

**Sarah Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa: Negotiating Physical and Cultural Survival in
the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

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The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw extreme changes for many Native peoples in North America. This paper will focus on two women's responses to this upheaval: Sarah Winnemucca (Numa) and Zitkala Sa (Yankton Dakota).¹ To survive in a rapidly changing world, Sarah Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa used their positions as cultural mediators between Native peoples and Euro-Americans to reshape and redefine aspects of Native identity, and to alter Euro-American perceptions and treatment of Native peoples. Winnemucca experienced and reacted to Euro-American invasion of the Great Basin, the formation of reservations within this region, and the starvation and slaughter of her people. Zitkala Sa, born thirty-two years after Winnemucca, faced the effects of the reservation system, the implementation of Indian boarding schools, the continuous oppression of Native American peoples, and the corruption in the Indian Office. As cultural mediators, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa held understandings of both Native and Euro-American cultures, so they had the ability to actively participate in dialogue between two different worlds. Their purpose was not to completely merge Native and Euro-American worlds, but to reduce the distance between the two. By reshaping and redefining aspects of their Native identity, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa attempted to carve out a space for Native cultures within Euro-American society, without completely assimilating to Euro-American culture. Concurrently, shifting Euro-American perceptions and treatments of Native peoples enabled the creation of this space without the elimination of a separate Native identity.

¹ Because Winnemucca's people called themselves the Numa, meaning "People," I will use that name rather than Northern Paiute when referring to her tribal affiliation. Euro-Americans gave the Numa the name Paiute, a fact that Winnemucca makes reference to in her autobiography. The Numa were not one tribe, but consisted of many linguistically similar bands. Winnemucca belonged to the Kuyuidika-a band. When referring to Zitkala Sa's tribal affiliation, I will use the name Dakota rather than Sioux, because Sioux is considered to be offensive by many of the Dakota peoples and I wish to abide by modern-day preferences. There are several tribes under the name Dakota, because the Dakota are considered to be the parent group of the tribes. The names Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota refer to different dialects of peoples within the Dakota. See Whitney Gae, Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), and Jessica Dawn Palmer, *The Dakota Peoples: A History of the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota through 1863* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2008).

To differentiate between Winnemucca's and Zitkala Sa's actions within their Native communities and the Euro-American community and to emphasize their roles as cultural mediators, I will use the terms "reform" and "activism." For the purpose of this paper, reform will be defined as working to change the practices and beliefs of an oppressed group, and activism will be defined as campaigning for the interests of one's own communities by negotiating with people in power. With these definitions, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa were reformers within their own Native communities and activists within the Euro-American community. Defining them as such emphasizes the difference between the types of changes Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa were attempting to make in each sphere.

This paper will consist of four sections. The first section will establish Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa as cultural mediators. Through the examination of their childhood and early adulthood experiences, I will demonstrate how these experiences placed Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa between Native and Euro-American worlds. Winnemucca's and Zitkala Sa's autobiographical works provide insight to their personal experience of broader events that shaped their childhoods; even though autobiographies are constructed literary works designed to target an audience and small details and dialogue may not be completely historically accurate, the broader themes within their stories are still valuable. The second section will explore the relationships between land, identity, and the survival of Native American peoples. Winnemucca strove to reform her people's concept of land ownership through the Dawes Act and implement new subsistence strategies. Zitkala Sa, who experienced the negative effects of the Dawes Act, sought to end the land loss the act caused and appeal to the government for the protection of Native American land rights. The third section will discuss how Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa used respectability to advocate for their people. They sought to gain leverage with the government by

presenting themselves and their people as respectable, while simultaneously revealing disreputable actions of Euro-American society. Finally, I will conclude by examining the differences between Winnemucca's and Zitkala Sa's respective reform and activism strategies, the reasons for these differences, and evaluate the overall success of their efforts.

The Development of Cultural Mediators

Because Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa grew up in different tribes at different times during the nineteenth century, they did not become cultural mediators in the same way. Winnemucca was born in what is now Nevada in 1844, shortly after Euro-American encroachment on Numa lands began. As a child, stories of Euro-American violence inspired her fear of white men. Roughly ten years prior to her birth, the Redford Walker expedition massacred roughly one hundred Numa people.² Not long after the winter of 1846-1847, stories of the Donner Party's cannibalistic actions reached the ears of Winnemucca's band, the Kuyuidika-a, inspiring even more fear of white men.³ In response to this violence, Winnemucca's father Poito and other tribal leaders decided that avoiding the incoming immigrants was their best chance of survival and the Kuyuidika-a spent the following summer in the mountains.

Though her wariness of Euro-Americans never vanished, Winnemucca began to see that relationships with Euro-Americans could be beneficial and provide some amount of protection as she learned more about her grandfather's experiences with immigrants. In the spring of 1851,

² Bernd C. Peyer, *"The Thinking Indian" Native American Writers, 1850's-1920's* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 93-95.

³ Though Winnemucca does not refer to the perpetrators of cannibalism by name, Zanjani, Peyer, and other scholars believe them to be the Donner Party. Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, *Sara Winnemucca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 22; Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 15.

when Winnemucca was about seven years old, her maternal grandfather Truckee led Winnemucca, her mother Tuboitonie and four of her other children, and about thirty other Kuyuidika-a to California. Every encounter with Euro-Americans along the way terrified Winnemucca. This greatly disappointed her grandfather, for he viewed the white invaders as potential allies.⁴ He believed that the settlers were the white brothers of the Numa people from a Numa legend. Despite the atrocities Euro-Americans committed against the Numa, he encouraged his people to remain peaceful toward them. After his first encounter with his “white brothers,” Truckee said to his people “I want you one and all to promise that, should I not live to welcome them myself, you will not hurt a hair on their heads, but welcome as I tried to do.” His sentiments did not change even after white men murdered Truckee’s son and several others while they, Truckee, and Poito were fishing on the Humboldt River.⁵ His policy of peace while grieving the loss of his son momentarily protected the rest of the Kuyuidika-a from further violence. Many more of the band would have died had they sought revenge.

