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Breakdown of Relations: American Expansionism, the Great Plains, and the Arikara People,
1823-1957

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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Introduction

The Sahnish, or Arikara, peoples, belong to the Caddoan linguistic group. Archaeologists and anthropologists speculate that the Arikara came from the societies along the lower-Mississippi River Valley, having cultural systems that resemble those of the Pawnee tribe.¹ It is unknown when the Arikara separated from the other tribes in the lower-Mississippi River Valley, but the Sahnish gradually moved northward to make permanent settlements on the Missouri River watershed in modern day North and South Dakota.² It was from this position of power that the Arikara gained control of trade along the northern reaches of the Missouri River into modern-day Canada. From this position of strength, the Arikara established powerful trade networks among the Mandan and Siouan speaking peoples in the region.³ In doing so, the Arikara reinforced their regional status as middlemen willing to adapt and innovate to retain their economic and diplomatic connections across the northern Plains.⁴

¹ Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 52-55; J. Daniel Rogers, *Objects of Change: The Archaeology and History of Arikara Contact with Europeans* (New York: Smithsonian, 1990); Richard A. Krause, *The Leavenworth Site. Archaeology of An Historic Arikara Community* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1972); D.J. Lehmer and D.T. Jones, "Arikara Archaeology: the Bad River Phase," *Publications in Salvage Archaeology* 7 (1968).

² William Duncan Strong, "From History to Prehistory in the Northern Great Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 17, No. 57 (1977): 355.

³ Roger L. Nichols, "The Arikara Indians and the Missouri River Trade," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, No. 2 (1982): 79-81; Edwin Thompson Denig and John C. Ewers, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arikaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 34-37.

⁴ It is important to note that the Arikara themselves did not define themselves as "middlemen." This is a phrase coined by historians in an attempt to define the position of various tribes in American history. This line is also inserted to contest the notions posited by contemporary historians (fueled by the words of Thomas Jefferson) that the Siouan tribes were the "lynchpin" to the American government securing their position on the Plains. Through emphasizing that the Arikara had geopolitical power on the Plains, it sets the basis for the tribe having a larger overall impact for the American people to migrate further West.

This thesis focuses on the Arikaree from pre-contact to the twentieth century. Focusing on such a large span of time makes it possible to draw on a cross-section of written archival sources, archaeological and anthropological investigations, and a wealth of historiographical insights to analyze how Arikara identities changed over time. The argument of this thesis seeks to highlight the agency exercised by the Arikara and, by extension, the Three Affiliated Tribes after their creation. The tribal agency shown throughout this history not only created the culture of the Fort Berthold Reservation as it is seen today, but also highlights that the Arikara, as well as the Mandan and Hidatsa, were active participants in history. The tribes were not resigned to their assimilationist fate but took a proactive approach to American encroachment.

An important note on the use of the word “agency” in this thesis: “agency” is not used to rob the Arikara people of their “humanness.” The tribespeople acted as any human would given the cultural and geopolitical happenings on the Great Plains. The focus on tribal agency in this paper is a matter of import for two reasons: the first being that historians have not highlighted the actions taken by the Arikara people, instead making the tribe a passive observer to “fate.” This makes the destruction of their population and culture a historic inevitability. The second is that the Arikara’s agency serves to “messy” a previously tidy historiography. In contemporary scholarship, many individuals focus on the Siouan tribes, such as the Dakota and Lakota, and how their actions and political hegemony impacted the Great Plains. This serves to tidy up history, making the Siouan tribes the only powerful force on the Plains, implying that the American government only needed to focus on one tribal entity to gain power in the West. This was not the case. Through focusing on the actions taken by the Arikara, the Great Plains transforms from being one region controlled by a tribal conglomerate to a stage set with various

cultures, a place where the American people had to navigate local tribal politics to gain a foothold.⁵

Understanding change and continuity in Arikara history requires us to go back into the deep history of this tribal community and explore the archaeological evidence. The Arikara, who were also known as the Sahnish, Arikaree, and Ree,⁶ lived in permanent villages composed of earthen lodges. Arikara people devoted most days to the cultivation of crops such as corn (maize), tobacco, beans, sunflowers, and squash.⁷ The Arikara's agricultural economy was reinforced by their religious deities: the Corn Mother. The Arikara's Corn Mother narrative is part of an earth-emergence origin story. Corn Mother, a helper of Nesharu, led the Arikaran people from the underworld and taught them how to survive through means of cultivation and hunting.⁸ Mother Corn also taught the Arikara's ancient forebears how to construct Medicine Lodges and instructed them in religious ceremonies involving a man's spirit guardian as well as a sacred bundle which was entrusted to each village.⁹ These ceremonies would directly impact the growth of crops as well as the success of hunting expeditions.

Historical and archaeological scholarship has outlined how the Arikara lived in semi-permanent societies and constructed their dwellings out of earth. Arikara people used their villages most heavily in the spring, fall, and winter seasons. During the spring, the Arikara women planted crops and began the cultivation process. After establishing the crops, Arikara

⁵ For more on agency, see also Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 113-124.

⁶ It is important to note that the term "Ree" is only referenced here because it was used in historical documents to distinguish the Arikara from other neighboring tribes. Today, "Ree" is seen as a derogatory tribe by Arikaran tribespeople and should not be used outside of an historic context.

⁷ Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 60.

⁸ Douglas R. Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 106-110.

⁹ Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, 108.

people embarked on hunting expeditions. They sought out, game such as buffalo, an activity that put the Arikara in direct competition with the Lakota.¹⁰ When these spring hunts concluded, the Arikara returned to their settlements to harvest crops in the fall and settle in for the winter.

Arikara women enjoyed considerable economic and social power in their communities due to their agricultural knowledge and skills. But Arikara women not only planted and harvested crops, they also built and owned the earthen lodges in which the tribespeople lived. As a matrilineal society, the occupants of Arikara lodges typically included the owner's sisters and their families. While such arrangements suggest that the Arikara people lived under a matrilineal tribal structure, much like the other Caddoan-speaking people throughout the Great Plains, there is no direct evidence to support the assertion of a matrilineal political structure.¹¹ While women were responsible for ensuring that village life ran smoothly, the men were part of voluntary societies that enacted raids and warfare, acted as a police force within villages, or cared for the poor within each village.¹² A man belonging to one of these autonomous Arikara villages could acquire a reputation within the tribe and ultimately acquire a leadership position in a specific village.¹³

¹⁰ Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 217-219.

¹¹ To come to the assertion that the Arikara operated politically and socially under a matriarchy, Pawnee cultural systems were analyzed. As it is theorized that the Arikara are a divergent group of the Pawnee, it can be inferred that they took some of the Pawnee's religious, cultural, and political values North along the Missouri River; George E. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 10, 127.

¹² Robert Harry Lowie, *Societies of the Arikara Indians (1913)* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 5-7.

¹³ Lowie, *Societies of the Arikara Indians*, 6-7; Preston Holder, *The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974) 17; Virginia Bergman Peters, *Women of the Earthen Lodges* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); Douglas R. Parks, *Traditional Narratives of the Arikara Indians, Volume 2: Stories of Other Narrators* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

The Arikara people also played a vital role in the geopolitical structures of the Great Plains. One such story that emphasizes the importance of the Arikara comes from the Omaha tribe outlining their migration west. The five cognate tribes of the Omaha and the Iowa peoples traveled from the Ohio River Valley to the Big Sioux River, or the Missouri River, during the 1600s. This migration was made necessary due to warfare between the Iroquois and the tribe along the Ohio River Valley.¹⁴ While the initial migrations were in the 1600s, a movement which led to the splitting of the Omaha into the Quapaw, the Omaha did not develop permanent villages in present-day Iowa until the early-1700s. It was on the Big Sioux River that the Omaha and Iowa constructed a village, *Ton-wa-tonga*, or the Big Village, much to the chagrin of the Oto tribe.¹⁵ The Oto felt that these outside tribes encroached on their lands without their permission. As a result, the Oto launched a war against these invading tribes. The Omaha and Iowa quickly retreated to the eastern banks of the Missouri River where they met the Arikara. Here, the Arikara successfully brokered a peace among the Omaha, Iowa, Oto, and Cheyenne Indians.¹⁶ Having played a pivotal role in reestablishing peace and gaining access to Omaha trade, Arikaran women then moved to help the Omaha reconstruct their village on the Big Sioux River. Arikara women encouraged the Omaha to abandon their traditional bark structures and taught them to construct earthen lodges.¹⁷

¹⁴ Paulette W. Campbell, "Ancestral Bones: Reinterpreting the Past of the Omaha," *Humanities* 23, No. 6 (2002).

¹⁵ John Joseph Matthews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 128.

¹⁶ Eric Buffalohead, "Dheigan History: A Personal Journey," *Plains Anthropologist* 49, No. 192 (2004), 332. This source focuses on the Omaha particularly and is a story from their oral tradition. While no parallel is found within Arikara society, the story carried more weight and was a defining point in Omaha culture.

¹⁷ Buffalohead, "Dheigan History," 333.

While the Arikara played a pivotal role in intertribal relations among the tribes on the Great Plains, their importance did not diminish with the invasion of Europeans. Prior to sustained contact with Europeans, the Arikara comprised a small but influential polity. Although many tribal nations began encountered Europeans from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico as early as the sixteenth century, Arikaras did not have regular contact with Europeans until the eighteenth century. The Arikara began encountering Europeans on a regular basis when French fur traders ventured into their homelands in the early eighteenth century. One of the earliest recorded contacts between the Arikara and French trappers dates to 1743 when the explorer La Verendrye and his sons entered Arikara territory. From his short narrative, La Verendrye claimed that the Indians were willing to conduct trade relations with the Frenchmen and allowed the traders to stay in their village before the men set out to explore the Rocky Mountains.¹⁸

Before the invasion of European traders and soldiers across the Great Plains, the Siouan-speaking tribes, particularly the Lakota, viewed trade and diplomacy with the Arikara as an important facet of life on the Great Plains. The Lakota were a primarily nomadic people who followed the herds of buffalo throughout the Plains to support their tribe.¹⁹ As such, the Lakota and various other Siouan-speaking peoples did not have an abundance of agricultural goods. Not only were the pre-contact Sioux eager to trade with the Arikaran peoples for maize, squash, and beans, but also for Arikara tobacco.²⁰ Lakota people used tobacco in various religious

¹⁸ Charles E. DeLand, "The Verendrye Explorations and Discoveries," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 7 (1913): 242. There is also a historic marker located at Fort Pierre, South Dakota that outlines the venture into the Dakotas, around the area the Arikara were living at the time.

¹⁹ Raymond W. Wood, *Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985): 108. Deepen research on Lakota pre-contact history by adding key historiographical works here

²⁰ David C. Posthumus, "Hereditary Enemies? An examination of the Sioux-Arikara relations prior to 1830," *Plains Anthropologist* 61, No. 240 (2016): 373-374.

ceremonies to induce a trance-like state and allow the user to embark on a vision quest.²¹ As the Lakota did not have permanent villages to farm and cultivate tobacco, they turned to trade to acquire the tobacco needed for their religious ceremonies. Moreover, trading within the Arikara villages along the Missouri River allowed the Sioux to gain access to northern and Canadian tribes and a variety of other trade goods as a result. The Sioux also valued the Arikara's supply of horses obtained from the south, in addition to firearms acquired from Europeans.²² This focus on trade was possible because of the Arikara's emphasis on horticulture, which made the Arikara a sedentary people, led to the Arikara to take on important roles in trade relations with European peoples.

The European invasion of the Great Plains destabilized preexisting trade and diplomatic networks. For the Arikara, pressure from French and Spanish traders precipitated a rapid decline in their trade relations with Siouan-speaking peoples. Furthermore, relations between the Lakota and Arikara deteriorated as competition for hunting grounds intensified.²³

The hunting of buffalo proved a particularly acute point of tension between the Lakota peoples and the Arikara. Europeans coveted buffalo hide for its practical uses on the frontier and its lucrative appeal in fashionable European markets.²⁴ Initially, French fur traders (and later British traders) had direct access to European goods such as firearms, gunpowder, which were used to gain dominance over the market on Arikaran buffalo hides. The use of these European goods was not only to have a competitive edge on trading with other Indians, as the bulk of the tribes coveted Euro-American goods, but European wares would also benefit the Native

²¹ Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 37-39.

²² Posthumus, "Hereditary Enemies?," 381.

²³ Roger L. Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823," *South Dakota Historical Society* 14, No. 2 (1984), 95-96.

²⁴ Wood, *Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 10-12.

Americans, providing tools which allowed natives to gain military dominance over nearby tribal enemies.²⁵ While the Sioux and Arikara conducted warfare and raids against one another, it was not until Europeans became involved in the Great Plains that the Lakota and Arikara began to fight over hunting territories.²⁶ The expansion of Lakota and Arikara feuds cut Lakota access to Arikaran goods and Arikara villages that acted as trading posts. As a result, the delicate economic and political balance that existed on the Great Plains prior to the arrival of Europeans became increasingly violent and uncertain prior to the 17th Century. The Arikara saw opportunity amid the instability and set out to use European goods on the Great Plains to reestablish a position of economic hegemony in the American Mid-West for the next two hundred years.

However, by the 1780s the Arikara experienced a dramatic change in demographics that weakened their overall position on the Great Plains. Between 1780 and 1782, the Arikaran people endured an epidemic of smallpox that afflicted thirty of their thirty-two villages.²⁷ Historian William Nesters argues that of the 30,000 tribespeople who lived in these villages, only 6,000 remained after the epidemic.²⁸ Not only did the sudden decrease in population weaken the Arikara's standing on the Missouri River and across the Plains, but it left tribal leaders scrambling to rebuild communities. The tribes of the Arikara consolidated their power into five villages in an attempt to protect the remnants of the population. Given that a majority of the 6,000 survivors were tribal leaders, challenges for leadership positions quickly emerged. The result was tribal in-fighting and disunity.²⁹

²⁵ Roger L. Nichols, *Warrior Nations: The United States and Indian Peoples* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 32-35.

²⁶ David J. Wishart, *The Great Plains Indians* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2016), 230

²⁷ Nichols, *Warrior Nations*, 257

²⁸ William R. Nester, *The Arikara War: The First Plains Indian War, 1823* (Mountain Press, 2001), 15.

²⁹ Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster," 100.

Not only did the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1782 make the Arikara ineffective as a functioning political entity, but it also left the villages vulnerable to raids from enemy tribes. At the Larson site, an archaeological dig in Illinois, archaeologists have uncovered seventy-one corpses that share traits with the Arikaran Indians. Archaeologists theorize that these individuals were slain during the Siouan expansion efforts and in their attempts to claim economic hegemony over the mid-western portion of America in approximately 1200-1350. The position of the Arikara on the Missouri River was a major factor in the Sioux not claiming total economic dominion on the Great Plains and negatively impacted relations between Siouan peoples and Euroamerican traders. Diminished Arikara power allowed the Lakota, Dakota, and various other Sioux tribes to strongarm the Arikara into a position of reduced economic and diplomatic influence during the early-1800s. The Arikara found themselves severely weakened. Not only was there a series of raids and wars that the villages could not hope to win but the tribe also suddenly lost its geopolitical and economic hegemonies over trade relations with Europeans to the Siouan tribes.³⁰ This downturn in trade destroyed the Arikara's hopes of combatting the Lakota in particular due to the gap in weaponry and other goods that trading with Europeans brought. In response to the constant threat of Siouan raids on their encampments, the Arikara moved their settlements closer to the Mandan and Hidatsa tribes in 1805 in the hopes that each of these smaller tribes might offer protection against the growing Siouan threat. This migration led to resettlement in present-day North Dakota throughout the Missouri River watershed. The Arikara hoped that relocation and resettlement would enable them to retain some of the power they had amassed in the region.³¹ Not only did the Mandan and Hidatsa provide a modicum of

³⁰ Nichols, *Warrior Nations*, 263.

³¹ Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2014), 108-111.

protection for the Arikara, but the tribes shared cultural similarities, allowing for easy integration and a renewed form of collective identification that will be explored further in chapter three of this thesis.

Another facet of Arikara village life that emphasized their shifting position as middlemen on the Great Plains is the number of tribes arriving in their villages in hopes of learning farming techniques from the Arikara. One account of these intertribal relations comes from Jean-Baptiste Truteau, a French-Canadian fur trader with the Missouri Fur Company. In his journals from 1794, Truteau recounts that there was a village of sixty dwellings which belonged to members of the Oglala Sioux in an Arikaran village.³² While residing within the Arikara culture, the Oglala and other nomadic tribes were taught the agricultural practices of the Arikara women and attempted to adopt those practices for their respective tribes in the 1810s.³³

These interactions and intertribal relations were further highlighted during the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804. While observing intertribal relations between the Teton and Arikara, the expeditionary forces noted that the Teton Sioux maintained this peaceful relationship with the Arikara well into the early-1800s. This is presumably because the Arikara farmed corn, a valuable commodity for the Teton.³⁴ While most Sioux were willing to maintain peaceful relations with the Arikara, various tribes like the Lakota and Yanktonai Sioux raided and warred with the Arikara regularly.³⁵ While these Sioux acted aggressively toward the Arikara, due to the Arikara having direct access to tribes and Canada as well as European goods, making them a

³² Jean Baptiste Truteau, ed. Annie Heloise Abel, "Trudeau's Description of the Upper Missouri," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 8, No. ½ (1921, original pub 1797): 157-158.

³³ Trudeau, "Trudeau's Description of the Upper Missouri," 200.

³⁴ David C. Posthumus, "Hereditary Enemies? An examination of the Sioux-Arikara relations prior to 1830," *Plains Anthropologist* 61, No. 240 (2016): 365-369.