Truckee continued to seek out interaction with white immigrants and felt comfortable enough to have his family stay with a white family in California. His trust of white men was not unfounded. In 1846, Truckee had served under army officer John C. Frémont in the Bear Flag Revolt. This immersed him in Euro-American culture and helped him establish connections in California. After he returned to his people, Truckee attempted to use his newly gained knowledge to reduce the Kuyuidika-a’s fear of Euro-Americans.⁶ Recent emigrant violence prevented Truckee’s success, but his knowledge had a lasting impact on Winnemucca. Her grandfather had been treated well while serving under an army officer. This influenced

⁴ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 25-26; Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 21-24.

⁵ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 7, 20.

⁶ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 17.

Winnemucca's positive view of the Army. Later in her life, after the Numa were forced onto reservations, she sought refuge with military officers when her people experienced poor treatment at the hands of reservation officials.

Truckee also introduced Winnemucca to the concept of writing. Upon his return, he showed the Kuyuidika-a a letter that he called his "rag friend." The letter, written by Frémont, allowed him to safely interact with settlers. It proved that he was not dangerous to Euro-Americans, because he had served in the U.S. Army and it explicitly stated that "all who read it should treat him well."⁷ Truckee told his people that letters like his "can talk to our white brothers and our white sisters, and their children...[it] can travel like the wind, and it can go and talk with their fathers and brothers and sister, and come back and tell us what they are doing."⁸ Truckee understood the importance writing within Euro-American culture and viewed it as a source of power. On their way to California, Winnemucca witnessed the power "rag friend" gave her grandfather. While travelling through the Sierra Mountains, their party came across an emigrant camp. After Truckee presented the letter to the white men, their group was welcomed and given gifts. Tuboitonie was aware of the power the letter gave her father, for when Winnemucca, who was still afraid of Euro-Americans, expressed the desire to go home, her mother said "We can't go alone; we would all be killed if we go, for we have no rag friend as father has."⁹

It was not until Truckee's party reached California that Winnemucca's fear of white people began to lessen. After the group reached Stockton, Winnemucca developed a severe allergic reaction to poison oak. An emigrant woman nursed her back to health. This act

⁷ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 23.

⁸ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 18-19.

⁹ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 25-26.

challenged Winnemucca's fear of all white people and helped her understand that some could be trusted. After learning who had helped ease her suffering, Winnemucca, for the first time since the beginning of their journey, voiced a desire to meet a Euro-American. When describing their encounter Winnemucca wrote "I looked at her; she was indeed, a beautiful angel."¹⁰ This woman was different from the other immigrants Winnemucca had encountered. She took an active interest in Winnemucca's wellbeing whereas the other immigrants did not have close contact with Winnemucca. Her gender was also an important factor. The stories of violence Winnemucca had heard mostly involved white men, so the emigrant woman's gender, as well as her kindness, set her apart from them. This meeting did not cause Winnemucca to blindly trust all white people, but it showed her a different perspective of Euro-Americans, the perspective her grandfather saw.

Unlike Truckee, Winnemucca's father did not trust the immigrants infiltrating the Numa's lands. Poito did not urge the Kuyuidika-a to attack the invaders, but he did see them as a threat and encouraged avoidance. As previously mentioned, Poito's first dream of white invaders encouraged his desire to retreat into the mountains. As the headman and antelope shaman, Poito's prophetic dreams were taken very seriously and his advice held great sway in his community.¹¹ His avoidance tactic helped keep the Kuyuidika-a relatively safe during the earlier stages of Euro-American encroachment. While Winnemucca was in California, many of the Numa had contracted typhus and died. Because Poito kept his band in the mountains and away from the settlers, they had remained relatively safe. According to Winnemucca, the Numa were unaware that a disease was causing so many deaths and they believed that the immigrants had

¹⁰ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 31-32; Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 32.

¹¹ An antelope shaman was someone who had the ability to charm antelope during a hunt so as to ensure the hunters success. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 9.

poisoned the Humboldt River. While this was not true, the connection of the Numa's suffering to an increase in white settlement along the river was accurate. Poito and his people's safety was connected to their distance from the river, but it was also their distance from settlements that kept them safe.¹²

Winnemucca learned how to communicate with Euro-Americans from her grandfather. His introduction of "rag friend" and observing his interactions with immigrants was an important part of her education. As an adult she used her grandfather's tie to Frémont to legitimize her place as a cultural mediator for her people. In a petition sent to Congress in 1884, Winnemucca introduces herself as the "granddaughter of Captain Truckee, who promised friendship for his tribe to General Fremont [sic], whom he guided into California and served through the Mexican war" not as the daughter of Poito Winnemucca.¹³ However, the lessons she learned from stories of white violence and her father's wariness of the invaders taught her to limit her trust of white people. The combination of these two influential figures taught her to be critical of Euro-American culture and to value white alliances. In her adult life Winnemucca did not employ her father's avoidance strategy, but she did recognize that the behavior of the Numa's "white brothers" was not always defensible and that Euro-American encroachment was the cause of her people's suffering.

Winnemucca's childhood experiences began her education in Euro-American culture and the English language. During her first stay in California, Winnemucca began to understand some English words and customs and it is likely that she and her siblings acquired their English names

¹² Whitney Gae Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 9.

¹³ Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, "Petition from Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins for Land Rights for Piute Indians and for the Reunion of that Portion of the Tribe Forcibly Separated during the Bannock War" petition, 1884, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

during this time.¹⁴ Her autobiography notes her acquisition of the phrase “poor little girl” and her sister Mary, who knew more English than Winnemucca, taught her the parts of a table set for dinner. She and her siblings also encountered new objects such as steamboats, permanent buildings, and Euro-American furniture for the first time.¹⁵ After their return to Nevada, Truckee wanted his granddaughters to increase their knowledge of Euro-American cultures and become fluent in English. He arranged for Winnemucca and her younger sister Elma to stay with a white family in Genoa, Nevada in 1857. The home belonged to Major William M. Ormsby and here the sisters learned English and domestic skills.¹⁶ Her autobiography states that Winnemucca and Elma came to the Ormsbys’ house “as playmates for their little girl.” However, in her biography of Sarah Winnemucca, historian Sally Zanjani states that it is more likely that the two girls were taken in as servants. Because Winnemucca and her sister were sent home after they had mastered English, “it may well be that the Winnemuccas had made an arrangement with the Ormsbys: Sarah and her sister would help with the household tasks in exchange for learning English.”¹⁷ Regardless of the motives behind her education, Winnemucca’s understanding of English and Euro-American culture was vital factor in her development as a cultural mediator.¹⁸ Without an insight to white culture and the ability to speak both her native tongue and the English language,

¹⁴ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 38.

¹⁵ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 35.

¹⁶ Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 96.

¹⁷ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 46.

¹⁸ In her autobiography, Winnemucca also mentions that she and her sister Elma briefly attended the Academy of Notre Dame, a convent school in San Jose, California. However, information concerning Winnemucca’s schooling is inconsistent. Canfield addresses these discrepancies in her biography of Winnemucca, and Zanjani and Peyer concur with her conclusions. The amount of time Winnemucca said she spent at the convent school changes from interviews conducted in 1873 and 1879 to her autobiography written in 1883. In the interviews she stated that she and her sister were at the school for three years whereas her autobiography says they were only there for three weeks. Canfield states that there are no records that show that the two sisters were at the school, but that it is possible that this results from their very short stay there. She also concludes that Winnemucca may have claimed to have a more formal education to increase her credibility in Euro-American society.

Winnemucca would have been unable to facilitate communication between her people and the Euro-American invaders.

Her encounters with settlers, her value of Numa culture, and her education, however informal, allowed Winnemucca to advocate for her people as a translator. Having an intimate knowledge of both Numa and Euro-American cultures facilitated her attempts to create an understanding between two significantly different peoples. Winnemucca's first position as an interpreter began in 1869. Though hired several times by the United States government on reservations and military camps, her loyalty remained with her people, not her employer.¹⁹

Unlike Winnemucca, Zitkala Sa received formal Euro-American schooling at a young age; however, like Winnemucca her development as a cultural mediator began at home. In 1876, Zitkala Sa was born to Ellen Simmons on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota. Though her birth name was Gertrude Simmons, as a young adult Zitkala Sa gave herself a Dakota name, which translates to Red Bird, after her sister-in-law accused her of abandoning her family in exchange for a Euro-American education.²⁰ By doing so, Zitkala Sa reaffirmed her cultural ties when they were called into question, asserting that her love of and talent for writing was not a sign that she had discarded Native identity. Zitkala Sa lived with her mother and her brother David until she was eight years old when she was taken to the East for schooling in 1884.²¹ Prior to Zitkala Sa's departure, Simmons developed her daughter's cultural identity, fostered her creativity, and tried to impress upon her daughter that Euro-Americans were dangerous. Zitkala

¹⁹ Cari M. Carpenter and Carolyn Sorisio, ed., *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), xv.

²⁰ Zitkala Sa, Letter to Carlos Montezuma c. June 1901, *Carlos Montezuma Papers*, Microfilm, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

²¹ Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris, ed., *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xv-xvi.

Sa describes her early years on the Yankton Reservation and her mother's lessons in her autobiographical essays, first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900.

Years of violence, land loss, disease, and starvation heavily influenced Zitkala Sa's mother's deep distrust of Euro-Americans. Ellen Simmons experienced the formation of Dakota reservations and was an adult at the time when the United States' violation of the 1868 Treaty of Laramie sparked military encounters between the Dakota and the U.S. military. Stemming from this violation, the Battle of Little Big Horn occurred the year of Zitkala Sa's birth and subsequent violence against the Dakota peoples brought even further devastation.²² In an essay about her childhood, Zitkala Sa recalls her mother saying "we were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away... We traveled many days and nights; not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo."²³ Many of the Dakota peoples were forcibly moved from their lands onto reservations as they were forced to relinquish more and more land. On the reservations, the Dakota had been forced to switch from hunting to farming prior to this act. The transition was a difficult one and many Dakota people starved. This and the introduction of Euro-American diseases increased the death toll. Simmons lost both her brother and a daughter to disease after she and her family were forcibly relocated.²⁴

Too young to remember the atrocities her mother experienced, Zitkala Sa describes a happy and carefree childhood through her autobiographical essays. Some of her fondest

²² Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and other Writings*, xi; Deborah Sue Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader, 1876-1938," PhD diss., University of Wyoming, 1985, 1.

²³ Zitkala Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 69-70.

²⁴ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 2-3.

memories involved listening to her community's elders recite stories and legends. Zitkala Sa's skill as a writer and orator probably stemmed from her love of legends, and close observation of her elders. Along with listening to legends, Zitkala Sa also engaged in hours of unsupervised play with her friends.²⁵ Her mother trusted her and treated her with dignity. Simmons had tried to teach her daughter not to trust white men, telling Zitkala Sa, "my little daughter, he is a sham, —a sickly sham! The bronzed Dakota is the only real man."²⁶ However, this lesson did not last. When white missionaries came to the reservation to obtain more students, Zitkala Sa's curiosity overwhelmed her mother's warnings. Her mother bowed to her relentless pleading and allowed Zitkala Sa to go with the missionaries to Wabash, Indiana. In 1884, she became a student at White's Manual Labor Institute, a Quaker run boarding school.²⁷ Considering Simmons's parenting techniques, it is likely that her respect of Zitkala Sa's ability to make her own decisions, even as an eight-year-old, and the knowledge that her daughter would need some level of education to earn living on or off the reservation, caused her to concede to Zitkala Sa's wishes.