³⁵ George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 236.

direct threat, Lewis and Clark observed that various members of these tribes regularly travelled to Arikara settlements to trade, suggesting that the Arikara tried to reconnect with older trading partners.³⁶ More than this, the disposition of each tribe often appeared erratic, the Oglala frequently cycled through periods of warring and living with the Arikara through the 1700s. These cycles of war and peace occurred frequently, one war between the Sioux and the Arikara lasting from 1795-1796, emphasized not only the power of the Arikara, but the mutual respect these tribes had for one another and the realization that one could not survive without the other.

The cycles of these wars between the Arikara and Sioux were complex. They reflected a variety of motives, from battles over supplies and raids to replenish tribal numbers through complex mourning wars. The cycle of war also had a religious aspect. For the Arikara, warfare was part of a complex ritual in which members of their longhouses sanctioned wars through their village bundles.³⁷ Not only did religion precipitate war, but the geographical closeness and strategic jockeying between the Arikara and the Sioux made intertribal warfare commonplace – something that the arrival of European exacerbated. With the largest population across the central and northern Plains, the Sioux sought out geopolitical dominance, something that forced the Arikara into a permanently defensive position. The Sioux's growing power led Thomas Jefferson to the assumption that they were the key to American settler expansion in the West.

The Sioux made the most of diplomatic overtures from the United States government. As Arikara economic power and diplomatic influence continued to wane during the early nineteenth century, Sioux peoples becoming increasingly influential regional powers along the Missouri River. To United States settlers and fur trading companies, trade with the Sioux became critical

³⁶ James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 179. For more on this topic, see Reuben G. Thwaites's edited volumes: *The Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*.

³⁷ Nester, *The Arikara War*, 3.

to prosperity in the Mid-West. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, this allowed the Siouan peoples to establish an economic hegemony, effectively emerging as the gatekeepers to the American West and the economic middlemen – a position once occupied by the Arikara – for Americans and Europeans.³⁸

For the Arikara, their loss of regional power heightened internal political tensions. One faction, led by Chiefs Bear and Little Soldier, sought to maintain neutral, amicable relations with Americans. This was because, while they were not a prominent focus for American traders, the tribe still traded for firearms, gunpowder, and other goods necessary for survival. Bear's mentality was that relations with the Americans and Lakota was not worsening, so there was no need to exacerbate tensions.³⁹ These chiefs also understood that the Americans had become an important and prominent geopolitical force on the Great Plains. Not only were they one of the chief trading partners with the Arikara, the Americans also commanded military might. This, coupled with the regular Lakota raids, made chiefs like Bear and Little Soldier believe that attacking the Americans would spell the destruction of their tribe. Chief Gray Eyes had a differing view. He believed that the Americans were slighting and disrespecting the Arikara peoples and sought to deal with them in a hostile, violent fashion.⁴⁰ It was the Arikara from his tribe who began shooting arrows at any white traders attempting to approach the Arikara villages in 1823.⁴¹ Gray Eyes and his tribesmen tricked Nathaniel Hale Pryor, a sergeant on the Lewis and Clark expedition who was entrusted to strengthen relations with the Mandan and Arikara peoples and his men in 1807. During this meeting, Gray Eyes allowed Pryor to leave an Arikara

³⁸ Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 317.

³⁹ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington: Government Print Office, 1903).

⁴⁰ Pierre-Antoine Tabeau, *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 124.

⁴¹ Ashley to unknown, 7 June 1823.

settlement, but stopped one boat that did not have any armed guards escorting it. After throwing the American peace medal presented to him on the ground, Gray Eyes and his warriors incapacitated the traders and took all the goods that were aboard their keelboat.⁴² This retaliation was caused because of the assumed dubious nature of white traders and the supposed assassination of Piahito, Grey Eyes' son, a year prior.

Chief Gray Eyes and his faction began to act in a bolder fashion around the year 1823, not only attacking white traders that approached Arikara villages, but also raiding trading outposts in the immediate area. One such raid occurred directly outside of Fort Recovery, an outpost the Sioux dominated in 1823, on June 2, an ambush that left fifteen members of an expedition slain. The remaining members retreated to the fort and reported the happenings to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company presence.⁴³ This hostile act prompted immediate action from the forces impacted by the Arikara's raid, particularly the American government, the Sioux, and trappers of the fur company. While these interactions between the Arikara and other powerful competitors in the area are important to analyze, it is necessary to see how these interactions shaped their societal culture throughout history. With that in mind, let's turn back to the Arikara and see how interactions with other tribes, Europeans, and Americans shaped tribal culture.

Historians emphasize another important consequence of European colonialism on Arikara culture: the influence of colonial culture on tribal oral tradition. Scholars observe how colonialism changed the narrative structure and messages of their oral stories and histories. Before white encroachment, Arikara stories typically focused on moral lessons, how individuals

⁴² William Clark to Henry Dearborn, 18 May 1807, Letters Received, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, RG107, National Archives, Washington D.C.; Richard E. Oglesby, *Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 49-50.

⁴³ Richard M. Clokey, *William H. Ashley: Enterprise and Politics in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 61.

fit in and contribute to society, or religious awakenings. Stories, particularly of ancient, prehistoric events, emphasized facets of creation and, as in the oral story of The Man with the Sharpened Leg, what would happen if tribespeople abused the powers bestowed upon them by nature.⁴⁴

After their loss of power on the Plains, Arikara tales began to focus on animal spirits, nature, and religious figures bestowing power on an individual or tribe. These stories emphasized the Arikara overcoming obstacles. On the inverse of this, tales also describe how nature begins to abandon the Arikara for past indiscretions and violations of nature.⁴⁵ While it is not directly stated in these oral traditions, it is implied that nature will help the Arikara overcome their tribulations, but only if they keep to traditional values of their people. Most of these stories do not involve actual events or people but are used to convey a message to the tribe as a whole. Of their oral histories, the Arikara do not seem to remember tales before the murder of White Horse's son in 1823. White Horse's son is not named in the narrative, for his murder at the hands of white fur traders and his being White Horse's son, a prominent chief of the Arikara, were important to the people.⁴⁶ Not only does this indicate that this occurrence marks a pivotal turning point for the Arikara as a people and culture. More than this, stories involving the Coyote, a trickster figure in the mythology of many Great Plains cultures, becomes more commonplace. In one tale, Coyote takes the clothes and finery from a dead Sioux. He parades about, telling anyone

⁴⁴ Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, 171-174. This is a common story among the natives among the northern Plains. In the Arikaran version, the man who sharpens his leg lures young men into his winter camp with promises of marrying his daughter. He would then murder them. Once his daughter was unable to tolerate his actions any longer, she assists the young man in escaping. The young man climbs into a tree which bequeathed immortality unto the Man with the Sharpened Leg. Upon learning of the Man's actions, the tree trapped him, forcing him to hang there for eternity. This story is to warn tribespeople of the dangers of abusing power given. This usually leads to individuals being punished by the beings which gave them the power.

⁴⁵ Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, 209-212.

⁴⁶ Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, 374-377.

who asks that he made these items himself. After a while, the dead Sioux came to haunt him and reclaim their lost possessions.⁴⁷

From tales like this, one can infer that Europeans and Americans who took goods from the Arikara would face retribution once they returned to the sacred lands of the Sioux, Arikara, and other Native peoples. The changes in tribal storytelling suggests that Arikara recognized changes in relations with Europeans and turned to oral traditions to seek guidance and perhaps even some form of divine intervention in order to regain their place as a hegemonic power on the Great Plains.

The following chapters expand on the above historiography by revealing how the Arikara were proactive in the formation of the American Mid-West as well in shaping Indian relations with the U.S. government throughout history. This is done through focusing on the agency of the Arikara and analyzing how they used American political systems to their advantage beginning in the 1800s well into the present day. Chapter 1 argues that the early- to mid-1800s served as a learning period of sorts for the Arikaran people. It was during this timeframe that the tribes learned the treaty making process and how best to use it to the tribe's advantage. While superficially it appears the Arikara were reactive in their dealings with Americans on the Great Plains, this chapter emphasizes that the Arikara analyzed the systems presented to them and understood the importance in dealing with the American government as a means for cultural survival.

Chapter 2 argues that the Arikara served as a test subject of sorts to analyze the effectiveness of off-reservation boarding schools. This chapter focuses on the Arikara sent to the Hampton Institute in 1878, particularly one student, Anna Dawson. Dawson's experience at

⁴⁷ Parks, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, 464-468.

Hampton not only assimilated her into the cultural systems of white America, but she also became a firm advocate for native children being educated by whites. This chapter emphasizes that Native American agency did not always come in the form of resistance but also conformity. This is crucial to broadening contemporary understandings of agency within the historiography.

Chapter 3 argues that, in the 1900s, the Arikara, formed into the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold, needed to take a more proactive approach in combatting the U.S. government's encroachment, particularly after World War II. With the construction of the Garrison Dam, the tribes within the Fort Berthold reservation needed to reassess where they stood in the geopolitical sphere of America. To accomplish this, tribal leaders such as George Gillette refused to give into the demands of the Army Corps of Engineers, entering a political struggle with the U.S. government to keep their lands. Not only did this force the tribes to reanalyze how they conducted themselves with the American government, it also showed deep tribal divisions within Fort Berthold that remain to this day.

These chapters highlight how the Arikara adapted to the increased American presence on the Great Plains. Through creating treaties with the U.S. government, tribal leaders sought to cement their place on the Great Plains. To take a burden off of the reservation and to spur the financial wellbeing of the reservation, Indian families sent their children to off-reservation boarding schools. While some of these children assimilated, others used this education to better the position of their respective tribes. Each of the actions taken by the Arikara people were not reactive to American efforts, but calculated, proactive approaches to their rapidly changing environment. Each move the tribe made was an attempt to better its position, not only on the Great Plains, but with the American government as a whole.

Chapter 1

Hostilities between the Arikara and American presence on the Plains were heightened in March of 1823. In this month, Arikara hunters went out to meet with American traders near Cedar Fort, a trading post established along the Missouri River. The Arikara demanded that the white traders forfeit the hides they were carrying for trade. Upon refusal, the natives became hostile and raided the traders, attempting to take the hides by force.¹ This attack was spurred on by the fact that Cedar Fort was established as a trading post for the local Sioux, effectively undermining Arikara trading efforts. This implies that, while the traders were white, the Arikara felt more hostility due to the implication that trading with the Sioux increased Siouan hegemony on the Great Plains.²

After this initial, seemingly random attack, the Arikara staged a larger raid against Cedar Fort just days later. In this raid to strike against Siouan hegemony, the Arikara also assaulted the Missouri Fur Company directly. In this assault, two warriors were slain, one of whom was the son of Grey Eyes, a prominent Arikara chief. Many warriors were also wounded in this attack, being an ultimate loss for the Arikara. White reports claim that this attack came from the native need to oppose civilization and was an act of vengeance against the white community. The explanation that is posited by historian Roger L. Nichols, that the attack was against the Sioux and an attempt to weaken their geopolitical position, is much more likely.³

¹ Pilcher Statement. 18 Mar. 1824. 13-14; Ashley to unknown. Franklin. Mo., 7 June 1823, in Morgan, *West of William H. Ashley*, 29-30

² Roger L. Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2.2 (1982): 98.

³ Harrison C. Dale, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Cleveland: Arthur C. Clark, 1918), 70; William Ashley to unknown, 7 June 1823, in Dale L. Morgan, ed., *The West of William H. Ashley, 1822-1838* (Denver: Old West, 1964), 29- 30; Richard M. Clokey, *William H. Ashley: Enterprise and Politics in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Norman: University of

Whatever the goals of the Arikara raids in March, they did not stop efforts of Americans to trade with the tribe two months later in May of 1823. The expedition, headed by William Ashley of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, met with the Arikara despite forewarning of their actions against American traders two months prior. More than this, the traders were made aware of a tribal division after the assault on Cedar Fort, one headed by Grey Eyes, the other by Little Soldier. This division was made all the more apparent upon the traders' arrival, as the tribal leaders had to deliberate for some time before meeting with the Americans.⁴ After this discussion, only Grey Eyes was sent to the boats of the traders. Ashley reported this as a good sign, as it made it appear as though Grey Eyes bore no ill will toward the whites for his son's death two months prior.⁵ After returning to his village, Grey Eyes assured the traders of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company that the Arikara would trade with the whites. Once trade commenced, the natives thought the whites were asking for too much, demanding forty horses for what the Arikara believed were cheap guns and insufficient amounts of gunpowder. This brought the meeting to a halt, Ashley's company returning to their boats with what goods they had procured. After this initial interaction, Little Soldier, one of the prominent chiefs of the Arikara, warned Ashley that both he and his expedition were in danger; various warriors wanted to attack them.⁶ Ashley did not understand this warning, as they had just concluded trading with the peaceful faction of the Arikara that day. At the beginning of June, Little Soldier's warning

Oklahoma Press, 1980), 90-91; Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (1953; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1964), 50-51; Anonymous to Thomas Forsyth, 23 January 1824, Thomas Forsyth Papers, Draper Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster," 98-99; Roger L. Nichols, "The Arikara Indians And The Missouri River Trade: A Quest For Survival," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1656 (1982): 86-87.

⁴ Ashley to Benjamin O'Fallon and Henry Leavenworth, in Morgan, *West of William H. Ashley*, 27.

⁵ Ashley to unknown, 7 June 1823, in Morgan, *The West of Ashley*, 29-30; Anonymous to unknown, June 17, 1823, in Morgan, *The West of Ashley*, 31-32.

⁶ Dale, *Ashley-Smith Explorations*, 71-74.

came to pass, once in the night when some of the traders went into the village in search of creature comforts, leading to the death of one of the whites. At daybreak, the Arikara attacked the rest of the company who were camping on the river, killing a majority of their horses and thirteen of the traders.⁷ This led the traders to flee to Fort Atkinson. From there, word of Grey Eyes' attacks against the Rocky Mountain Fur Company rapidly reached Washington in 1823.

On hearing the news, officials in the American government felt a display of force, and a counter strike against the Arikara, was needed. With the complaints of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company fresh in the minds of government officials, Colonel Henry Leavenworth was dispatched to Fort Atkinson with the approximately 230 troops of the 6th Infantry.⁸ To bolster their forces, Leavenworth allied himself with the Sioux, now enemy to the Arikara, and gained the support of several hundred Siouan warriors. These troops, coupled with the disgruntled trappers, ventured to the upper village in hopes of brokering an agreement with the principle chief of the Arikara, Chief Bear. Leavenworth demanded that the Arikara surrender their horses as recompense for the actions of Gray Eyes.

Chief Bear refused this agreement.⁹ William Ashley, a co-owner of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, would accept nothing less than this payment to atone for the loss of twenty of his men during Gray Eyes' raid. Chief Bear's unwillingness to bend knee to American might led to a lengthy artillery barrage from Leavenworth's forces which ultimately lasted a day. Although the barrage proved largely ineffective against the villages, it did force the Arikara to evacuate their settlements and they retreated to the villages of their Mandan neighbors for a brief period. While

⁷ Nichols, "The Arikara Indians And The Missouri River Trade," 87.

⁸ Roger L. Nichols, "The Arikara Indians and Missouri River Trade: A Quest For Survivor," *Great Plains Quarterly* (1982): 86

⁹ Roger L. Nichols, *Warrior Nation: The United States and Indian Peoples* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 73-74; Henry Leavenworth, "Leavenworth's Final and Detailed Report," October 20, 1823, 202-233.

this retreat did allow Leavenworth's forces, particularly the fur trappers involved in the conflict, to burn and destroy the Arikara villages, the tribe itself was left relatively unscathed from this conflict.¹⁰

The above story provides an insight into how rapidly life was changing for the Arikara. This chapter argues that the early- and mid-1800s brought rapid geopolitical, social, and economic change to the Arikara. While this change was spurred by American involvement on the Great Plains, the natives were not passive observers to the changes. Drawing on senate records, letters to the Office of Indian Affairs, treaties, journals, and a dearth of scholarly sources, the evidence in this chapter suggests that the Arikara were proactive in securing their place in the Mid-West, navigating the treacherous ground of white politics and using various systems in place to their advantage.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1823 conflict, the Arikara continued to raid and assault white traders and fur trappers operating in the Northern Plains.¹¹ The logic for these action was simple: the Sioux had become too large and powerful for the Arikara to combat, so the only enemy small enough to combat at this time were the American traders in the immediate area.¹² Various reports from St. Louis to the Bureau of Indian Affairs describe raids that occurred against white traders, including one account from William Clark, then territorial governor of the area, describing a "bloody massacre" of six fur trappers. Clark's primary concern for the loss of

¹⁰ Richard M. Clokey, *William H. Ashley: Enterprise and Politics in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 75.

¹¹ Statement by Joshua Pilcher to Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, 18 March 1824, U.S. Congress, Senate, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Senate Document no. 56, 10, 15

¹² Anonymous to Thomas Forsyth, January 23, 1824, Thomas Forsyth Papers, Draper Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

the Upper Missouri was that the U.S. would lose a profitable 2000 miles of land to not only the Indians in the area, but also to the British who operated and traded in the region.¹³

The first military alliance began in 1823 with the First Plains Indians War.¹⁴ This conflict began when the Arikara attacked an expedition funded by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in retaliation for a trapper slaying the son of their chief. That event ignited the existing tensions over Siouan past raids and current encroachment on their territory by American trappers.¹⁵ After the assault of American men, the American government sent approximately three hundred men to retaliate against the Arikara. Along with these American soldiers were also about seven hundred fifty Sioux warriors.¹⁶ This conflict ended abruptly when the forces killed approximately fifty Arikara and burned one of their villages. This burned site would later become an American trading post, sending a clear message to other Native tribes in the area.¹⁷

This war not only gained the United States a foothold on the Great Plains, allowing them to position themselves in a central portion of the area, but also contest British control on the Missouri River and create friendly relations with the Lakota.¹⁸ Why did the Lakota assist the American forces? The Lakota saw this war as an opportunity to assault their enemies. The Arikara were in a strategic position, one that allowed them to oversee much of the trading with the Americans on the Plains. It is because of this positioning and the rising power of the United States that the Sioux wanted the Arikara moved. This particular war accomplished just that.