Her mother's lessons allowed Zitkala Sa to see the shortcomings of the boarding school system she encountered. The stark contrast between Simmons's parenting style and the treatment Zitkala Sa received at the hands of her teachers is obvious. She respected her mother, not because she feared her, but because Ellen Simmons did not belittle her daughter and gave her the freedom to be herself. Zitkala Sa was afraid and overwhelmed by her new surroundings, then

²⁵ Zitkala Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," 68-79.

²⁶ Zitkala Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," 69.

²⁷ Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, xv-xvi; Zitkala Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 87-89.

humiliated when a missionary cut her long hair. In her second essay installment in the *Atlantic*, Zitkala Sa lists her sufferings:

Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.²⁸

While in the company of Euro-Americans, Zitkala Sa learned that she would not be treated as an individual. The sense of dignity her mother had nurtured struggled to remain during Zitkala Sa's time at school. None of the adults she encountered spoke her language so she received no words of comfort that she understood.

The essay describing her time at White's Manual Labor Institute provides examples of fear and abuse. While she had experienced love and encouragement from her mother, at school she learned the dangers of not knowing English in a Euro-American world. In her third *Atlantic* article titled "The Snow Episode" Zitkala Sa relates the story of a friend who only knew the word 'no.' Not long after Zitkala Sa and her friends Judéwin and Thowin had arrived at the institute, a white woman called them inside to admonish the girls for playing in the snow. The institute did not allow the freedom of unbridled play the girls had been allowed at home. Judéwin was the only one who knew a little English and advised the others to say 'no' to everything the woman said. Unfortunately, Thowin was scolded first and 'no' enraged rather than placated the woman. Thowin was spanked for her answers while Zitkala Sa and Judéwin stood outside of the woman's office door, listening to their friend's shrieks.²⁹ From this incident, Zitkala Sa learned that Euro-Americans used physical violence to punish children, something she had never

²⁸ Zitkala Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 89-90; shingled hair is cut close to the head. See "shingle," *Dictionary.com*, 2016.

²⁹ Zitkala Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 92-93.

experienced with her mother. Not only was corporal punishment used to encourage good behavior, it also provided Zitkala Sa, and other children, with an incentive to quickly learn English so as to avoid experiencing the same fate as Thowin.

After three years at school, Zitkala Sa returned to the Yankton Reservation in 1887 and stayed with her mother for a year and a half before returning. Instead of feeling at ease, her stay at home caused her more emotional distress. She attempted to secure the identity she had possessed before going to school, but instead Zitkala Sa “seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid.”³⁰ Simmons had not experienced what she had and therefore felt unable to comfort her daughter as she once did. Before Zitkala Sa’s boarding school experience, her mother would have consoled her with kind and reassuring words. Instead, because she knew Zitkala Sa had developed a love of reading, Simmons attempted to comfort her daughter by giving her the only book she owned, given to her by a missionary: the Bible.³¹

Zitkala Sa’s experience was common. Many Native students experienced a cultural rift after returning home. Knowledge students had gained while at school did not always, if at all, translate to realities of reservation life. In his book *Education for Extinction*, David Wallace Adams describes this new form of cultural dissonance: “Whereas the cultural clash between whites and Indians had once been fought on battlefields and in treaty councils, now it advanced to parent-child disagreements over campfires and across kitchen tables.”³² Some students referred to cultural mores they had learned as children as “the old way.” While some conflicts occurred over a lack of modern conveniences students were used to having at school, others

³⁰ Zitkala Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 97.

³¹ Zitkala Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 97-100.

³² David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 277.

centered on religion. Students who had converted to Christianity rejected their previous religious beliefs.³³ Intergenerational differences are not unexpected in any culture, for culture is not a static phenomenon; however, Indian boarding schools certainly influenced these discrepancies. Zitkala Sa's disagreements with her mother are not unusual, but they did center on the continuance of her boarding school education. Ultimately, despite her mother's wishes, she decided to return to school. Although parts of her boarding school experience were traumatizing, Zitkala Sa had developed a love for reading and writing that could not be satisfied on the reservation. She attended Santee Technical School in Nebraska from 1889 to 1890, and then returned to White's Manual Labor Institute until 1895.³⁴

Drawn to higher education, Zitkala Sa enrolled at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana soon after she left White's. Here she was able to nurture her talents as a writer, orator, and a musician. Zitkala Sa's abilities did not go unnoticed. In February 1896, she won the college's oratory contest and went on to compete in the state contest, where she was not only the sole Native American competitor, but also the only female competitor. She won second place with her speech "Side by Side," an address that reveals the beginnings of Zitkala Sa's use of her Euro-American education to point out atrocities committed against Native American peoples.³⁵ "Side by Side" emphasizes the hypocrisy of Euro-American ideals through recounting the Europeans' arrival to North America in search of freedom. Though she romanticizes Native American life prior to European invasion, her message is clear: Europeans, claiming to bring civilization to the "New World" are responsible for the degradation of Native American peoples and are just as violent and savage as they portray the American Indian to be. She cites witch trials, violent

³³ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 277-278.

³⁴ Zitkala Sa, "School Days of an Indian Girl" 100-101; Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, xvi-xvii; Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 8-9.

³⁵ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 10-11.

disputes between Christian sects, and unprovoked violence against Native Americans as evidence.³⁶ In the wake of these criticisms, Zitkala Sa calls on Americans to enact their claims of “Christian brotherhood” and treat Native Americans as equals, given the same opportunities as other Americans:

Idealists dream that in this commonwealth of all humanity the divine spark in man shall be the only test of citizenship, and we think of their dream as future history. America entered upon her career of freedom and prosperity with the declaration that “all men are born free and equal.” Her prosperity has advanced in proportion as she has preserved to her citizens this birthright of freedom and equality. Aside from the claims of a common humanity, can you as consistent Americans deny equal opportunities with yourselves to an American people in their struggle to rise from ignorance and degradation? The claims of brotherhood, of the love that is due a neighbor-race, and of tardy justice have not been wholly lost on your hearts and consciences.³⁷

Unfortunately, Zitkala Sa fell ill not long after the state oratory contest and had to withdraw from school in 1897 at the age of twenty-one. However, this did not end her success as a writer, nor her education in music. She had regularly contributed to Earlham’s student newspaper and regularly performed in concerts while in college. After Zitkala Sa left school, she sought to insert herself in literary circles and further develop her musical talents. In 1899, she enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston to study music and violin. A year later, at the age of twenty-four, Zitkala Sa published several short stories about her childhood in *The Atlantic Monthly* and by 1901 she had published her first book, *Old Indian Legends*.³⁸ Her publications reveal her role as a cultural mediator, for she strove to inform the Euro-American public about the experiences and culture of her people.

³⁶ Zitkala Sa, “Side by Side,” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 222-224.

³⁷ Zitkala Sa, “Side by Side,” 225-226.

³⁸ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 9-10; Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, xvii-xviii.

Later in her life when she was thirty-eight, Zitkala Sa was able to expand her role as a voice for Native American peoples when she joined the Society of American Indians (SAI) in 1914. Founded in 1911, the SAI primarily consisted of educated middle-class Native Americans. The organization only lasted twelve years, weakened by internal disagreements over the function and existence of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, education methods, and the Peyote Religion emerged not long after the society was founded.³⁹ Despite its limitations, the SAI created an important space for Native Americans like Zitkala Sa, who had become cultural mediators because of their Euro-American education, to debate methods of ensuring the physical and cultural survival of their people. The purpose of the SAI was to “bring together all progressive Indians and friends of Indian progress for the purpose of promoting the highest interests of the race and the individual.”⁴⁰

Zitkala Sa’s education gave her the skills she needed to communicate with the Euro-American world. She mastered the English language and became a skilled writer. Her mother had encouraged Zitkala Sa’s creativity and individuality and both qualities are visible in her writing. While her mother and her childhood experiences did not encourage her to trust white people, Zitkala Sa turned to writing as a source of comfort and developed it into a tool to shape her own identity and to critique aspects of Euro-American culture.

Unlike Winnemucca, Zitkala Sa’s education occurred while she was isolated from her community. Instead of observing the power of learning English from a family member, Zitkala Sa was taught by strangers. Because she did not connect with her teachers, Zitkala Sa developed friendships with her fellow classmates and turned to her studies to cope. Winnemucca’s

³⁹ Peyer, *The Thinking Indian*, 271-277; Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 84-85.

⁴⁰ “Statement of Goals,” Second Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians in “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader, 1876-1938,” by Deborah Sue Welch, PhD diss., University of Wyoming, 1985, 244.

acquisition of Euro-American mores and language helped her gain a prominent role among her people whereas Zitkala Sa became an outsider in her own community. As a young adult she had to struggle to build her identity. This struggle prepared Zitkala Sa for her role as a cultural mediator. Her liminal position and skill as a writer allowed her to become an activist for her people while simultaneously reforming the Native community. By contrast, Winnemucca's role as a translator did not emerge from a loss of identity, but it did firmly place her between Native and Euro-American worlds. Though each acquired her skills in different ways, both women strove to use their status to remedy their people's grievances.

Fighting for Land Rights

Sarah Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa attempted to use their roles as cultural mediators to reclaim land for Native Americans. The two women's relationship with the Dawes Act heavily influenced their struggle to secure land for Native peoples. Also known as the General Allotment Act, the Dawes Act was proposed by Senator Henry Dawes and passed in 1887. Its purpose was to divide Native American lands into allotments that would be given to individual Native American families, so as to gradually dismantle the reservation system and transform Native Americans into respectable farmers.⁴¹ Winnemucca initially supported this idea. From her perspective, obtaining land allotments would have allowed the Numa to lay claim to land that was rapidly being invaded by Euro-American settlers, escape the indignity and danger of being government wards on reservations, and create a safe place independent from Euro-American society. After she had established herself as an activist, Winnemucca wrote and spoke to Dawes

⁴¹ Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 41.

about his bill in 1883 showing her support. However, she did critique the bill and suggested that, chiefs, not the secretary of the Interior, should have the power to give their tribal members plots of land. Dawes listened to her ideas and welcomed her support, but he did not incorporate her suggestions, thus the bill that passed was not what Winnemucca had envisioned.⁴²

In hindsight, the Dawes Act was clearly disastrous. Instead of ensuring landholdings, the government held each allotment in a trust, labeled sixty million acres of tribal land as “surplus,” and sold it to Euro-Americans; this greatly increased white settlement.⁴³ Zitkala Sa, who did not become active in Indian affairs until after the act’s passage, experienced the aftermath of the Dawes Act and strove to address the problems it caused. Winnemucca’s support for the Dawes Act must be kept within the context of her people’s experiences prior to its enactment in order to be understood. Corruption on the reservations and Euro-American violence toward the Numa encouraged her to seek a remedy for the Numa’s suffering. Winnemucca believed the Dawes Act would be that remedy.