¹³ William Clark to J. C. Calhoun, 29 March 1824, in Morgan, *West of William H. Ashley, 1822-1838*, 19-20.

¹⁴ Roger L. Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2.2 (1982): 93-94.

¹⁵ Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster," 93.

¹⁶ "Backdrop for Disaster," 94, 97. Most of the Sioux involved in this war were Lakota.

¹⁷ "Backdrop for Disaster," 112-113.

¹⁸ It is important to note that this outpost also impeded native trade with other Europeans in the area, such as the French. More than this, the outpost would remove the intrinsic need to use the Sioux as a trade mediator and would make the Sioux a nonissue.

While the Arikara were not totally eradicated—something for which the American commander, Colonel Henry Lavenworth, was harshly criticized—the Arikara would not be able to easily recover from this loss, further strengthening the Sioux control on the Plains. This alliance between the Sioux and the American government alienated the Arikara who had been previously targeted by the Sioux which further complicated the American efforts to create inroads on the Great Plains. To couple with this, the ally made in the Sioux was not buying into the American vision, making the alliance tenuous and hostile to both sides.

In the period directly following the First Plains Indian War, from around 1824 until 1862, trading companies such as the Missouri, Rocky Mountain, and Columbia Fur Companies attempted to subvert American licensure policies by telling Native communities that they were British.¹⁹ Not only was this action illegal under American law, but it also deduced tribes such as the Arikara into doing business with American traders who were encroaching upon their hunting grounds and subverting their autonomous trade networks. While military personnel, such as Leavenworth, attempted to keep these traders in check through regular visits to tribes and promises of companies being dissolved or fined for these illegal acts, they were difficult to prove and often went unpunished. These subversive tactics often led to inequity in trade deals between the companies and the Indians, typically in the trading company's favor. The subterfuges of traders also ran the very real risk of increasing hostilities between tribes and American frontiersmen. In one circumstance, a certain tribe -- it was unknown if they were Siouan, Arikara, or Mandan Indians – ambushed and killed six members of a Messr. B. Pratte and his

¹⁹ Clokey, *William H. Ashley*, 112-13; Benjamin O'Fallon to William Clark, May 7, 1824, Indian Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. There are also various letters detailing these events in the *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents*, Vol. 91. Richard T. Holliday to unknown, 16 February 1824, in *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents*, Vol. 91, (United States, 1825), 71.

company travelling the Northern Plains during attempts to establish trade relations with the various tribes in the area.²⁰ While it is unknown which tribe actually assaulted the traders, the motive for the attack was the same: not only did this group of white Frenchmen have gifts and goods to give to various Native American tribes in the hopes of acquiring buffalo hide and other valuables from the mid-west, but the natives assumed that the white men were moonlighting as Europeans and were actually Americans subverting treaties and attacking indigenous control of economic relations.²¹

Officials from the United States government and military noticed these attacks on whites across the Great Plains. Because attacks such as the one on Messrs. B. Pratte & Co. could have been enacted by the Arikara, military leaders such as Brigadier General Atkinson criticized Leavenworth's actions during the Arikara War of 1823, claiming that Leavenworth showed too much constraint when combatting the Arikara.²² The American officials who criticized Leavenworth believed that total war, the destruction of the Arikara people, was the only way to reduce native peoples to the will of the American government. While Leavenworth subsequently redeemed himself with the creation of Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, his military career proved rocky, his superiors often viewing his compassion for Native Americans as a weakness.

Not only were the Arikara relatively unscathed from the American, Siouan, and Rocky Mountain Fur Company onslaught, they were allowed treaty making privileges in 1825 when

²⁰ H. Leavenworth to Brigadier General Atkinson, 9 March 1824, in *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents*, Vol. 91, (United States, 1825), 71.

²¹ Jacques Brazeau to H. Smith, 20 February 1824, in *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents*, Vol. 91, (United States, 1825), 71.

²² Russel Reid and Clell G. Gannon, eds., "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 4 (1929): 10-11; Henry Leavenworth to Henry Atkinson, June 18, 1823, U.S. Congress, Senate, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Senate Document no. 1. This letter is reprinted in Doane Robinson, ed., "Official Correspondence of Leavenworth Expedition of 1823 into South Dakota for the Conquest of the Ree Indians," *South Dakota Historical Collection* 1 (1902): 181-82.

Brigadier-General Henry Atkinson, a representative for the United States Army -- a necessary inclusion as the Bureau of Indian Affairs was a branch of the Department of War -- and Major Benjamin O'Fallon, an Indian agent, were sent to create a treaty with the Arikara to end hostilities on the Northern Plains.²³ However, to enact this peace the Arikara American officials forced them to recognize that they resided within the boundaries of the United States and, as such, were subject to the laws and whims of the "Great Father," or the U.S. President.²⁴ The treaty also ensured that the Arikaran concept of blood law, or retaliation against a group or individual for misdeeds, was to end. Not only does this stipulation undermine Arikara tradition and sovereignty, it ensured that the tribe was legally powerless to act against fur trappers, agents, and other individuals that slighted them in relations. Moreover, the Arikara were assigned an agent from the Bureau of Indian Affairs who would provide licenses to individuals who proved trustworthy to trade with the Arikara.²⁵ While this treaty did serve to limit the Arikara in the name of peaceful relations, six chiefs signed the document. This emphasized that the tribe maintained some form of political autonomy and exercised their sovereignty in relations with the United States government in the creation and signing of this document.

It is not clear if the parameters of this treaty were adequately translated to the Arikara chiefs present at the signing.²⁶ One such proof is that this treaty forced the Arikara to conform to

²³ Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1997), 143; Russel Reid and Clell G. Gannon, eds., "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition, 11.

²⁴ The concept of the "Great Father" was a universal term used in many treaties and dealings between the U.S. government and native peoples. The "Great Father" had a duty to protect the members of the tribes under his rule, being that he was considered the Chief of Chiefs. The American government's failure to uphold bargains struck through treaties and trade deals showed natives they were not worthy of the title. For more information, see Francis Paul Prucha's *The Great Father*.

²⁵ *Treaty with The Arikara Tribe*, 18 July 1825.

²⁶ Present chiefs included: Stan-au-pat (Bloody Hand), Ca-car-we-ta (Little Bear), Scar-e-naus (Skunk), Chan-son-nah (Fool Chief), Chan-no-te-ne-na (Chief that was Afraid), and Coon-ca-ne-nos-see (Bad Bear). This document was also signed by fourteen Arikara warriors to show tribal unity. The two

the laws of the United States and that Arikara law and, therefore, sovereignty, was made moot through the signing of this treaty. The treaty makes no mention of the courts which would be used to try accused parties, but there is no record of the Arikara having a formal judicial system until they merged with the Mandan and Hidatsa tribes in the mid-1860s. This suggests that the American court system in charge of the Northern Plains Indian Territory took responsibility for trying accused convicts. This meant that Indians accused, for example, of crimes like horse theft, would be tried in a white court system with white juries. The resulting trials were often one-sided affairs that favored white settlers.²⁷

After the Treaty of 1825 was signed, the United States government's formal involvement with the Arikara tribe ended until the Office of the Indian Affairs dispatched a new Indian agent, John F.A. Sanford, in 1833. The Arikara's limited interaction with the American government, meant that the 1825 treaty was the only document signed between United States officials and the Arikara Indians until the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851. This created a diplomatic and economic vacuum that the Rocky Mountain Fur Company filled.

William Henry Ashley of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company sent various frontiersmen and trappers to deal with the Arikara in the 1824 to 1833 period outside the auspices of the American government. One such trade expedition was spearheaded by Hugh Glass. Glass's expedition has recently attracted popular fame thanks to the 2015 Hollywood blockbuster *The Revenant*. While attempting to travel across the Platte River in Nebraska, Glass's expedition discovered a small Arikaran settlement. The unnamed leader of this village claimed to know

interpreters present, Antoine Garreau and Joseph Garreau, were Frenchmen, meaning that the translation of the treaty had to go through two layers of translation before it reached the ears of the present natives.²⁷ Another tribe in much the same situation as the Arikara were the Cherokee in terms of being subjected to the American court systems. For more information on this subject, see Gregory D. Smithers' *The Cherokee Diaspora*. Lots of other examples that I'd insert here to deepen engagement with historiography

Glass and invited him and his men to rest in his village. However, the offer of friendship is portrayed as a ruse as tribesmen attempt to rob and murder the members of Glass's expedition.²⁸

The actual motivation for this attack lies in the previous actions of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in 1822 when the founders lied to the Arikara and began hunting on their lands and encroaching on the existing trade relations that the Arikara had established and which stretched all the way to St. Louis.²⁹ The stealing of the Glass Party's goods and equipment was a form of retribution for business stolen.

Glass and two of his four men escaped the Arikara ambush and fled to Fort Kiowa.³⁰ After his escape, Glass transitioned to a position hunting and trapping for the American garrison at Fort Union in the 1830s. While collecting food for these troops, the Arikara again ambushed Glass, killing him in 1833.³¹ The motive for this latter ambush is unclear. Perhaps the Arikara believed Glass affiliated with the Rocky Mountain Company. Maybe they knew that he was working with the United States Army, a military that had previously destroyed their villages and splintered the Arikara tribe, further weakening their position on the Great Plains. Both scenarios would be grounds for retributive violence.

While the motivation for some of the Arikara's raids on Glass are unclear, the Arikara's general purpose for attacking whites and Americans on the Northern Great Plains had a simple purpose: to force out competition. This means that native violence was not random attacks but were strategic raids and assaults designed to weaken or perhaps force out the white American presence that had become a permanent facet of life on the Plains. This made the attacks

²⁸ Hugh Glass to the Family of John Gardner, June 1823, *South Dakota State Historical Society*, transcription by South Dakota State News, accessed on 11 February 2019. url: <http://news.sd.gov/newsitem.aspx?id=19773>.

²⁹ Nichols, *Warrior Nations*, 72-73.

³⁰ Joseph Dennie, *The Port Folio*, 1 January 1825.

³¹ "Hugh Glass Later Life," *Hugh Glass – The Real Story*, Museum of Mountain Men.

inherently strategic, a tactic used by the tribe in hopes of bettering their position on the Plains. While the Europeans and Americans on the Plains grew in power, they did not exercise anything approaching complete domination over this vast region until after the midpoint of the century. In comparison, the Lakota and Sioux dominated the Plains, especially region near the Arikara homelands.³² It's reasonable to assume that the Arikara viewed the Sioux as the most important economic and military power on the Plains. It was therefore far more difficult for the Arikara to strike a blow against Sioux power.

In comparison, fur trappers comprised small bands. They often fumbled their way through unfamiliar landscapes, making their supply lines easy targets for Arikara warriors. Indeed, not only were Arikara raids on fur trappers profitable, they became important to the tribe's general survival during the early nineteenth century. Arikara raids on fur trappers assured them of receiving goods that trading companies and the United States government often failed to deliver. Finally, the Arikara appear to have used these attacks as part of a military strategy designed to create fear and uncertainty in the minds of white settlers and prevent further encroachment on what little hunting land the Arikara still had.³³

For much of the 1820s and early 1830s, most Arikara interactions with white Americans and the American government occurred through Indian agent John F.A. Sanford. In 1825, Sanford became the clerk for the St. Louis Office of Indian Affairs under William Clark was appointed in 1833. After the untimely death of the agent for the upper Missouri River area, Peter Wilson, Sanford was appointed agent to the area in 1826. While agent, Sanford worked to maintain peaceful relations with the Minitarees, Crow, Arikara, Assiniboines, and two tribes of

³² Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster," 103.

³³ Nichols, *Warrior Nations*, 75-76.

Sioux.³⁴ Sanford quickly realized that federal government administration of Indian affairs in the region was woefully underfunded. Sanford requested an injection of federal funds. This request may have been an effort to advance his own career, but on paper the funds were earmarked to help improve the living conditions of the tribes.³⁵ If Sanford hoped to make a name for himself, however, he failed. He played a small role in American relations with the tribes of the Upper Missouri and he is mentioned only once in the journal of William Clark after he became Indian agent in 1826. The next official mention of Sanford is a negative one, in 1828, when he requested yet more funding from the House of Representatives.³⁶

By the early 1830s, the movements of the Arikara tribes are difficult to chart. No formal accounts from this period survive. What we do know is that in 1832, the Arikara still resided on the Missouri River approximately 200 miles south of the Mandan.³⁷ By the year 1833, the tribe had abandoned this village. This site, designated at the Lewis and Clark-Leavenworth villages, were abandoned due to a massive drought and crop failures, fear of American retaliation for assaulting various traders, and a lack of animals to hunt for subsistence.³⁸ While all of these may account for the Arikara leaving the area, they do not account for the impact of the biggest

³⁴ William Clark, Louise Barry, ed., "Journal of William Clark, May 1826-February 1831," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 16, No. 1 (1948): 9.

³⁵ Janet Leconte, *Fur Traders, Trappers and Mountain Men of the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 50-60.

³⁶ William Clark, Louise Barry, ed., "Journal of William Clark, May 1826-February 1831," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 16, No. 1 (1948): 42.

³⁷ George Catlin, *Arikara Village of Earth-Covered lodges, 1600 Miles above St. Louis, 1832*, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., 1985.66.386. George Catlin, *My Life Among the Indians* (unpub., 23 January 2016), 153-158. George Bird Grinnell, *Trials of the Pathfinders* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2006), 237-246.

³⁸ It is difficult to pinpoint when the drought occurred for this village as the 19th century was a dry period for the Great Plains in general. The years 1816 to 1844 were particularly unfruitful due to a lack of rain on the Plains, meaning that it was within this timeframe that farming became an impossibility for the village. It is impossible to pinpoint when the village became unsustainable. What historians can determine is when the Arikara left: 1833. For more information, see: Michael C. Stambaugh, Richard P. Guyette, Erin R. McMurry, et al., "Drought duration and frequency in the U.S. Corn Belt during the last millennium (AD 992-2004)," *Agriculture and Forest Meteorology* 151 (2011): 154-162.

military threat to the Arikara's survival: the Sioux.³⁹ The Arikara had the power to raid the two villages at the Lewis and Clark-Leavenworth site at any time and did so frequently. This made surviving on the Upper Missouri neigh impossible for the Arikara peoples and, as such, the tribe was forced to move out of their position of power in 1833.

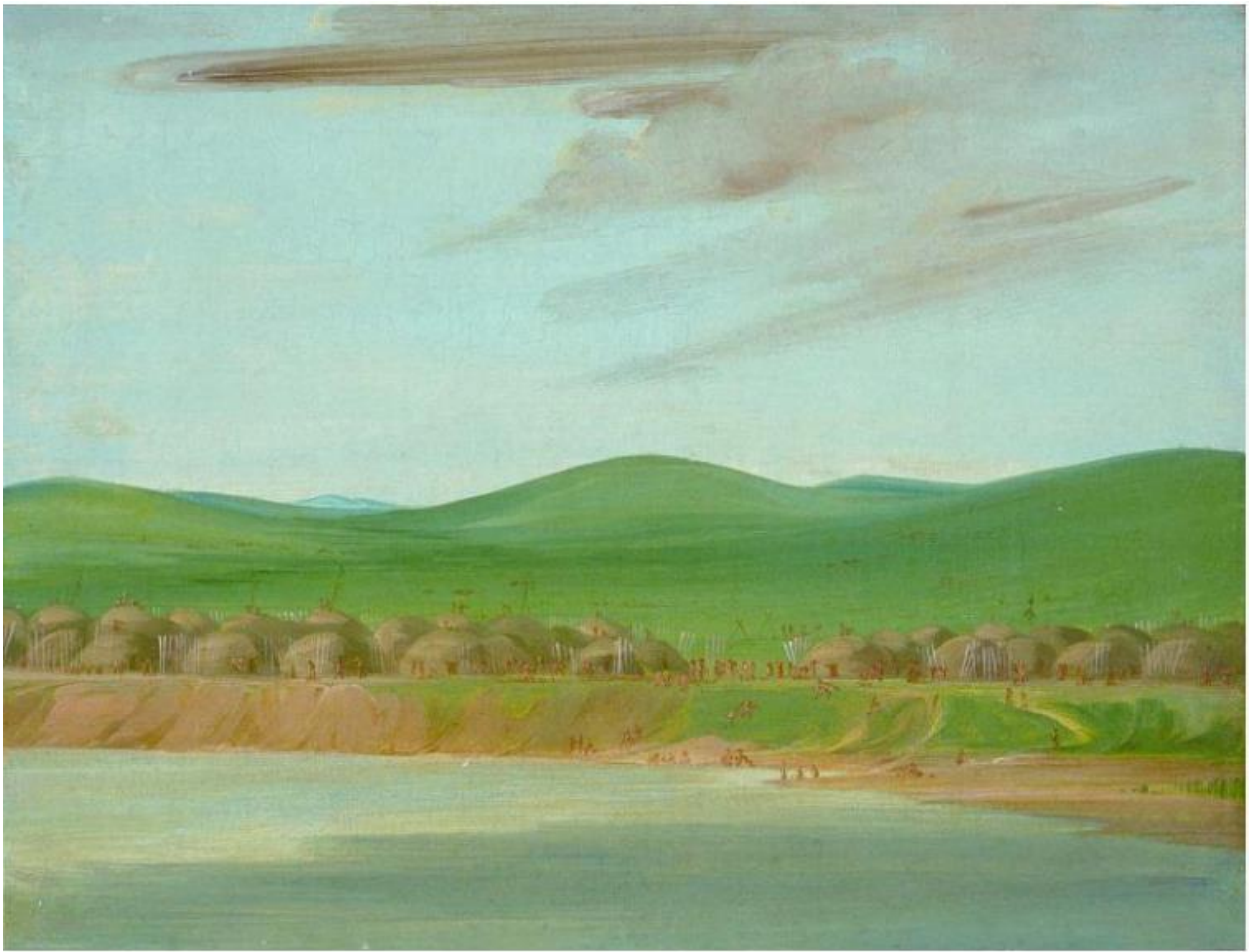


Image 1: This painting by George Catlin depicts the earthen lodges that typified Arikaran culture.

After the intense interactions with Americans, be they from privately owned fur companies or with the government, and the Sioux, the Arikara realized they needed to reassess

³⁹ Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 58.

their position along the Missouri River. In the 1830s, the tribe fractured into two groups, one migrating south to be closer to the Skidi Pawnee, a tribe that was closely related to the Arikara because they were originally members of a Pawnee band. The second group attempted to migrate north along the Platte River in the hopes of finding stable relations with indigenous communities near Fort Clark, such as the Mandan and Hidatsa. Then, in June 1835, the Arikara contacted Colonel Henry Dodge and his regiment of Dragoons. From this meeting, Dodge told Congress that the Arikara posed little threat to the area. Dodge claimed that the tribe had become nomadic. This observation was made primarily because their housing structures, once earthen lodges that were erected for permanent settlement, were now made from hide, making them easily transported. More than this, the tribe was surviving almost entirely on wild game and roots they harvested. The Arikara remained on the Platte River and migrated from there to the base of the mountains, posing little-to-no threat to the American presence in the area.⁴⁰

In 1836, William N. Fulkerson, the sub-agent for the Mandan tribe, collected census data and reported that this small group of Arikara had intermarried with the Mandan people. Fulkerson's data implied this particular band of Arikara had no intention of returning to their villages along the Missouri. There is no evidence to suggest that the Arikara ever returned to the Lewis and Clark-Leavenworth site. The attempts of this tribe to repair relations with the Mandan tribes through intermarriage were fruitful. While it was forced removal for the native people in a sense, their residing at Fort Clark amongst the Mandan allowed the tribe to retain their cultural autonomy, particularly because the Mandan and Arikara shared religious and cultural

⁴⁰ "Serial 289," 25th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 4, House Document No. 181, 14.

similarities, meaning that their way of life was not eradicated and they still functioned as the Arikara did along the Missouri River.⁴¹

The roving Arikara tribe, unknowing of the intermarriage of stationary Arikara with Mandan, sent a delegation from the Black Hills to Fort Clark in late-1836 to determine if the Arikara band would be welcomed at Fort Clark. After the warm reception, the delegation returned to the nomadic group, relaying that the tribe was invited to live within the confines of Fort Clark. After the winter of 1836 where this Arikara group wintered along the Turtle Mountain, they began the trek to the fort which was completed in April of 1837. The Arikara arrived with a group of 250 lodges, most of which were able to live amongst the Mandan, a remaining twenty lodges being moved to live among the Hidatsa due to lack of space.⁴² The reason the Mandan were willing to accept the Arikara so readily was due to the smallpox epidemic that decimated the village of Mitutanka in 1856. This outbreak left the village all but empty, meaning that there was space enough for a bulk of the lodges in the Arikara band.⁴³ Not only did this integration amongst the Mandan and Hidatsa ensure this band of Arikara's survival, but it also ensured the tribe would submit to American governance. The Arikara and Mandan remained in this village until the Yankton Sioux forced the tribes out in 1839 during a raid. While the tribes returned immediately and rebuilt the lodges and remained there until they were forced out by Sioux aggression again in 1861.⁴⁴ While merging with the Mandan allowed the Arikara to maintain their tribal sovereignty in terms of religion and economy, they had to adapt

⁴¹ Francois A. Chardon, Annie Heloise Able, ed., *Chardon's Journal of Fort Clark, 1834-1839* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 157-166.

⁴² Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 58-60.

⁴³ Clyde Dollar, "The High Plains Smallpox Epidemic of 1837-38," *Western Historical Quarterly* 8, No. 1 (1977): 17.

⁴⁴ Roy Willard Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 108.

and trade with nearby Americans on their terms, making trades a one-sided affair, more so than they were previously. It also ensured that the Arikara could not perform regular raids on American traders as the tribe was residing in close proximity with the Americans. While superficially this meant that the Arikara would live peacefully with whites in the immediate area, the other side to this affair meant that the Arikara could not retaliate against American aggression or lack of compensation in trade deals and treaties.

The intertribal warfare between the Plains Indians posed a problem for the weaker and smaller tribes and the United States government for maintaining outposts and villages in the Indian Territory. The need for political and social stability on the Great Plains led to the creation of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie. The document gathered the Cheyenne, Lakota Sioux, Arapaho, Crow, Assiniboine, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara nations in the hopes that providing each tribe with a land allotment would end the need for tribal warfare and would allow white settlers to migrate west peacefully.⁴⁵ In exchange for permanent lands, the native peoples were expected to allow settlers to travel peacefully along the Oregon Trail and stated that the tribes would get a \$50,000 annuity over fifty years. More than this, the tribes were expected to allow the American government to construct forts in their territories. While this treaty did grant the tribes lands along and around Horse Creek, the tribes that aided the United States in conflicts received more land. As a result, the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa received the second smallest land allotment, the smallest belonging to the Assiniboine. For helping Leavenworth in the First Plains Indian War, the Sioux were awarded the largest plot of land which included the lands that

⁴⁵ "Treaty of Fort Laramie," excerpted from: Stacey Bredhoff, *American Originals* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 56-57.

once belonged to the Arikara.⁴⁶ While these territories existed on paper, the tribes involved did not respect these boundaries and intertribal warfare amongst warring tribes continued.

By 1853, Lakota chief Running Antelope conducted a raid in the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa territory, killing four Arikara natives. After this act of war was committed, the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa tribes appealed to American officials to send aid in forcing back the aggressive Sioux. This request was ignored repeatedly.⁴⁷ While the tribes attempted to follow proper American channels in hopes of preserving their sovereignty against Siouan encroachment, the process was in vain and, as such, the tribes took matters into their own hands when dealing with the aggressive Lakota. In retaliation, the Arikara consistently stole horses from roving Siouan bands until at least 1858; horses, being one of the most valuable items to own on the Great Plains, was one of the most heinous thefts that could occur. These horse thefts occurred because the Arikara were unable to hunt for hides and, as such, were unable to trade with trappers and merchants for goods necessary for survival. This series of raids between the Arikara, Mandan, Hidatsa, and the Lakota eventually culminated in a war that forced the Arikara out of the land allotment granted to them in the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1851.⁴⁸ This warfare forced the Arikara tribe across the Missouri River by 1862 where they created a village next to the Mandan and Hidatsa settlement of Like-a-Fishhook Village. This fact was communicated to

⁴⁶ Ibid.; See also: Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Plains, 1738-1889* (Vancouver: Cordillera Press, 1990), 32.

⁴⁷ Garrick Mallery, *Picture-Writing of the American Indians, 10th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1888-89* (Washington, D.C., 1893), 572-573.; Ed. Eli R. Paul, *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2012), 125-130; Willard, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 121.

⁴⁸ Henry A. Boller, *Among the Indians: Four Years on the Upper Missouri, 1858-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 154.; McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses*, 102.

the United States government in 1864 when Arikara chief White Shield ventured to Washington, D.C. as a delegation.⁴⁹

After the Arikara were forced from their treaty lands to live amongst the Mandan and Hidatsa, the Sioux continued to attack the three tribes at Like-a-Fishhook Village. These assaults led to the tribes entreating the U.S. government for firearms to defend themselves. Congress complied and sent the tribes 300 guns to combat invading Sioux forces in 1869.⁵⁰ After acquiring these weapons, the Arikara sold part of their land gained during the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1870, the southern portion that was already taken from the tribe by the Lakota.⁵¹

While the Arikara sent a delegation to sign the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, the tribe was unwilling to relinquish their lands. This is, in part, due to the nature of tribal politics. The Arikara were a communal people and, usually, the entirety of the tribe had to agree for action to be taken or for laws to be created. The tribe as a whole did not agree to sign this document and, as such, warfare was permitted and, in some cases, encouraged. This made the treaty a formal document only to the American delegation present, the Arikara and various other tribes present not willing to accept the parameters established for peace. Intricacies of tribal politics aside, the United States government did not adequately lay out the land claims, often times placing warring tribes next to one another. The Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa claimed lands north of the Heart River while the Lakota Sioux maintained lands gained in 1823 along the Grand River as well as

⁴⁹ Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 108.; Serial 1220, 38th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 5, House Executive Document No. 1, 408-410.

⁵⁰ McGinnis, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 120-122.

⁵¹ American Memory, *Indian Land Cessions in the United States, 1784-1894*, Serial 4015, 56th Congress, 1st Session, 852-853.

the lands along the southern portion of the Heart River. Not only did this gain the tribes compensation from the Americans, the agreement allowed the tribes to retain Like-a-Fishhook Village, a necessary portion of the deal due to the fact that the village was technically outside of the area the tribes were allowed to reside. This deal in particular accentuates that the Arikara were not foolish nor ignorant in their dealings with the Americans. They understood that government officials were relatively unaware of which lands were still within the Arikara's sphere of influence. More than this, they understood that, legally, the land the Lakota annexed was legally still Arikaran territory. For this reason, they made a deal with the American people in which they lost nothing but gained new territory. While this deal spelled disaster for the Americans who attempted settlement of the area, the Arikara used their knowledge of American political systems to gain advantage in this situation.

The First Plains Indian War of 1823 forced the Arikara to reassess their geopolitical role on the Great Plains. After the conflict, the tribe adapted, creating lines of communication with the United States government in hopes that they could maintain what political power they retained after conflicts with the Sioux and Americans. This was done through various treaties, including the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851. This treaty allowed the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa to consolidate their power into the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold reservation. While superficially it appears that this decision forced assimilation and American oversight on the tribes, the decision allowed the Three Affiliated Tribes to protect themselves – in theory – not only with greater tribal numbers but also with American military might.

This mentality of using the systems provided by white encroachers to the tribe's advantage is not only political, but also socioeconomic as well as educational. As the next chapter will illuminate, the tribes used boarding schools in an attempt to further their social

position in the 1870s. Sending children to boarding schools not only provided families with more money to support themselves, but it also educated the native children in American social mores, allowing them to understand white culture and how to navigate in this new environment.

Chapter 2

The early 1870s brought a push to assimilate Native Americans, particularly Native children, through the development of off-reservation boarding schools. Sponsored by the federal government, these institutions aimed to separate children from tribal influences and teach them about American culture and the value of individualism. To fully remove children from Indian influences, off-reservation boarding schools set out to immerse children in American ways. With the support of largely white organizations such as the Indian Rights Association, Indian Citizenship Association, and the Indian Board of Cooperation, it was believed that Native children would leave the boarding schools as educated American citizens and convince their tribal relatives to embrace the civilized, western ways of white America.

The methods of these boarding schools were harsh and, for lack of a better term, immersive. This immersion was exemplified particularly through the education of—and forced use of—the English language.¹ For many Native children, use of indigenous language while attending an off-reservation boarding school was met with swift punishment, many children receiving corporeal punishment. Other educational institutions kept children of like tribes separate, understanding that tribes were of differing linguistic stocks. This reduced the opportunity Indian children had to interact with one another in their native tongues.² Those students who were unable to speak English in any capacity were reported and had extensive attention paid to them, ensuring they learned the English language on their path to being Americanized.

¹ Brenda L. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

² J. H. Meyers, “Development of Technical-Vocational Education at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,” M.A. Thesis: University of Florida, 1954.

One early off-reservation boarding school that served as a model for other Indian educational facilities was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. This institution was founded in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt. While this school held the same basic model as the Hampton Institute, the boarding school focused on in this study, it separated itself by becoming the “ultimate Americanizer.”³ More than this, Pratt believed in a military-style education, using corporal punishment on any child that exhibited traditional Native American behaviors, including speaking native languages. This was in line with his philosophy of “kill the Indian, save the man,” meaning that, in Pratt’s view, humanity and native culture were incompatible and traditionalist values needed to be excised. While the Hampton and Carlisle Institutes had the same overall assimilationist goal for native children, Pratt’s model focused on eradicating Native American values from children, stemming the flow of native culture at a young age; the methodological approach at Hampton on the other hand focused less on corporal punishment and instead allowed native students to develop at their own pace.

Hampton Institute fundamentally differed from the off-reservation boarding schools that began emerging in the late 1870s. First and foremost: Hampton was founded as an institution to educate freed black students, such as Booker T. Washington. In 1867, Samuel C. Armstrong founded the Hampton Institute normal school after receiving a commission from the Freedman’s Bureau.⁴ The school was incorporated under Virginia laws in 1870. Armstrong’s goal was to provide the African-American community access to higher education and upward socioeconomic

³ Mary Lou Hutgren, *To Lead and to Serve: American Indian Education at Hampton Institute, 1878-1923* (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy in cooperation with Hampton University, 1989), 13.

⁴ Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1877-1911* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 3-7.; E.A. Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1904), 13.

mobility.⁵ While the initial purpose of the normal school was the education of black freedmen, Armstrong sought to take advantage of the government funding to provide instruction for Native American. This provided a unique environment for Native students at Hampton because unlike other off-reservation schools, they interacted regularly with African-American students.

It is important to note that, compared to other tribes, the Arikara sent relatively few students to attend off-reservation boarding schools. In 1878, the inaugural year for natives going to the Hampton Institute, four Arikara found their way to the boarding school's doors. Of the four, George Ahuka, Laughing Face, and Mary Dawson were adults who spent anywhere from one to three years at the school. One of the students, however, was Anna Dawson. She spent a bulk of her adolescence at the school and even returned after graduation to teach at the institution. It is for this reason that she is a good example of long-term education and involvement in boarding schools and how those experiences impacted native youth.

The demography at Hampton Institute allowed for the education of two “uncivilized” peoples simultaneously. It was the belief of those heading Hampton that the use of African Americans to educate the Native students would not only benefit the black pupils but allow them to experience education in the English language. Such an education might also show the benefits of an American education to those Native students sent to the school. White Americans in the late-1800s generally believed that African Americans possessed animalistic qualities akin to those held by Indians. Whites also saw Native people as having more respect for the black community, as was exemplified through the use of terms such as “buffalo soldier.”⁶ These

⁵ Samuel C. Armstrong to Whittlesey, 15 March 1888, Box on Childs Report, Hampton University Archives.

⁶ Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, *The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and its work for Negro and Indian youth* (Hampton: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Press, 1896), 4.; Barbara S. Tracy, “Transcultural Transformation: African American and Native American Relations,” PhD Dissertation, (University of Nebraska, 2009). While the origin of the term “buffalo soldier” is

factors, coupled with existing education levels among African Americans at Hampton highlighted the benefit that the institution might also have among Native Americans. Not only was their English instruction fundamentally different from other boarding schools, as other schools did not have black instructors, but the rules for speaking indigenous languages differed at Hampton.

At other boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School, Native American children were not permitted to speak their Native language in any capacity. At Hampton, Indian students could speak indigenous languages with the stipulation that they had to speak English before breakfast and after supper. Armstrong also implored the students to pray in English.⁷ Armstrong believed that by allowing Indian students to use and retain their original language, they could eventually return to their tribes and communicate what was learned. It was Hampton Institute's goal to use the educated Indians to spread the education, effectively assimilating older Native people on the reservations. This would serve to assimilate individual tribal members and hasten the break-up of indigenous communities.

To adequately teach English in a multiracial classroom, officials at Hampton Institute had to devise methods to ensure the most optimal educational strategies. For instance, older Native children who understood and fluently spoke indigenous languages were segregated from other students, particularly Indian youth who did not know an indigenous language.⁸ These older

unclear, some historians posit that it was given as a term of respect for the fighting capability of African American soldiers during the Civil War. Other legends still claim that the name came about from the hair of black soldiers, while another claims that natives began using the term because of the buffalo skin coats the soldiers wore. This thesis operates under the assumption that it was adopted as a term of respect for the African American soldiers.

⁷ Minutes of the Indian Teacher Faculty, Indian Collection, Hampton University Archives, 1882.; Margaret Rostein Muir, "Indian Education at Hampton Institute and Federal Indian Policy: Solutions to the Indian Problem," Master's Thesis, (Brown University, 1970).

⁸ H. W. Ludlow, "The Evolution of the Whittier School," *Southern Workman* (1906): 340.

students were put in special classes and taught as though they were deaf.⁹ They were unable to continue regular lessons at Hampton until they proved their mastery of the English language. The pedagogy behind this method of instruction emphasized that Native children who spoke an indigenous language would require special attention and might pose an obstacle to other Native children's learning, but to the learning of African-American students at Hampton.¹⁰ This problem only addressed students unwilling to speak English during their time at the boarding school, however. Many Native children possessed a grasp of the English language, so when some chose not to speak it, they effectively engaged in a form of passive resistance. Still, this educational format emphasized the assimilation process, as boarding schools attempted to eradicate all forms of Native tradition from the memories of students.