Before the arrival of Euro-American immigrants, the Numa were hunter-gatherer peoples.⁴⁴ This was the best response to living in the Great Basin region, which is both mountainous and arid. The only fertile land existed along the rivers, so farming was not a practical way to sustain the entirety of the Numa population. So as not to overwhelm the available food sources, the Numa organized themselves into several small bands comprised of a few family groups. Each band occupied different regions of land and relied on the resources available in their territory. Maintaining a nomadic lifestyle allowed resources time to replenish

⁴² Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 243-244.

⁴³ Andrew S. McClure, “Sarah Winnemucca: [Post]Indian Princess and Voice of the Paiutes,” *MELUS* 24, no. 2 (1999): 35.

⁴⁴ Even after the introduction of the horse, the Numa’s subsistence strategy did not change. It was not until after 1845 that the Numa began riding horses. Prior to this, they had used the animals as a food source. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 37.

before a band returned to an area within their region, and enabled the Numa to access food items only available during specific seasons.⁴⁵ Surviving in the Great Basin required skill and extensive knowledge of the land, plants, and animals. Coming from a society that valued agriculture and a stationary life-style, immigrants did not respect the Numa's abilities and often referred to them as "digger Indians" in reference to the way Numa women gathered roots and bulbs.⁴⁶ The arrival of white settlers and creation of the reservation system limited the Numa's available territory, which in turn affected their method of subsistence. Euro-American immigrants established their settlements on the small amount of fertile land within the Great Basin and their livestock polluted the rivers. The Numa were cut off from gathering grounds, hunting grounds, and fishing areas. Their way of life depended on a balanced ecosystem and white settlers severely disrupted that balance. The land designated for the Pyramid Lake, Malheur, and Yakama reservations was unsuitable for hunting-gathering subsistence, so the Numa were forced to adopt agriculture as a mode of subsistence.⁴⁷

Euro-Americans also affected the Numa's power structure. Because the Numa were organized into bands, one chief did not preside over all of the Numa. Each band had a headman and, although Poito was the headman of the Kuyuidika-a, his power was not absolute. Elders also held authority and conferred with the headman before some decisions were finalized, but when general councils were called, both men and women of the entire band contributed to decision-making.⁴⁸ As encounters with Euro-Americans increased, the distributed power structure proved unsuitable for interacting with white settlers. Though she did not dislike the Numa's way of life

⁴⁵ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 7-8.

⁴⁶ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 5-6.

⁴⁷ McClure, "Sarah Winnemucca," 34.

⁴⁸ Women sat in a separate circle, but they were still able to voice opinions that held value. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 9.

prior to these occurrences, Winnemucca concluded that it was necessary to reform their power structure. The settlers did not understand that the Numa hierarchy was distributed and thought they could influence the appointment of a chief.⁴⁹ Because he was knowledgeable about white customs and could speak English, within the Kuyuidika-a Truckee became the voice of authority on encounters with Euro-Americans. Winnemucca expanded upon this and referred to her grandfather as the “chief of the entire [Numa] nation.”⁵⁰ Aware of the power structure within Euro-American society, Winnemucca felt that establishing a few powerful figures would simplify Numa and Euro-American interactions. Depicting her grandfather and father as authority figures in her narrative legitimized her ability to speak for the Numa, but also undermined the original power dynamic of her people.⁵¹ Though Winnemucca’s support for her grandfather’s position as chief did not necessarily mean that all the Numa considered him to be so, this title allowed her to claim some amount of authority when interacting with Euro-Americans.

Because reservations and loss of territory confined them to smaller areas of land, Winnemucca believed it was necessary for the Numa to shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture. By the mid-1870s she had witnessed a few Numa bands successfully make this shift. However, after experiencing the Pyramid, Walker, Malheur, and Yakama reservations, which held not only the Numa, but also the Shoshone, Bannocks, and other Native American tribes in the Great Basin, she knew the Numa could not learn to farm and survive under the reservation system. When reservation agents did not supply Native Americans with proper equipment, or teach them how to farm, they had to rely on rations provided by the government for survival. In

⁴⁹ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 87.

⁵⁰ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 5, 19-21

⁵¹ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 4; McClure, “Sarah Winnemucca,” 41.

these cases, corruption within the Indian Office, most commonly in the form of “Indian Rings” caused many Native Americans to starve. In these “rings,” white Indian Office employees in charge of supplying reservations with rations, who sought to make a profit off of the goods they administered, worked with agents and the politicians who appointed them to sell “surplus” rations that should have gone to the Native Americans.⁵² Even when Native Americans did farm on reservations, the land the government set aside for them was not always fertile enough for successful agriculture, as was the case on the Pyramid reservation. At Pyramid, the Numa also had to worry about Euro-Americans settling on reservation land and allowing their cattle to destroy Numa crops. The agents there either did not try, or they had little success protecting reservation boundaries.⁵³ In order to be successful farmers, Winnemucca knew that the Numa needed more than just the skill to farm; they needed to have land they could call their own that was not under the control of the government.

Winnemucca first witnessed the Numa successfully farm at Malheur Reservation. Formed in 1872 in southeastern Oregon, Malheur initially brought hope to Winnemucca and her family. Prior to her employment as an interpreter at Malheur in 1875, Winnemucca’s brother Natches had clashed with the agents at the Walker and Pyramid reservations. Natches was subsequently jailed in 1874 for protesting against the agents’ mistreatment of his people.⁵⁴ But Samuel B. Parrish, Malheur’s agent, the chief administrator of the reservation, was different.

⁵² Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 125; Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 19.

⁵³ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 88.