Hampton Institute mirrored other boarding schools regarding grooming standards and uniforms for Native students. At Hampton, Native Americans were required to cut their hair and wear clothing that was not only Western in appearance but appeared military in style. The purpose of these grooming and dress standards was to further separate the students from the traditional tribal values and customs. By not allowing males to have long hair and forcing children to wear Americanized clothing, educators believed that children would lose all connection to their former culture, effectively becoming assimilated over time.¹¹ Another interesting facet for those Native students enrolled at Hampton was that they could keep their indigenous names if they chose to do so. While it was not required, Native pupils at Hampton chose to change their names for convenience. Spahana Nadaka, for example, became Anna

⁹ Hollis Burke Frissell, "Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Principal," *Southern Workman* 27 (1898): 88.

¹⁰ Samuel C. Armstrong, *The work for two races at Hampton, VA: Meeting on behalf of Negro and Indian education* (Hampton: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Press, 1892), 7.

¹¹ Witmer, *The Indian Industrial School: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1879-1918* (1993).

Dawson. This decision was made for convenience of communication between her educators and herself. More than the communication barrier, it was understood that some educators at boarding schools intentionally pronounced Native names incorrectly which served not only as an assertion of colonial power and dominance, but also served to embarrass Native students.¹² These methods were used to undermine the students' autonomy as well as the traditional values of Amerindian culture.

Another important facet of boarding school education at Hampton was a focus on developing farm skills. These gender-specific skills were honed either through an industrial education, with some students focusing on the maintenance of farm machinery, or through vocational aspects of agriculture in which students worked in the private fields of the institutions. Other schools, particularly Carlisle and Haskell Indian School in Kansas, used this labor to offset operation costs and allow the school to continue to operate without the free labor native children provided. This vocational training emphasized the general aim of these boarding schools to educate the Native youth in “the hand, the head and the heart... to be examples to and teachers of their people.”¹³

Gender-specific agriculture courses served a dual purpose: not only did they provide the schools free labor, they also taught Indian student Western farming practices that they would, in turn, bequeath unto their tribes. Native farming practices vastly differed from Euro-American practices. Typically, tribespeople would grow their crops in a mound, the various vegetables and

¹² *Sixty-First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892).

¹³ Helen W. Ludlow, *Ten Years' Work for the Indians at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute at Hampton, Virginia* (Hampton: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Press, 1888).; Paulette Fairbanks Molin, “Training the Hand, the Head, and the Heart: Indian Education at Hampton Institute,” *Minnesota History* 51 (1988): 82.; Hoda M. Zaki, *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute: The Legacy of Alonzo G. Moron* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 14.

legumes nitrating the soil, allowing the ground to remain fertile.¹⁴ Americans farmed in rows and annually rotated crops, a process which drained the soil of nitrates and other essential nutrients for the soil to retain fecundity. Americans, however, viewed their farming practices as a hallmark of a civilized society.¹⁵ This belief stemmed, in part, from the demarcation of private land boundaries through the use of land plats and fences. This practices reinforced Euro-American farming practices as a factor of private land holdings.

Boarding schools emphasized the importance of Western-style agriculture to reinforce their assimilationists curriculums. That said, boarding schools could provide an economic safety-net for economically struggling Native families. As many Native families did not make enough household income to support the entirety of their family, boarding schools like the Carlisle Institution offered some families a temporary form of financial relief.

As I alluded to above, in 1878, many Native people from the Fort Berthold area of the Northern Plains went to the Hampton Institute, a historically African American college in Virginia. At Hampton they received a westernized education in the hopes of furthering their position either in reservation living or in American towns. Three of these students were from the Arikara tribe. George Ahuka, a twenty-one-year-old son of Son of the Star, a prominent Arikara chief, attended the institution until 1881.¹⁶ He returned to Fort Berthold to be among his people as a carpenter. Ahuka's attendance at the Hampton Institute was believed to encourage other members of the

¹⁴ Gary Paul Nabhan, *Enduring Seeds: Native American Agriculture and Wild Plant Conservation* (Phoenix: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 24.

¹⁵ Adam Dean Wesley, *An Agrarian Republic: Farming, Antislavery Politics, and Nature Parks in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), xviii, 3-8.

¹⁶ Hampton Institute Archives, George Ahuka file.

Arikara tribe to become more fully westernized and to assimilate into American culture. This plan, according to educators, was believed to have a greater impact as Ahuka was the son of a prominent chief and as such the other Arikara peoples would follow his example. While this was a common educational theory among American educators, the impact of this strategy was lessened because members of the Mandan and Hidatsa also attended the institute, one of whom died during his education and was buried in the school's graveyard.¹⁷ More than this unfortunate death, each of the men that attended the institution from the Fort Berthold area died within four to eight years of being educated at the college. Due to the limited exposure these individuals had to western education and their lifespan, it is not believed they could advocate for the American education provided at such a school. While this is not known for a fact, it may have been an actuality.

The other two Arikara sent to Hampton Institute in 1878 were Mary and Anna Dawson. Mary Dawson attended Hampton Institute until her graduation in 1879. While at the school, Mary acted as the interpreter for other Native children attending the school. Mary died in 1880, a year after leaving the institution.¹⁸ Before graduating, Mary left her daughter, Anna Dawson, in the care of Hampton Institute. Anna was educated at Hampton Institute from the time she was eight years of age. After her graduation in 1887, Anna remained at the school to teach post-graduate studies until sometime in the 1890s. After her employment at the Hampton Institute, Anna left for Farmingham, Massachusetts. There she taught at a normal school in the area. After this venture, Anna decided to return to Fort Berthold, a home she had not seen since she was

¹⁷ Hampton Institute Archives, Ecorruptaha file.

¹⁸ Hampton Institute Archives, Mary Dawson file.

eight years of age. She became a field matron, a position she held until her death on June 6, 1968.¹⁹

While Mary Dawson's experience may not have convinced the Arikara people of the worth of a formal American education, Anna Dawson's experience was used to convince various Native people to attend Western institutions. She had led a prosperous life under the tutelage of the white education system and even returned to her tribe after an extended period of time to aid them in farming and maintaining their land. Anna Dawson was young when she was admitted to the school, meaning she did not know much, if anything, about the Arikara culture. While her story lacks the agency of the tribal identity, her mother attempted to increase the tribe's position with the American people by gaining a formal education and sought to use it to secure the sovereignty of the tribes within the Fort Berthold reservation.

During her enrollment at Hampton, Anna Dawson displayed aptitudes that, according to institutional records, other Native students did not. Instead of being assigned traditional grades, Native students were proposed for advancement based on their standings of poor, fair, good, or excellent.²⁰ Of the students from Fort Berthold, Anna Dawson was the only one to receive an excellent rating in 1878.²¹ What makes this particularly interesting is Dawson's age in relation to her contemporaries. She was the only adolescent from Fort Berthold permitted to go to the institution with her mother, Mary Dawson. The other students were in their early-twenties. The age differentiation emphasized that younger Natives were able to retain the information needed to become civilized much easier than those students who understood their traditional tribal

¹⁹ Hampton Institute Archives, Anna Dawson file.

²⁰ *Sixty-First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892).; This grading system is also reflected in the various student files of the Hampton Institute. Most Native student records report them in the "bad" to "fair" range with few getting "good" or "excellent" grade reports.

²¹ Hampton Institute Archives, Anna Dawson file.

culture.²² Since it has been established that Hampton was fundamentally an experiment for the effectiveness of native boarding schools, it is argued that Anna Dawson's progress during her time at the school was used to justify the education of younger children at future boarding schools.

Anna Dawson remained an important factor at Hampton Institute well into 1889 when African American and Indian students began to contest the segregation of dining facilities on the campus. While Armstrong and other officials at the institute framed the separation as being between teachers and students, graduate students felt as though they were segregated based on race, given that a majority of the teachers were white.²³ The students' claims of it being a racial issue were supported through the assertions of certain teachers who made claims such as the employment of African American employees would degrade the quality of education received at Hampton because the black educators would feel overwhelmed by largeness of Hampton. Moreover, many faculty members felt that educating these "uncivilized" peoples was the job of white individuals, making African-Americans inadequate proxies for white teachers to educate Native children.²⁴ This led to a clear hierarchy of races at Hampton. Natives who left Hampton to

²² It is important to note that this might also hint at the importance of family bonds at educational institutions. As such, the success of this student might provide an example of how the isolation from family was not conducive to academic success.

²³ Mary F. Mackie to Samuel C. Armstrong, 3 May 1889.; Helen W. Ludlow to Samuel C. Armstrong, 29 May 1889.; Elizabeth Hyde to Samuel C. Armstrong, 2 May 1889.; These letters focus on the dining room controversy at Hampton Institute from the educators' perspective. Elaine Goodale Eastman, *Pratt, the red man's Moses* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), 34-39.; Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute*, 74-79.

²⁴ Bobbie Whitehead, "Education at Hampton Institute: An experiment in race relations an assimilation," *Indian Country Today* 23, No. 10 (2016): 3.

attend white institutions had opportunity to eat with the white educators. Black educators were not afforded the same opportunity.²⁵

It was in this social climate that Anna Dawson was invited back to Hampton as a post-graduate teacher. Dawson completed additional education outside of the institution and she was sought-out to become an educator as a result. Initially, Dawson refused this offer because of the volatile social climate at Hampton in 1889.²⁶ This tension was addressed by officials of Hampton in a bid to assuage Dawson's fears. Cora Folsom, an educator at Hampton, claimed that the faculty were harmed by the accusations of the students. Folsom claimed that the students at the institute were treated the same as they would at another school.²⁷ Folsom's testimony influenced Dawson to return to Hampton as an educator. In this circumstance, Dawson learned from her schooling that negotiation and vocalization of concerns was the only potential way to create proactive change at academic institutions. For this reason, she used her potential employment as to help desegregate the lunch rooms at Hampton. While she was unsuccessful, her legacy and the legacy of the students involved in desegregation efforts persisted until the 20th century when the facilities at Hampton were finally integrated.

Anna Dawson's experiences provides a particularly revealing case study. Of the thirteen individuals from the Three Affiliated Tribes who attended Hampton Institute in 1878, she was the only one to graduate. Dawson was also the only individual from Fort Berthold to pursue

²⁵ Samuel C. Armstrong, "The work for two races at Hampton, VA: Meeting on behalf of Negro and Indian education," *Hampton Institute* (Hampton: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Press, 1892).

²⁶ Cora M. Folsom, "The careers of three Indian women," *The Congregationalist and the Christian World* (1904): 374.

²⁷ Cora M. Folsom, "Indian Work at Hampton," *Hampton Institute*, unpub., n.d.

higher education.²⁸ Her focus was in teaching, a skill that she brought back to the reservation in the early-1900s. While she acted as a field matron at Fort Berthold, her return and expertise in Americanized educational systems could have been used to the tribes' advantage. With a qualified educator on the reservation, demands to send Native children to off-reservation boarding schools had the potential to decline. However, upon her return to Fort Berthold, Anna Dawson acted as a recruiter advocating for children to attend Hampton Institute as a way to better themselves.²⁹ Her avid support for the Hampton Institute and American education for native children means that she fundamentally believed the assimilationist argument; Dawson believed that the best course of action for her tribe was to integrate into American culture fully.

Anna Dawson was one of two field matrons, a position used to educate the women from the Three Affiliated Tribes in the "ways of white women."³⁰ She was chosen for this role because of her previous education at Hampton as well as various normal schools in Massachusetts, all of which meant that Dawson was well-educated and all but assimilated into Western culture by the time of her return to Fort Berthold. To further cement the position, Dawson married Bryon Wilde in 1902. Wilde was an Arikara man educated in American systems much like Dawson. He was also a clerk for the local Indian agency, giving him a prominent position. American officials believed that the field matron position would influence other native women to seek an Americanized education, conveying the obvious benefits of

²⁸ Hampton Institute Archives, Anna Dawson file. Other student records, including Mary Dawson's, state that they immediately returned to the Fort Berthold reservation after their schooling at the Hampton Institute.

²⁹ Folsom, "The careers of three Indian women," 374.

³⁰ United States, "Wilde Dawson and Beauchamp Field Matron Reports," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1900-1905): 269-273.; Jane E. Simonsen, "'Object Lessons': Domesticity and Display in Native American Assimilation," *American Studies* 43, No. 1 (2002): 91-96.; Lisa E. Emmerich, "'Right in the Midst of My Own People': Native American Women and the Field Matron Program," *American Indian Quarterly* 15, No. 2 (1991): 212-213.

assimilating into American culture. The field matron position proved more of a hinderance to the progression of this assimilation agenda, however.

By the year 1905, Anna Dawson Wilde had been in the field matron position for five years. During the same year, however, it became apparent that the field matrons were more contentious figures than had been initially anticipated. The complaint began from Ella Ripley, a woman on the reservation who worked under both Wilde and Adeline Beauchamp, the other field matron. Ripley asserted that the deaths of two women, Mamie Elder and Esther Crows Ghost, were the direct result of the inaction of the two field matrons in question. Both women had contracted tuberculosis and Ripley's account claimed that neither Wilde nor Beauchamp visited or attempted to care for them, effectively neglecting their duties.³¹ This negligence led to Ripley drafting a petition to get the two women removed and have the office of field matron disbanded all together. Ripley's efforts gleaned 150 signatures. While it was obvious that the natives of Fort Berthold had no love for this position and it was not an effective method, Wilde was allowed to retain her position until 1910 when the post was downsized.³²

Boarding schools put natives in a unique position when it comes to tribal autonomy and agency. While many Indians did not agree with the concept of off-reservation boarding schools, believing it would wipe out traditionalist values, many others believed that being educated in American systems and culture could be beneficial to the wellbeing of not only the child, but the family. Other families still used boarding schools during times of economic downturn as a way to supplement a household's income.

³¹ Ella Ripley to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 26 October 1905.; Simonsen, "'Object Lessons,'" 96.

³² Ella Ripley to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 26 October 1905.

While boarding schools were fundamentally a tool of assimilation, Native Americans used the system to improve tribal positions and as a means of individual advancement and survival.

This chapter emphasizes that the story of off-reservation boarding schools is more complex than simply being an assimilationist tool. While U.S. officials sought to “civilize” these children to eradicate tribal identity, natives used these institutions to their advantage. It also shows that natives were not wholly against the use of these schools and, while some saw the educational facilities as a way to destroy tribal identity, others saw the schools as a new future for the survival.

The story of Anna Dawson Wilde also emphasizes the notions of tribal agency in terms of combatting American efforts of assimilation. While Wilde herself was effectively assimilated, she returned to the Three Affiliated Tribes at Fort Berthold and described the benefits of receiving an Americanized education. While initially these assimilation efforts can be seen as removing agency from natives, the fact that Indians who attended these schools advocated for their importance emphasizes that specific individuals saw the merit and import of these educational pursuits. While Wilde herself used her own agency to, in her eyes, better her tribe, the women worked under her used their own agency to not only stave off the assimilation Wilde represented, but also dismantle the title she was given. In her position as field matron, Wilde was fundamentally negligent in aiding those under her care. Her inaction led to the deaths of two women, something that showed the native women that Wilde did not have tribal interests at heart. As a result, women such as Ella Ripley began a campaign to have the position of field matron, a position established to give women on the Fort Berthold reservation a standard to aspire to. Due to Wilde’s education and background, that standard was typified by white

American mores. While the story of Wilde is one of personal advancement, her position within the Three Affiliated Tribes is complex. While she convinced various natives to have their children educated by Western standards, others resisted her because of her position. Her story shows that agency does not have to take the form of resistance.

Chapter 3

Understanding the educational decisions that some Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara families made makes more sense when seen in the broader context of late nineteenth-century Indian policy. In particular, the overwhelming push from federal officials for Native people to assimilate into white society helps us see why Arikara people like Anne Dawson made some of the decisions they made about education and career choices. With the land-base of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara communities under assault, making the most of an education policy that emphasized assimilation may have seemed a calculation that indigenous women in Dawson's position were willing to consider if it meant the possibility of greater social and economic security in the future.

While the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara were consolidated into the Fort Berthold with the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851, Congress did not recognize the treaty. As a result, the President passed an executive order on April 12, 1870 officially establishing the Fort Berthold Reservation "according to [the boundaries set by] the Treaty of Fort Laramie, with the addition of a strip of land east of the Mississippi River."¹ The federal government's assertion about land boundaries was technically true, the territory itself was not being used as it once had due to tribal decline due to disease and because of the drastic decrease in the buffalo herd in the region.

Although the *Congressional Record* states that this reservation was within the parameters established by the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, the Arikara's selling of Like-A-Fishhook Village in 1870 due to Lakota encroachment significantly reduced the Three Affiliated Tribes'

¹ United States, "Message from the President of the United States, transmitting a communication from the Secretary of the Interior of 19th instant, submitting draft of bill providing for the allotment of lands in severalty to the Arickaree, Gros Ventre, and Mandan Indians on the Fort Berthold Reservation, Dakota," S. Exec. Doc. No. 36, 48th Congress, 1st Session (1884), 2.

landholdings that same year. This loss of land continued with the expansion of the railroads across the West. The Northern Pacific Railroad, for example, received land grants to lay track through Indian Territory in the 1870s. A portion of that land went through the center of the Fort Berthold Reservation.²

An executive order on July 13, 1880, further reduced the landholdings of the Three Affiliated Tribes to a mere ten percent of the twelve-million-acre land allowance outlined in the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1851.³ The executive order ensured that the lands west and south of the Mississippi River around the Fort Berthold Reservation were designated unceded lands and re-allotted. Many of the lands recognized as belonging to the three tribes became public domain by the aforementioned executive order. After this drastic loss of land, the Fort Berthold Reservation contained only 2,912,000 acres of its previous 12,000,000. Reports from Jacob Kauffman, the agent assigned to Fort Berthold in 1880, claimed that the tribespeople desired privately owned land allotments. Kauffman pleaded with Congress to allow the tribes severalty in this regard because it would destroy the need for typical tribal communalism and act as a springboard for fundamentally deconstructing tribal identity in the hopes of civilizing the Arikara and their allies.⁴ This alleged want for private land ownings was used to justify taking more land from the reservation, the government feeling that the 1,352 Native Americans within Fort Berthold would misuse larger land allotments. These arguments were used to justify the forced assimilation of the Arikara and other tribes in the hopes of fundamentally deconstructing native communal identity and Americanizing the peoples. This need on the part of the American

² Roy Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977) 113-114.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1883, 33.

³ Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 1:883.

⁴ Charles Dudley Warner, *Studies in the South and West with Comments on Canada* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 88-90.

government to “civilize” is fundamentally what led to the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa to be included in the Dawes Severalty Act.

This chapter argues that, while the tribes were subjected to the auspices of the American government on the Fort Berthold reservation, they exerted their own tribal and cultural sovereignty in their dealings with the federal government. Not only did the Three Affiliated tribes assert their right as a sovereign people, the events surrounding the Garrison Dam brought intense internal debate among tribal factions, showing that the tribes controlled their own local government in a powerful way. The tribes understood the limitations of American law and what their previous treaties with the American government allowed them to combat. While the Army Corps of Engineers ultimately succeeded in ceding reservation lands to build the Garrison Dam, the Three Affiliated Tribes did everything in their power to garner a favorable deal for their people. More than this, the construction of the Garrison Dam highlights old tribal divisions that show that American and intertribal politics were no longer two distinct entities, but were intertwined in such a way that one drastically impacted the other.

Congress passed the Dawes Act into law in 1887. It aimed to grant severalty to Native people living on reservations created by the United States in the hopes that they would adopt American values and become assimilated into white culture. The Dawes Act stipulated that each head of household would receive a plot of 160 acres of land, orphans over the age of 18 would receive 80 acres, and each person under the age of 18 would receive 40 acres.⁵ Only Indians registered as living on reservation lands and land used for farming by individual families were eligible for

⁵ U.S. Government, “Transcript of the Dawes Act,” *Forty-Ninth Congress of the United States of America*, 2nd Session, 1887.

allotments. This policy effectively dismantled communal land ownership practices, one of the cornerstones of traditional tribal nations.⁶

While the Dawes Act theoretically allowed for the private ownership of reservation lands, Section 5 of the act stated that the United States government and the Secretary of the Interior held claim to the land for a period of twenty-five years. The Secretary of the Interior was also allowed bargaining power to negotiate with native people and could purchase allotted lands so long as both parties agreed to the transaction. In reality, this power effectively made it possible for the federal government to claim more lands for the American people.⁷ More than determining what land was allotted and how much land each tribesperson received, the Dawes Act also made the indigenous people subject to the laws of whatever state their reservation existed in.⁸ This further deconstructed tribal sovereignty and were forced to obey American law. Therefore, tribal legal systems were also deconstructed. The only tribes exempt from this act were the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Osage, Miami, Peoria, Sac, and Fox tribes.

The Arikara's compliance with the Dawes Severalty Act led to the Fort Berthold tribe selling two-thirds of their remaining tribal land by 1892. The remaining land that the tribe did control was offered up as allotted plots following government surveys on the condition that funding was provided for an Americanized education as well as for housing for tribal members.⁹

⁶ John M. Copper, "Indian Land Tenure Systems," *Indians of the United States*, 1949.; Jessica A. Shoemaker, "No Sticks in My Bundle: Rethinking the Indian Land Tenure Problem," *Kansas Law Review* 63 (2014): 400-402.; Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 13-14.; Julian H. Steward, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002), 253.

⁷ U.S. Government, "Transcript of the Dawes Act."

⁸ Leonard Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1981), 17-19. Elmer Rusco, *A Fateful Time: the Background and Legislative History of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

⁹ Roy Willard Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arrikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 156-158.

After the surveys, tribespeople were allowed to select which land they wished to live on, many Arikara and Mandan selected land clustered around the Missouri River watershed because it was seen as productive land.¹⁰ While the lands were meant for those indigenous people residing within Fort Berthold, many reservation lands were leased to white ranchers for the purpose of raising cattle. This leasing emphasized the American's lack of respect for the territorial boundaries outlined within various agreements, as well as the Bureau of Indian Affairs' unwillingness to intervene in the activities of white Americans in Indian Territory. While actions of particular ranchers, combined with the inaction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' served as examples of Euro-Americans exploiting Fort Berthold tribal members, the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa tended to view the Dawes Act as generally beneficial to their survival and tribal identities.

The Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold agreed to the General Allotment Act for the simple reason that tribal officials felt that Congress did not take the tribes seriously due to their lack of power and numbers.¹¹ The tribes claimed that the United States government took actions unfavorable to the tribe because they knew the tribes could not openly retaliate. One such example was the reallocation of lands in southern Fort Berthold to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company in 1880 to "fulfill the grant made by Congress." This was done without the consent of the Three Tribes who demanded recompense, for which they received less than half of the acres lost to the reservation in the exchange.¹² The Arikara and other tribes of Fort Berthold believed that, if they had been Siouan peoples, these actions would not have come to pass. The Three

¹⁰ Michael L. Lawson, *Dammed Indians Revisited: The Continuing History of the Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux* (South Dakota State Historical Society, 2009), 212.

¹¹ Christian W. McMillen, *Making Indian Law: The Hualapai Land Case and the Birth of Ethnohistory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 173.

¹² The land received was infertile and not suitable for farming or inhabitation. This was seen as a slight against the people of Fort Berthold.

Tribes made this assertion due to the fact that, even as a consolidated power, the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa lacked the political influence that the Siouan nations wielded. The tribes thus believed that the government was taking advantage of their weakened state and did not feel inclined to deal with the tribespeople of Fort Berthold as a sovereign nation. For this reason, the Three Tribes felt the need to accept the stipulations outlined by the Dawes Act. While superficially the Three Tribes forfeited their tribal sovereignty, the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa understood that they were not seen as an independent nation in the eyes of the American government any longer. The Dawes Act therefore prompted the Three Tribes to acquiesce to the assimilationist policies of the Federal government with the Arikara selecting land allotments that most benefitted the position of individual members of the Three Affiliated Tribes. Moreover, the shift from communal landholdings to private land ownership led to the Fort Berthold people viewing their land differently than traditional values demanded.

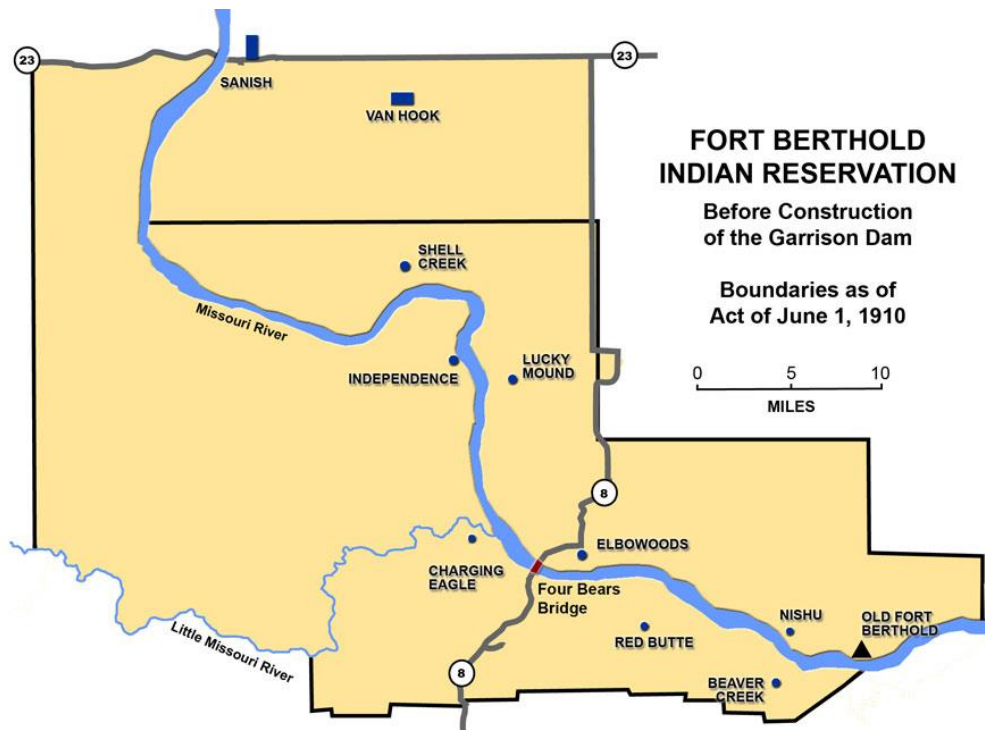


Image 2: This map details the land contained within the Fort Berthold Reservation before the flooding caused by the Garrison Dam.

While the overall goal of the United States government was to assimilate and “civilize” the Native Americans, their efforts to control what land Indians led the tribes at Fort Berthold to an appreciation of the intrinsic value land had in Euro-American culture. The Dawes Act allowed the Native Americans to hold private land, a fundamentally different concept from their understanding of communal land ownership. By assigning the reservation particular monetary values, Native people began to understand that land had intrinsic value for white Americans. This realization presented an opportunity. Arikara Chief Sitting Bear declared that “Away back in the olden times we did not know how to make treaties with the Government, but now we know the value of our land.”¹³

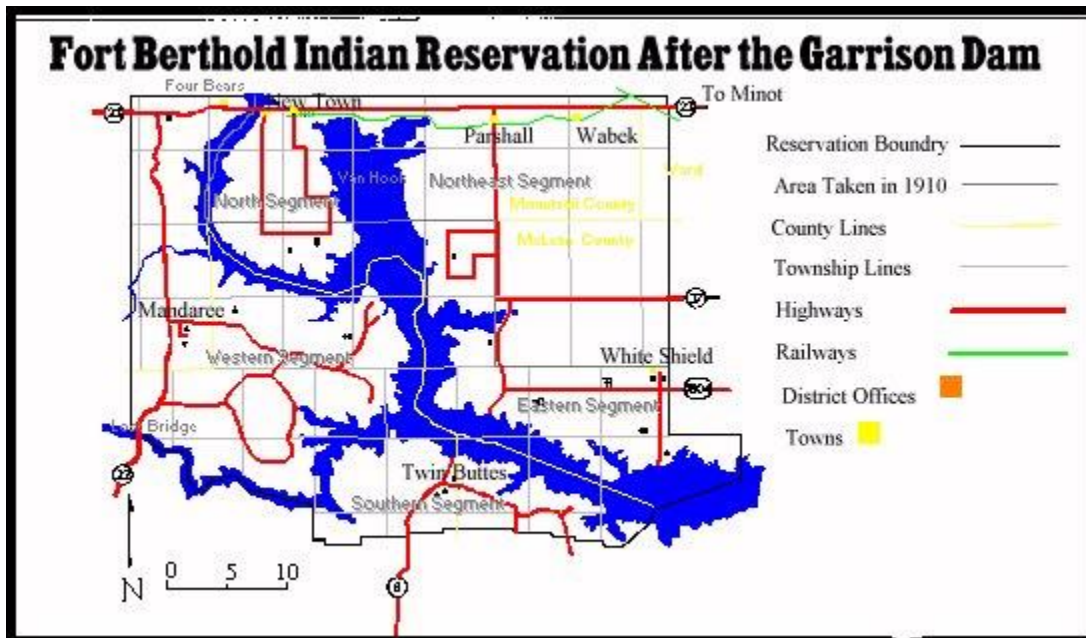


Image 3: This map details the land held by the Three Affiliated Tribes after the construction of the Garrison Dam in 1953.

¹³ Bernard Bryan Smith, *The heart of the new Kansas: A pamphlet historical and descriptive of southwestern Kansas* (s.n., 1960), 2.

These types of statements reveal that the Arikara understood that if nothing else, they could use land as a tool to bargain with the government to improve the social and economic position of Arikara people. While the Dawes Act and the involvement of the American government brought fundamental change to reservation life and Native culture, those Native Americans in Fort Berthold sought to improve their position with the American government by using treaty processes and the Dawes Act against white America. This revealed a shift in focus among the Three Affiliated Tribes, their enemy shifting from the Lakota and other Siouan bands throughout the Great Plains to the American government who promised to protect Arikaran land interests from Lakota encroachment.

Not only was the Fort Berthold Reservation reduced by approximately ninety percent as a result of the Dawes Act in 1910 the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa lost further landholdings after a government survey changed the boundaries of their territory. In 1886, a survey was taken of the Fort Berthold region which stated that the landholdings of the Three Tribes measured 55 by 45 miles. The federal government promised that these lands would belong to the tribes and could not be taken by the United States government. In a survey conducted in 1910, however, American officials claimed that the territory of the Three Tribes was 44 ½ by 34 ½ miles, further reducing the reservation size. Each of the tribal leaders questioned the integrity of the surveyors and argued that their work was a ploy to force them into a position of dependency on the American government.¹⁴ Although they were given allotments, tribal leaders such as Good Bear began to question if the land truly belonged to the native peoples. Tribal leaders questioned how

¹⁴ Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 155-161.

long it would take before the tribes were forced to sell off more land.¹⁵ The first question was answered while Native people held possessory rights to the land, the government retained all official land titles. The tribes were told the only way that the land would remain in tribal possession was in the form of tribal members to “individually receive patents in fee [simple] for it.”¹⁶ While this may superficially appear that the Arikara and other tribes were giving into American dominance, there is no evidence to suggest that the tribes simply accepted this as fact. Native people chose the most fertile farmlands and chose to question the authority of the federal government in the hopes of gaining answers about how they could retain their land ownership rights. Specifically, tribal members attempted to use the allotment process to retain land holdings.

While this loss of land was a substantial blow to the sovereignty of the Three Affiliated Tribes, they used the lands they did retain to move out from under federal governmental control. In the 1910s, a bulk of the lands allotted on the Fort Berthold reservation were leased out to private ranchers so the tribes could accrue adequate funds. Indian ranchers provided substantial funds for the collective tribes.¹⁷ These sources of income, coupled with the tradition of substance farming, allowed the tribes to remain somewhat autonomous. For example, the Indian agent posted at the reservation declared in 1920 that he did not need to provide rations to the peoples for five years. This implies that the natives took care of themselves and did not wish to rely on

¹⁵ Fort Berthold Bulletin, January 1942, 018 Fort Berthold Service Bulletin, 1938-1942, Decimal Correspondence 009-021, Fort Berthold Agency, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG75, NARA. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri*, 164.

¹⁶ Robert Merrill, “Fort Berthold Relocation Problems (Preliminary Draft),” Manuscript 4805, University of Chicago, Fort Berthold Project Records, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, 1951, 50.

¹⁷ Meyer, 134-140. Wolf Chief to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 6 Jan 1900, NARA, RG75, Letters Received.

the United States government for aid.¹⁸ This picture contrasted with reservations like the Fort Belknap reservation in Montana. While Fort Belknap rented out the local coal mine to white companies, they were unable to fully provide for themselves and required governmental assistance to survive. The economic position of the Fort Belknap reservation was more common than that of the Fort Berthold reservation.¹⁹ Many tribes required governmental aid well into the 1960s and were still subjected to the will of federal agents and agencies. The Three Tribes took proactive steps to ensure that the federal government had little say in the activities that occurred on their reservation.

By the 1930s, the Great Plains were hit with a severe drought that negatively impacted farming communities across North Dakota. Beginning in the 1920s, North Dakota experienced a drought every third year, meaning that crops had difficulty growing and cattle lost grazing land. More than this, taxes on farmland and real estate more than doubled in the area during the early 1920s. This factor was further compounded when the price of farmland dropped from \$41 per acre in 1922 to about \$13 per acre in 1940.²⁰ There was also an overabundance of farmers on the Great Plains due to factors such as the Homestead Act making land readily available. This led to crop prices plummeting and farmers making significantly less than they had in the late-1800s. While all of these factors led to economic decline across North Dakota and the Great Plains, the Dust Bowl, which began in 1930, impacted the Great Plains further by making farming for monetary

¹⁸ Donald L. Parman, "The Indian and the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Pacific Historical Review* 40, No. 1 (1971): 40.

¹⁹ Regina Flannery, *The Gros Ventres of Montana, Part 1: Social Life* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953).

²⁰ Jerome E. Johnson, "North Dakota Farmland Values and Rentals," *Agricultural Economics Report* 136 (1984): 26.

gain totally unsustainable. The cycle of monthly droughts made growing crops virtually impossible, even if rain came sparingly during the decade. All of these factors made the per capita income of those who lived in North Dakota approximately \$375 annually, the national average being \$703 in the 1930s.²¹ For most of those residing on the Great Plains, life was unsustainable and brought more hardship than relief during the 1920s and 1930s.

The Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold largely escaped the ravages of the 1930s through not only their practices of land leasing, but also due to reparations collected in 1931. The tribes created a case for reparations in 1898 regarding fraudulent land cessions outlined in the 1870 and 1880 executive orders that shrank the size of Fort Berthold land holdings. While Native leaders gathered information on the lands taken and how they could combat the false claims made by surveyors and government officials, they failed to take the case to court until 1920 when they brought the case to the Court of Claims.²² The tribes hired Charles Kappler and Charles H. Merillat to file a formal petition with the Court of Claims on July 31, 1924.

By 1929, the courts ruled in favor of the Three Affiliated Tribes and granted them reparations totaling \$2,169,168.58. This sum was dispersed throughout Fort Berthold on a per capita basis, with each individual on the reservation awarded \$1,191.50.²³ The money was given to the Arikara and other tribespeople on the reservation by 1931, offsetting the initial woes of the Dust Bowl crisis. Additionally, the fact that most of the Fort Berthold reservation's assets were leased out or invested in cattle ranching made the environmental crisis less impactful reservation residents. While some tribe members faced economic hardships because of lessees defaulting on payments, a majority of the Indians offset and weathered the depression well. The individuals

²¹ Johnson, "North Dakota Farmland Values and Rentals," 26-28.

²² Meyer, 189-190.

²³ Meyer, 187-188.

who were more drastically impacted by the Great Depression and Dust Bowl sent their children to boarding schools to lessen the financial burden on the household. The fact that much of the farming done by Indians on the reservation was subsistence farming also allowed them to grow adequate crops to provide for their families.²⁴ While economically many of the Native American families in Fort Berthold remained secure, their lands soon saw a drastic ecological change because of federal involvement.

The Dust Bowl created the need to develop dams and other means of getting water to farmlands along the Missouri River. In the event that another large-scale drought occurred on the Great Plains, the government felt it necessary to begin developing infrastructure. This led to federal action in 1944 with the creation of the Flood Control Act, or the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. The Flood Control Act created various dams along the Missouri River, however the one that drastically impacted Fort Berthold was the Garrison Dam, with construction beginning in 1947. The dam was completed in 1953.²⁵ According to President Eisenhower, the dam would “be used for the people’s benefit.”²⁶ While the Garrison Dam created jobs for the Army Corps of Engineers and would allow easy access to water for farmers throughout the Missouri River Basin, the project itself had detrimental effects for those living on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

The Garrison Dam flooded over 1,500,000 acres of reservation land with the creation of Lake Sakakawea, much which was prime farm land. The lake also flooded the reservation hospital in 1953.²⁷ This created the need for eighty percent of the Indians in Fort Berthold to

²⁴ Meyer, 190.

²⁵ “Dam for People – Ike,” *Bismarck Tribune*, 11 June 1953. Clyde Baker, interviewed by Eric Wolf, National Park Service, tape recording converted to digital audio file, New Town, ND, 17 July 1990.

²⁶ “Dam for People – Ike,” *Bismarck Tribune*, 11 June 1953.

²⁷ State Historical Society of North Dakota, “Lesson 1: Changing Landscapes, Topic 1: Garrison Dam and Diversion, Section 3: The Taking,” *North Dakota Studies*, Website:

relocate themselves and fundamentally shrank the reservation yet again. While George Gillette, representative for the Fort Berthold Indians, did sign a contract with federal officials selling the reservation lands for \$33 per acre, a total of \$5,105,625, in 1948, the tribespeople did so in a state of duress.²⁸ Many Native people, Gillette included, believed that the contract fundamentally violated the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie as well as tribal contracts created with the federal government.²⁹ The Native Americans at Fort Berthold were forced to sell the land to make it possible to build the Garrison Dam, the federal government claiming eminent domain over the reservation lands. Effectively, the federal government strong-armed the native peoples into selling their lands for the creation of a reservoir. While the federal government forced the Native peoples to sell their land to make way for the Garrison Dam, the tribes actively fought against this encroachment during the decade prior to the dam's creation.

<https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iv-modern-north-dakota-1921-present/lesson-1-changing-landscapes/topic-1-garrison-dam-and-diversion/section-3-taking>, Accessed on: 12 February 2019.

²⁸ *Washington Post* 21 May 1948; Resolutions, relocation, census, claims, per capita; Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota; Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; National Archives and Records Administration – Kansas City, MO.

²⁹ “Indians with ‘Heavy Hearts’ Cede Lands to Government; Chairman Expresses Faith in Congress,” *Minot Daily News*, 24 May 1948.



Image 4: George Gillette, depicted left, crying as he signs the contract selling the lands of the Fort Berthold reservation for the construction of the Garrison Dam.

After the rampant flooding in the Missouri River basin and the promotion of the Pick Plan in 1943, tribal leaders of Fort Berthold drafted the Resolution Opposing the Lower Dam in

retaliation.³⁰ This document represents a formal opposition forwarded by the Three Affiliated Tribes which was presented to William Brophy, former Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in 1944. In formal declaration of malcontent, the tribes attempted to meet with Brophy in hopes of discussing the proposed dam site and the impact it would have on the reservation as a whole. While the tribes forwarded their formal opposition to these plans to dam various portions of the Missouri River to governmental officials, the Federal Flood Control Act of 1944 was still signed into law. This act approved the creation of five dams along the Missouri River, one of which was the Garrison Dam.

After the passage of the Federal Flood Control Act, the Native council drafted yet another resolution: The Resolution Further Opposing the Lower Dam. In the 1945 resolution, Native leaders extrapolated on why they believed the dam was an affront to treaties made with the Fort Berthold tribes. In this resolution, tribal leaders addressed the families that would be displaced by the creation of the dam as well as the cemeteries that would be desecrated by the flooding. They also stated that 250 Native men serving in the military would be denied “land rightfully theirs” if this act was to pass. The resolution emphasized not only the rights of tribal people to own their lands and for their property rights to be unmolested, but also addressed the concepts of tribal sovereignty and how the tribe needed to have self-determination in deciding what happened to their reservation lands.³¹

³⁰ Resolution Opposing Lower Dam, Three Affiliated Tribes Tribal Council, April 24, 1945; Decimal Correspondence File; 362.1 Misc. Correspondence; Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, Record Group 75; Bureau of Indian Affairs; National Archives and Records Administration – Central Plains Region (Kansas City).

³¹ Resolution Further Opposing Garrison Dam, Fort Berthold Tribal Business Council, April 24, 1945; Decimal Correspondence File; 362.1 Misc. Correspondence; Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, Record Group 75; Bureau of Indian Affairs; National Archives and Records Administration – Central Plains Region (Kansas City).

After the passage of this second resolution, the Three Affiliated Tribes sent a political delegation to testify in protest of the construction of the Garrison Dam to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. The delegation was sent in October of 1945. It met with minor success in December 1945 when funds for the Garrison Dam were halted until negotiations with the Fort Berthold Indians were completed.³² While this delayed the construction of the dam, it pressured the tribes to settle with the federal government in a hasty manner. While the tribes hired a consultant to analyze different lands to propose a new location for the dam and create a proposal, the War Department opted to offer the tribes different land as compensation for lands lost to flooding after the creation of the Garrison Dam.

This proposal served to galvanize the tribespeople of Fort Berthold, as the land was sacred to the peoples and relocation was seen not only as a slight but disrespectful to established reservations created by treaties. In a meeting with Pick, Native leaders rejected the notion that separate land was adequate compensation, stating that “[the government] have never lived up to their promises” and “There will be no land in comparison in what we got here.”³³ Not only did the words of native peoples anger Pick, but the fact that white communities which were being offered as compensation began to protest their land being offered without their consent. This conglomeration of voices led officials to believe that the offer of land was not feasible.³⁴

³² *Protesting the Construction of Garrison Dam, North Dakota, by the Fort Berthold Indians: Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Seventy-Ninth Congress, first session, 9 October 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1945). North Dakota, *Garrison Dam and Reservoir Project* (Bismarck: North Dakota State Dept. of Public Instruction, 1947). Leo D Harris, *Water is Coming: Souvenir Garrison Dam Project* (Fargo: Forum Publishing Company, 1949).

³³ Daniel Wolf Statement, May 27, 1946, Elbowoods Community Meeting with Col. Pick, Elbowoods, ND. Quoted from *Mandaree Village Voice*, Special Edition: Dealing with the history and culture of the Tribes, vol. 2, no.5 (1994): 5.

³⁴ Paul VanDevelder, *Coyote Warrior: One Man, Three Tribes, and the Trial that Forged a Nation* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2004), 115-124.

The events surrounding the Garrison Dam's construction and the disputes between the Fort Berthold Native communities and Congress led to a change in the Tribal Council in 1946. That year, Martin Cross was voted out of his position of power and replaced with George Gillette. After Cross's removal, the Tribal Council quickly became uncooperative with the Corps of Engineers and War Department, refusing to allow the government entities to conduct surveys of Fort Berthold lands. This sudden shift in the stance of the leadership of the Three Affiliated Tribes suggests that Cross was more willing to cooperate with the federal government in determining the worth of the land that would be flooded by the construction of the dam. Gillette, on the other hand, resisted. He took a proactive stance in combatting Congressional efforts to appropriate and destroy the reservation lands granted to the Three Affiliated Tribes in 1851.³⁵

The Three Affiliated Tribes and their tribal leadership refused the initial offers of other lands as a form of compensation from Pick. After these refusals, the Secretary of the Interior informed the tribes that the lands for the dam had already been chosen, making construction inevitable. It was for this reason, according to the Secretary, that the Native people should accept the "lieu lands."³⁶ After the Secretary of the Interior strongarm tactics, the Fort Berthold community held a tribal conference to confer and decide if the lieu lands were an acceptable offer yet again. This led to a second rejection on the part of the tribespeople, which, in turn, prompted the Secretary of the Interior formally rejecting the notion of lieu lands in 1947.³⁷ These rejections led Congress to offer monetary compensation.

³⁵ Martin Cross to A.L. Wathen, Chief Engineer, Office of Indian Affairs, 8 July 1946, Decimal Correspondence File, 362.1 Misc. Correspondence, Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, RG75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration – Central Plains Region.

³⁶ VanDevelder, *Coyote Warrior*, 124.

³⁷ Meeting in the Secretary's Conference Room December 16, 1946 for the purpose of obtaining the views of the three affiliated tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation on the lieu lands offered by the Secretary of War; Lieu Land Meetings; Decimal Correspondence File; 362.1 Misc. Correspondence; Fort

The need to change the form of compensation for the natives led to the 80th Congress passing Public Law (PL) 296, which appropriated funds for general flood control. A portion of this money was for distributing to the Fort Berthold Natives and, once the consultations with the War Department were completed, Congress decided that a sum of \$5,105,625 was fair compensation for the lands in question. While this was a secondary offer, Native leaders had met at an earlier date and concluded that monetary compensation should not be accepted. The logic for not accepting any form of compensation was simple: tribe members felt that, if compensation was received in any form, it would set a precedent for the United States to violate treaties made with other tribes. This rationale is clear in the words of councilmember Mark Mahto, who stated:

The quickest and most merciful way to exterminate the three tribes is by mass execution, like they did to the Jews in Germany. We find it strange that the treaty made between you and the aggressor nations of Japan and Germany are more sacred than the treaty you made with the three tribes. Everything will be lost if Garrison is built. We will lose our homes, our communities, our economy, our resources. ... If you are determined to remove us from our land, you might as well take a gun and put a bullet through us. The principles that we fought for in this last war, right beside you, was for the very homes, lands, and resources that you are trying to take from us today.³⁸

Mahto's views reflected those of other Native people at the time. It was his belief that, as sovereign nations, treaties made with the Indian tribes before assimilation were documents that

Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, Record Group 75; Bureau of Indian Affairs; National Archives and Records Administration – Central Plains Region (Kansas City).

³⁸ VanDevellder, 127-128.

should be respected and that any attempts to undermine those documents was effectively undermining the sovereignty of a nation.

While the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara were fundamentally against PL 296 on the grounds that it undermined tribal sovereignty, the total sum of \$5,105,625 was not contested until 1986. While some individuals contest that the natives of Fort Berthold received approximately \$1 to \$2.50 per acre taken as a result of the construction of the Garrison Dam, the figures do not add up. Given that the tribes lost just over 150,000 acres due to flooding, the tribes \$1 per acre would amount to \$150,000. If they had been given \$2.50 per acre, the amount would add up to \$375,000. In all likelihood, the land was worth at least five to seven times that amount. The lands in question included *unimproved* lands having no buildings upon them.³⁹ According to an analysis conducted by Jerome E. Johnson of the Department of Agricultural Economics at North Dakota State University, lands in North Dakota with buildings and other improvements were sold at \$28 per acre in 1948, \$30 per acre in 1949, \$29 per acre in 1950.⁴⁰ Keeping this in mind, the United States government was offering the tribes \$5,105,625, meaning that, according to the 1948 contract, Congress was willing to buy the improved lands on the Fort Berthold reservation in North Dakota for a little over \$34 per acre. According to the average price of *improved lands* in North Dakota, the government gave the natives a fair deal. While the natives were not willing to accept the deal in terms of tribal sovereignty being undermined, questions of the amount being “unfair” were never raised. The arguments were focused on what accepting this deal would mean for the agency of the tribes, not in terms of fairness.

³⁹ Social and Economic Report on the Future of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota, completed 15 January 1948, Missouri River Basin Investigations Unit, Reconnaissance, Manuscript 4805, University of Chicago, Fort Berthold Project Records, Sol Tax – Fort Berthold Action Anthropology Project, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. Johnson, “North Dakota Farmland Values and Rentals,” 26-29.

⁴⁰ These values are averages.

Efforts by the Tribal Council to retain their lands are seen through various senatorial records. However, the records of July 6, 1949 highlight a brief debate before the signing of the agreement that transferred Fort Berthold lands to the War Department. After voicing grievances and stating that the sum offered to the Three Affiliated Tribes was not compensation enough to pay for the lands being claimed under the government's eminent domain, the tribes signed the contract, effectively diminishing the size of the reservation and displacing approximately eighty percent of the Indian population at Fort Berthold.⁴¹ The contract also stated that, out of the sum of \$5,105,625, the cost of relocation and rebuilding homes and facilities for the tribe would be deducted from the awarded funds. Those funds were also expected to be used in recreating monuments on lands of "like character," effectively showing Congress's lack of understanding when it came to the importance of land and its meaning to Native peoples.⁴² While the amount given to the tribes to compensate them for their reservation's destruction was used to rebuild infrastructure Congress should have been held liable for, the Tribal Council did succeed in retaining important rights for the tribes on these new lands given to the peoples. One such right was that the Native Americans would retain hunting rights on the lands appropriated for the construction of the Garrison Dam. The Three Affiliated Tribes gained exclusive rights to fish in the Garrison Reservoir so long as they abided by the rules and regulations established by the

⁴¹ Hearing Held Before the Subcommittee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, April 29, 1949, Legal and Political History of the Three Affiliated Tribes, Manuscript 4805, University of Chicago, Fort Berthold Project Records, Sol Tax – Fort Berthold Action Anthropology Project, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴² "Lo, the Poor Indian!" *Washington Post*, 29 May 1948.; Resolutions, relocation, census, claims, per capita, Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration.; A Joint Resolution to vest title to certain lands of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota, in the United States, and to provide compensation therefor, Pub. L. No. 81-437, ch. 790, 63 Stat. 1026 (1949) (Also referred to as the "1949 Takings Act.")

Chief of Engineers.⁴³ While these victories in the contract seem relatively inconsequential, they highlight two important points. First, it shows that the Tribal Council fundamentally understood what was important for tribal survival and prosperity. Second, this victory in terms of land rights shows that the Three Affiliated Tribes understood how to use the treaty making process to their advantage and gain certain small rights that allowed the tribes to retain some semblance of sovereignty.

Before continuing with the narrative of the Garrison Dam and its impact on these tribes, a discussion on the sum allotted to the tribes for their lands is imperative. To determine the value of the lands needed to construct the Garrison Dam, Congress sent an economic consultant to assess the value of the lands. The consultant claimed that they “estimated the income the tribes would have earned from the use of the land.”⁴⁴ In response, the tribes hired their own economic consultant to contest the findings of the government officials. The tribal consultant found that the tribes lost approximately \$170,000,000 between 1949 and 1986 and that that total was required for the tribes to be adequately compensated for the construction of the Garrison Dam. The consultant also claimed that the land was worth approximately \$15,000,000 in 1949, meaning that the United States government paid the tribes approximately one-third of the land’s actual worth.⁴⁵ This figure was established by calculating the median income of families on the reservation in 1950, a total which was estimated to be \$3,320. Congress refuted this claim,

⁴³ A Joint Resolution to vest title to certain lands of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota, in the United States, and to provide compensation therefor, Pub. L. No. 81-437, ch. 790, 63 Stat. 1026 (1949).; Peter Capossela, “Impacts of the Army Corps of Engineers’ Pick-Sloan Program on the Indian Tribes of the Missouri River Basin,” *J. Envtl. Law and Litigation* 30, No. 143 (2015): 164-168.

⁴⁴ United States, General Accounting Office, United States Congress, Select Committee on Indian Affairs, *Indian Issues: Compensation Claims and Analysis Overstate Economic Losses*, GAO/RCED-91-77, 1991, Appendix I, 12.

⁴⁵ Keppler, *Indian Issues*, 13.

stating that the findings in the Missouri River Basin Investigation calculated the median income of Native residents in the area, both cash and non-cash assets, at a total of \$1,840. This total was believed correct on the basis that other rural families in the late-1940s and early-1950s had a median income of approximately \$1,970.⁴⁶ The economic consultant for the American government also stated that the discount-rate established by the Native economic advisor of 3.5 percent could not have been thought of by the native populace as it was assumed they did not know the actual value of their land; because the tribespeople did not value their lands in this high regard, the American economist stipulates that the discount-rate posited is invalid. It is not explained how the consultant knew this information, he only asserts that it must be so. The lower rate would mean that the land was valued at higher prices. If the Native Americans of Fort Berthold did have their land appraised and saw their land as being at a 3.5-percent rate, it would mean the land had astronomically more value than Congress had paid in 1949.