⁵⁴ Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 106-107; The Numa living in the Humboldt region were informed that agent Ingalls was issuing blankets at Walker Reservation. After they arrived to do so, Ingalls told the Numa they could receive the blankets at Pyramid Reservation. Agent Bateman told the Numa he was not issuing blankets and suggested they go back to Ingalls. Natches confronted Bateman, but the Numa never received blankets. Responding to this incident and a rumor that the Numa were going to be forced onto reservations away from reservations on their territory, Natches discussed the matters with the editor of the *Humboldt Register*. Bateman, who had been criticized by Winnemucca in the past, brought charges against Natches for causing unrest among the Numa, resulting in his arrest. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 114-115.

Parrish had come to the West as a child with his family in 1840 and was known for being sympathetic toward Native Americans. For Winnemucca's services as his interpreter, Parrish paid her forty dollars a month and provided her with a place to live. Instead of devoting his time to missionary work, Parrish primarily focused on teaching the Numa at Malheur to farm. Parrish also allowed the Numa to keep what they grew.⁵⁵ This set him apart from Pyramid's agent, whom Winnemucca openly condemned for forcing the Numa to relinquish two thirds of their produce and selling it for his own benefit.⁵⁶

Because Parrish could not speak the Numa's language, Winnemucca's arrival enabled him to communicate his view of his position to them. He told them that "we must work while the government is helping us, and learn to help ourselves...for the government is not always going to help us...The reservation is all yours. The government has given it all to you and your children."⁵⁷ He was the first agent to earn Winnemucca's respect. Under Parrish's direction, the Numa learned different subsistence skills. Within a year, they constructed fences, a carpentry shop, a smithy, a school house, cleared and planted 120 acres, and dug a two-mile-long irrigation ditch. The conditions at Malheur far surpassed those at Pyramid.⁵⁸ Winnemucca's prior experiences and interactions with Parrish led her to conclude that a new method of survival was needed after the Euro-Americans invaded the West, and the Numa were more than capable of survival if they had the means to farm. Parrish was patronizing and referred to the Numa as his children, but unlike other agents he was honest with them. He consulted the Numa before enacting his plans, stopped Euro-Americans from encroaching on reservation land, and did not

⁵⁵ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 128-131.

⁵⁶ Catherine S. Fowler, "Sarah Winnemucca: Northern Paiute, ca. 1844-1891," in *American Indian Intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. By Margot Liberty (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 40.

⁵⁷ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 106.

⁵⁸ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 31.

force the elderly to work.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Parrish was unpopular with the local white settlers and they lodged complaints claiming he “[treated] the Indians too well: he gave them too much food and clothing, he overpaid his workers, and he failed to economize on his system of farming to sustain the Indians.”⁶⁰ In addition to this, Parrish, the son of Methodist missionary, did not strongly promote Christian beliefs even though “all the reservations were to be under the Christian men’s care.”⁶¹ Winnemucca, her father, and two other Numa headmen, Egan and Oytes, attempted to use their military connections at Camp Harney to prevent Parrish’s departure. They asked their ally Major Green to send a letter to Washington on the Numa’s behalf. He did so without hesitation and added, “It seems to me strange to remove an agent who is doing so much for the Indians, and one whom they are so unwilling to lose.” However, these efforts were in vain and in March of 1876, Parrish was dismissed and President Grant appointed former army officer and Baptist, William Rinehart to replace him.⁶²

Rinehart quickly dismantled the agreeable living conditions at the Malheur Reservation. His authoritarian methods sharply contrasted against Parrish’s diplomatic approach and Winnemucca and the rest of the Numa disliked him almost immediately. Winnemucca’s father, Poito, who was willing to remain at Malheur while Parrish was the agent, refused to live there under Rinehart and retreated to the mountains with most of the Kuyuidika-a. During his first meeting with the Numa, Rinehart informed them that the reservation was not their land; it belonged solely to the government as did their crops. Egan quickly protested and Rinehart simply responded “I don’t care whether any of you stay or not. You can all go away if you do not

⁵⁹ Siobhan Senier, *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 98.

⁶⁰ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 134-135.

⁶¹ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 118.

⁶² Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 135; Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 107.

like the way I do.”⁶³ Winnemucca remained on the reservation as Rinehart’s translator, but she did so to help the Numa, not Rinehart.⁶⁴

The new agent completely changed Parrish’s system of payment and ration distribution. Instead of offering the Numa wages for their work, Rinehart paid them with rations instead. Rinehart also gave white employees access to the goods that were supposed to be reserved for the Numa. Concerned for his band’s survival, Egan, the headman, once again confronted Rinehart and received the same answer. At the time, Winnemucca had no solution to the problems at hand and suggested they wait to see if the situation improved. It did not. Due to the Indian Department’s incompetence, Malheur did not receive its much needed rations until after winter began. Because Rinehart did not reserve supplies for the Numa and seized all of the crops they produced, the threat of starvation was imminent.⁶⁵ After Rinehart ceased issuing rations all together, Winnemucca confronted him about his policy and said “Mr. [Rinehart], why did you not tell me right before [Parrish] when he was telling you about my wheat? If you had then said it did not belong to us, I would not have told my people about it.” He did not answer her question. Instead he simply repeated what he always said when confronted about the low food supply: everything belonged to the government.⁶⁶ His careless attitude toward keeping Native Americans on the Malheur reservation did not match federal policy. In the 1870s, the government focused on confining Native American peoples to their reservations, not drive them away. Prior to his position as reservation agent, Rinehart had served in Oregon’s volunteer

⁶³ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 110-111; Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 107; Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 124.

⁶⁴ Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 107.

⁶⁵ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 111-112.