The consultant for the tribes also made assumptions of how the land would have been developed had the tribes kept ownership of those lands in 1950. The native consultant assumed that the lands would be developed at the same rate as non-Indian lands, based on acreage. The native advisor stated that, based on reports from 1949 to 1982, North Dakota irrigation lands increased by 5.4-percent annually. This land was then estimated, based on land yields in corresponding years, and a total was estimated based on these figures. The American economic advisor declared that these figures are faulty on the basis that, when the agreement was made, the government could not have known how profitable the land was. The analyst further states that there was no way for the federal government to know the plans in development to support agriculture and farmers. Furthermore, the consultant insisted that the activities of tribespeople

⁴⁶ Keppler, *Indian Issues*, 14-15.

were focused primarily on cattle ranching and dry farming, which was true. However, this analysis did not account for lands leased to white farmers which were used primarily as crop farming lands. This land would be improved and possibly irrigated, meaning that the natives of Fort Berthold could lease their lands for higher rates if the land was not forced to be sold to the government. The American consultant also claimed that various natives worked off-reservation and that those totals should be subtracted from the assumed total of \$15,300,000 the Native consultant estimated.⁴⁷

The above information came from two reports compiled in the late-1980s as the Three Affiliated Tribes attempted to get reparations for damages done to their tribes and the United States government not respecting treaties made in the 1800s. The exchange between the two consultants in 1986 emphasizes the agency of the Three Affiliated Tribes evolving. In the 1940s and 1950s, the tribes attempted to get the “best case scenario” from negotiations, accruing a lump sum of currency in exchange for their lands. By 1986 case for reparations and a push for a greater sum for the land shows that the tribes tried to use the American systems for their gain. The claims of the American economist were rendered moot, however, when it came to the Natives not knowing the value of their land. In 1948, Gillette conducted an interview with the Minot Daily News where he described the land being flooded by the construction of the Garrison Dam as “the best

⁴⁷ R.G. Cummings, “Valuing the Resource Base Lost By the Three Affiliated Tribes as a Result of Lands Taken From Them for the Garrison Project,” Resource Management Associates, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1986.

part of our reservation,” emphasizing that the tribes knew the true value of the land they were forced to sell.⁴⁸

In order to determine an adequate sum for the natives, the Bureau of Indian Affairs dispatched its newly formed Missouri River Basin Investigations (MRBI) unit to interview tribe members, account for all their assets, and survey the lands in question in 1947. This, coupled with the fact that the Army Corps of Engineers began construction of the Garrison Dam in 1947, a year before the contract with the Three Affiliated Tribes was ever drafted, only heightened tensions on the reservation and increased the feeling of inevitability felt by natives about the situation.⁴⁹ The Social and Economic Report on the Future of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota was completed by the MRBI in 1948 affirmed the Indians’ beliefs that the construction of the Garrison Dam would fundamentally negatively alter their lives on the reservation. The report first accounted for the displacement of a majority of Fort Berthold reservation’s population due to the flooding caused by the dam. More than this, the dam would disrupt the substance farming practices of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara to such a degree that the MRBI was concerned that the tribes would become dependent on governmental aid.⁵⁰

The MRBI’s efforts and the construction of the Garrison Dam led the Three Affiliated Tribes to panic, their plight becoming clearer daily. The fear of losing their lands without compensation led the Tribal Council to act, seeking ample funds from the deal so the reservation could effectively operate independent of the American government as a cash economy. More

⁴⁸ “Indians with Heavy Hearts’ Cede Lands to Government; Chairman Expresses Faith in Congress,” *Minot Daily News*, 24 May 1948.

⁴⁹ “Social and Economic Report on the Future of Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota,” Missouri River Basin Investigations staff report, USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, Billings, Montana, 15 January 1948.

⁵⁰ H.D. McCullough, “Social and Economic Report on the Future of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota,” Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Missouri River Basin Investigations Report no. 46, 24 December 1947.

than this, the community needed funds to rebuild their reservation after its destruction. While Congress was pressuring the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara to accept any deal, the tribes refused until they procured the right to bring a case to the Court of Claims at any point in time if the government should not follow through on their obligations or if any relocation costs go uncompensated.⁵¹

While tribal leaders demanded ample sum and legal rights for their people should the need arise, United States officials made procurement of these stipulations difficult. While many individuals on Congress, such as Senator Watkins, claimed they sought a “just and generous” settlement for the Native Americans, tribal leaders were still skeptical. This skepticism was proven justified when the Key Committee only discussed the issue of fair compensation in brief.⁵² The Army Corps of Engineers proposed granting the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara a sum of \$17,000,000 (which is inclusive of the cost of relocation and reconstruction). This proposed amount was roughly two-thirds the amount proposed by the MRBI’s report, which stated that the reservation’s lands were valued at \$21,981,000, inclusive of structures and other assets constructed on the lands.⁵³ While the issue was hotly debated amongst Congress, particularly in the House Committee on Public Lands, the House and Senate both believed the conservative amount of \$1,700,0000 was more than adequate for the natives to survive. Of this \$1,700,0000, \$3,000,000 was allotted for procurement of lands and ensuring displaced natives had homes, \$2,400,000 was for power upon completion of the Garrison Dam, \$6,500,000 was

⁵¹ Social and Economic Report on the Future of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota, completed 15 January 1948. Merrill fieldnotes, Manuscript 4805, University of Chicago, Fort Berthold Project Records, Sol Tax – Fort Berthold Action Anthropology Project, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

⁵² Glynn S. Luney, Jr., “Compensation for Taking How Much is Just?” *Catholic University Law Review* 42 (1993): 736-739.

⁵³ Luney, Jr., “Compensation for Taking How Much is Just?” 739.

rewarded as miscellaneous funds, and \$5,100,000 was for the market value of the land itself. While this two-thirds value was deemed acceptable, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, spearheaded by Watkins, swayed perceptions and got the value reduced to \$1,260,000 by 1950.⁵⁴ While this sum was not amenable to tribal leadership nor the citizenry of the reservation, they accepted the greatly reduced sum in fear that the government would further reduce compensation should the offer be refused.

Once the tribes had voted to accept the offer posed by Congress, there was a question on how distribution of the funds to the tribespeople would proceed. This caused political turmoil amongst the communities, particularly between two figures with political clout amongst the community: Martin Cross, who had been voted out of the Tribal Council yet retained his political voice, and Carl Whitman, Jr. Cross favored a distribution of funds to individual members of the tribe while Whitman sought to have the funds put into an account controlled by tribal leaders which would then be funneled into programs to benefit the tribe as a whole. The tribe members had an opportunity to have their voices heard during the 1950 tribal election when Whitman was ousted in favor of Cross. It is important to note that, while the Three Affiliated Tribes were having an internal debate on how funds from the Garrison Dam contract should be used, the Bureau of Indian Affairs were holding their own debates on how best to terminate governmental involvement with the reservations.⁵⁵ The BIA's debates were centered around the same basic

⁵⁴ United States, Garrison Dam on the Missouri, (Riverdale, N.D.: U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Garrison District, 1955).

⁵⁵ Termination was the policy of the United States government in the 1940s until the 1960s. This policy led to a series of laws that severed ties between federally recognized tribes and the federal government. It was believed that the citizenship rights would force acculturation of natives. More than this, officials believed that the removal of federal mismanagement led to the tribes rejecting the assimilation process as a whole. This would also cut down on federal funds allocated to the tribes. For more on the termination process, see: Warren R. Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Edward Charles Valandra, *Not Without Our Consent: Lakota Resistance to Termination 1950-59* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006). Kenneth R. Philip,

argument tribal officials were conducting: which method of monetary distribution would lead to the tribes becoming independent and “civilized” the quickest? The consensus of the Fort Berthold tribes was they were fundamentally against governmental interference in tribal politics, but understood they required aid from the federal government to survive.⁵⁶ With this in mind, the Congress came to the conclusion that the funds awarded should be distributed to the tribes on a per capita basis and that termination of governmental aid for the Three Affiliated Tribes was not the proper course of action.

While the Three Affiliated Tribes had a hand in determining how funds from the land loss imposed by the Garrison Dam were distributed, they did not have a choice in where removal would take them. The BIA attempted to frame this mass exodus of citizens from the Fort Berthold reservation as a recreation of Fort Berthold on higher ground, ignoring the significance the physical land of the former reservation held for the Native Americans. The relocation to three new settlements named New Town, Mandaree, and Twin Buttes was seen by the government as an opportunity of the tribal communities to forge a new, communal identity as opposed to being three separate tribes with equal voices.⁵⁷ This did not happen. Instead, the geographical shift negatively impacted the economic livelihood of the tribespeople. Not only were these plots of land not fecund to produce crops, many of the natives were forced to participate in the

Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). Charles F. Wilkinson and Eric R. Biggs, “Evolution of Termination Policy,” *American Indian Law Review* 5, No. 1 (1977). Nicholas C. Peroff, *Menominee Drums: Tribal Termination and Restoration, 1954-1974* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). Renee Ann Cramer, *Cash, Color, and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ Kris Fresonke and Mark Spence, *Lewis and Clark: Legacies, Memories, and Perspectives* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004), 129-130.

⁵⁷ Fresonke and Spence, *Lewis and Clark*, 131. Ben Reifel, “The Problem of Relocating Families on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation,” *Journal of Farm Economics* 32 (1950): 644-646.

economies of non-native towns to survive.⁵⁸ Many Indians had to hire themselves out to white farmers as wage laborers. Not only were there economic ramifications, the community itself was fractured because a bulk of the tribal infrastructure was drowned along with their living spaces. Amongst these buildings was not only the reservation hospital but also various reservation schools. The schools being submerged meant that young natives needed to be sent to either public schools constructed elsewhere on the reservation or, more likely due to the economic downturn the Garrison Dam caused, be sent to BIA-approved boarding schools.

The turmoil caused by the Garrison Dam highlights the agency of the Three Affiliated Tribes and how they attempted to staunch the flow of Congressional involvement in their tribal lands and politics. This retaliation came in the form of the tribespeople electing tribal leaders, particularly George Gillette, who they believed had their interests at heart. Gillette refused to accept the initial deals proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers, feeling that they were not only impractical, but disrespectful to the reservation's lands and people. While this forced Congress to adapt their form of compensation to fair market monetary value for the land, the natives were not satisfied with this, as it showed that the government was not willing to respect past treaties made with Indian nations. When the inevitability of the Garrison Dam's construction became apparent, the tribes voted to accept the sum posited by Congressional boards, fearing if they did not, a lesser amount would be offered. While the situation in the late-1940s and early-1950s was bleak for the Fort Berthold natives, they used American governmental systems to their advantage in the hopes of gaining better position politically. This emphasized that Native people at Fort Berthold

⁵⁸ Nishu District Meeting, 12 November 1950, General Relocation Meetings, Box 71 Relocation, claims, maps, progress reports, Fort Berthold Indian Agency, North Dakota, RG75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration. Meyer, 190-192. Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Origins of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 57-60.

were not passive observers to their fate but took proactive action in the hopes of stemming the tide of American encroachment into the 20th Century.

Conclusion

Emphasizing these issues, particularly the Three Affiliated Tribes' struggles with the federal government over the construction of the Garrison Dam, is important not only historically, but because these issues between the U.S. government and tribal authorities impact American society today. After the flooding of the reservation, the tribes not only fought for rightful compensation, but also for the government to rebuild the facilities they destroyed after constructing the dam. It was not until 2010 that congress awarded the tribes a \$20 million stipend to construct the Elbowoods Memorial Health Center, a project that was completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2011. The hospital was also provided \$8 million in operating funds by the Obama administration to employ healthcare professionals. It was not until almost sixty years of lobbying on part of the Three Affiliated Tribes that the United States awarded them these funds.¹

Not only were there lobbies to fund for infrastructure necessary for the survival of the tribespeople, the Three Affiliated Tribes also regained land that was lost to the flood in 2016. This land reclamation process began in 2004 with the proposed Fort Berthold Mineral Restoration Act which basically allowed for the return of lands deemed as being "surplus" to the tribes. This act allowed for formal hearings on behalf of the tribes which ended in 2006 without any conclusion being reached. This reluctance was in part because of John Hoeven, former governor – now senator – of North Dakota. Hoeven stated "that access agreements should be in place before any transfer occurs" because discussion on this transfer of land back to the Three Affiliated Tribes had occurred over ten years prior.² There was also debate as to who should

¹ Sun Staff, "Obama Budget has money for Tribe's health center," *The Jamestown Sun*, 8 March, 2010.

² "North Dakota tribe recovers ancestral lands taken by Army Corps," on indianz.com, 20 December 2016, accessed on 28 February 2019, url: <https://www.indianz.com/News/2016/12/20/north-dakota-tribe-recovers-ancestral-la.asp>.

claim the lands within the tribes themselves, with some natives claiming that the land should be communal and others, like Roger Birdbear, a trader and prominent member of the Three Affiliated Tribes, believed that the land should be released to the original owners of the land.³ His logic for this was that the lands were not taken from the tribes as a whole, but from the native who once resided on them back in the 1950s. These debates halted the land being returned to the tribes for nearly a decade. It was not until 2016 that the tribes were awarded 25,000 acres around Lake Sakakawea, given to the natives in a trust. With these lands also came the mineral rights to the lands, as well as being granted the autonomy to do with the lands what they will.⁴ This story, while it does not account for the total lands lost by the tribes on the reservation, shows that these battles from the 1800 and 1900s still ripple in the minds of the tribes today. Even in the contemporary mind there is debate over what is and is not covered by formal treaties made with these tribes and how best to go about repairing relations with native tribes.

That is one of the key purposes of this thesis: to emphasize the agency of the Arikara and, later, the Three Affiliated Tribes and how they were proactive in the shaping of not only the Great Plains, but also tribal relations with the American government. Chapter 1 analyzes Arikara intertribal relations as well as interactions with the American government in the early- to mid-1800s and the actions taken by the Arikara to maintain their weakening position on the Great Plains. While the interactions with American were worsened by the actions leading up to and immediately after the First Plains Indian War of 1823, the Arikara used the conflict to their overall advantage. While the tribe was forced to move from their ancestral position along the Missouri River as a byproduct of this conflict, they established a residence with the Mandan at Fort Clark, ensuring that the tribe would have more aid against their traditional enemies: the

³ “North Dakota tribe recovers ancestral lands taken by Army Corps.”

⁴ “North Dakota tribe recovers ancestral lands taken by Army Corps.”

Sioux tribes in the immediate area. In 1851, the Treaty of Fort Laramie shows that the tribes were cognizant of their severely weakened position on the Great Plains because of the increased American mobilization west. This led to the creation of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold. While they still suffered from Lakota raids and attacks into the 1870s, the tribes were able to plead with the federal government for aid on the basis that the land being stolen was theirs by treaty right. While the government was slow to act, this shows a fundamental understanding on part of the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa of American systems and the import they now played in tribal life. While the tribes actively resisted and combatted increased American encroachment, they also used the legal systems of the United States as well as integrating with other tribes as means of survival.

Chapter 2 focuses on the use of off-reservation boarding schools and how, while they served as a representation of concentrated efforts on behalf of white Americans to assimilate Natives and eradicate their culture, they were also used and – to an extent – embraced by native peoples. Through the case study of Anna Dawson-Wilde, we see that some native children who attended these assimilationist institutions saw their importance to tribal life. Dawson attended Hampton Institute from a young age, brought with her mother in 1878 among the first group of natives to attend the school. While her mother and the other members of her tribe left the school after just a few years, Anna Dawson stayed until she was eighteen, leaving the institution to teach at a normal school and returning to teach post-graduate studies. When she felt it was time to return to the Fort Berthold Reservation, she did so as an ambassador of sorts. She was granted the position of field matron on the reservation and was used to show other native women the benefits of assimilation into the American culture. While she was ultimately found undeserving of her position by the other native women, officials in power at the Fort Berthold Indian agency

believed this program showed the benefits of acculturation. While Dawson-Wilde failed as a field matron, she continued to endorse the benefits of an Americanized education to other tribe members for the remainder of her life at Fort Berthold. Anna Dawson's story emphasizes a few truths of reservation life and native beliefs in the late-1800, early-1900s. One such truth was that, while off-reservation boarding schools were fundamentally abusive to native students and served as a means to destroy native culture, it was necessary for some native families to send children to these schools. This is because many families on-reservation needed any extra funds to survive day-to-day. More than this, not all natives were actively against assimilating. Dawson's story in particular shows that some Native Americans thought a westernized education was a keystone to civilization as well as a sign of prestige. Dawson's story highlights tribal divisions regarding how best to approach assimilation and if it was best for tribes to simply go along with the acculturation process.

Chapter 3 discusses the position of Fort Berthold in the 1900s and how the construction of the Garrison Dam fundamentally shook their geopolitical position. While this circumstance was devastating for the tribes, as the construction of the dam flooded a large portion of their reservation, displacing approximately ninety percent of the families living there, the tribes exercised their sovereignty throughout the discussion of constructing the reservoir. Tribal leaders such as George Gillette fought the Army Corps of Engineers in an attempt to cease the construction of the dam before it began. When it became apparent that their efforts would not halt the construction, the tribes attempted to get the best possible deal for their lands. They debated for years with federal officials on the best form of payment for these lands. Payment options ranged from different lands for the natives to relocate to, to physical cash compensation for the lands lost. In the end, the Three Affiliated tribes were relocated to less fruitful lands and

received a lump sum of money. While the solution was less than ideal for the tribes, it shows that they had garnered a fundamental understanding of the federal systems in place and how they could best combat governmental efforts to unjustly seize their lands.

Each of the instances provided throughout this project highlights the agency exerted by the Arikara and the Three Affiliated Tribes throughout history. This agency shows that the tribes were not passive participants in history, rather that they took conscious, organized efforts to slow colonial encroachment into the Great Plains. While they were unsuccessful in stopping western colonization, the tribes used American systems to their overall advantage, maintaining some facsimile of their previous power on the Great Plains. This thesis show that the Three Affiliated Tribes made strategic moves throughout history to have their voices heard by the federal government.

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