⁶⁶ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 133.

cavalry and against Native Americans. It is likely he never grew to see Native Americans as anything other than an enemy and therefore saw no need to treat them humanely.⁶⁷

Mismanaging rations and appropriating crops were not Rinehart's only faults; he had a violent temper. In her autobiography, Winnemucca describes Rinehart beating a young boy. He thought the child was laughing at him and said "Sarah, that little devil laughed at me...I will beat the very life out of him. I won't have any of the Indians laughing at me."⁶⁸ Rinehart almost shot another young boy named Johnny who ignored one of his orders. Luckily Winnemucca and her brother Lee interfered on the boy's behalf and, instead of killing the child, Rinehart handcuffed him and left him in a shed overnight. Rinehart's violent tendencies and his indifference toward the starving Numa drove Winnemucca to report his behavior. Shortly after Johnny was handcuffed, according to her autobiography, she sent a letter to Washington testifying against Rinehart.⁶⁹ She cites this as the main reason for her dismissal, but Rinehart also blamed Winnemucca for the Numa's discontent. He believed that Winnemucca encouraged her people to rebel against his policies and did not acknowledge his own role in the short supply of rations.

Even after she was fired, Winnemucca continued to speak out against Rinehart. Before she left the reservation she and Egan rode sixty miles to Camp Harney and reported Rinehart's behavior to the commanding officer.⁷⁰ They reported Rinehart's actions to Major Green and persuaded him to inspect the reservation. Unfortunately Green did not find any fault with Rinehart during his inspection. Winnemucca's alliance with the Army failed to yield desirable results. It is possible that Rinehart was civil during Green's inspection and successfully

⁶⁷ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 20; Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 137.

⁶⁸ Hopkins 128

⁶⁹ Zanjani mentions this in her biography, but she notes that no record of Winnemucca's letter has been found. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 139; Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 134.

⁷⁰ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 131-134.

convinced Green of his innocence, but Rinehart's status as ex-military may also have influenced the outcome of Green's inspection. After Winnemucca's army connection's failed, she remained on the reservation a few weeks longer before moving to Canyon City. Egan and his people also left the reservation not long after Winnemucca. Even though General Howard of Camp Harney provided a supply of blankets after he learned Rinehart did not have enough supplies to sustain the Numa, Egan knew his people would starve if they remained. By the spring 1879, all of the Numa people had left Malheur and Rinehart realized his actions had jeopardized his position. He tried to persuade the men and women he had driven away to return to his reservation, but ultimately failed to get any of them to return.⁷¹

The Numa's problems with reservations did not end with Malheur. In the beginning of June in 1878, the Bannock War broke out after the government failed to prevent Euro-American settlers from encroaching upon reservation lands. The war involved several Numa bands, the Northern Shoshones and the Bannocks. After the war ended in September, problems arose at the Yakama Reservation. Most of Winnemucca's band, the Kuyuidika-a, had not been involved, but the government no longer trusted any of the Native Americans in the Great Basin region to remain peaceful. This damaged the relationship between Winnemucca and her army contacts, meaning she could no longer rely on the military for support.⁷² While positioned at Camp Harney as an interpreter, Winnemucca was given orders to go to Camp McDermitt and bring all the Numa who had lived at Malheur before the war, back to Camp Harney. The Army planned to return them to Malheur and, knowing that Rinehart was still at the reservation, the Numa felt uneasy. Natches, who was at McDermitt when Winnemucca arrived, tried to encourage them to trust the Army, but he was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the Numa decided to go to Harney.

⁷¹ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 140-142, 195-196.

⁷² Peyer, *"The Thinking Indian,"* 108-110.

Before he returned to McDermit, Natches and the rest of the Numa agreed that Leggins, a member of the Kuyuidika-a, would act as their chief.⁷³

However, the commanding officer at Camp Harney, Captain Cochran, was given new orders. Instead of being taken back to Malheur, the reservation on land they were familiar with, Winnemucca's people and all of the other Numa at the camp were to be taken to the Yakama Reservation. This was punishment for all the Numa who had left Malheur, not just those who had participated in the war. General McDowell, who remained friendly toward Winnemucca and her people after the war, protested this decision, but in the end he could not sway those who felt severe punishment for all the Numa was necessary. Because she was employed as the Army's translator, Winnemucca was the one who had to inform the Numa about the change in proceedings. Her words were not taken kindly and many refused to speak with her. Though she was not required to go to Yakama, Winnemucca went anyway, perhaps as a way to gain back her people's trust and share their suffering.⁷⁴

The journey to Yakama was dangerous. The Numa were forced to walk three hundred and fifty miles through the snow in the middle of winter. They did not have enough clothing and were treated like criminals. While the men were shackled, soldiers dragged any women who were not willing to walk. This trek was a "small-scale repetition of the Cherokee Trail of Tears," for several of the Numa died along the way and nearly all suffered from exposure and starvation.⁷⁵ The Yakama agent, Reverend James H Wilbur, was not forewarned in time to prepare for the Numa's arrival. A shed was hastily constructed as a crude form of shelter and

⁷³ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 151.

⁷⁴ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 190-192.

⁷⁵ Peyer, "*The Thinking Indian*," 109; Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 192.

Wilbur did not have enough food and clothing to sufficiently supply the Numa. Many more died after reaching the reservation.⁷⁶

Her experience at Malheur and the aftermath of the Bannock War showed Winnemucca how precarious the Numa's lives were while living on land run by government employees. Because the government ran the reservations and did not recognize the Numa as owners of their communal off-reservation territory, it felt justified in forcibly uprooting Numa bands. But Winnemucca's initial support for the Dawes Act extended past addressing the corrupt reservation system. She understood that the Numa needed land they could legitimately call their own, outside of government control, to defend themselves against Euro-American violence. Any of the Numa people who lived in close proximity to Euro-American settlers were in danger of being viewed as hostiles and killed without question. In March of 1865, a large number of Kuyuidika-a were slaughtered near Mud Lake in Nevada, including Winnemucca's mother, her sister Mary, and her baby brother. A young officer named Captain Almond B. Wells was informed that a group of Native American cattle thieves were camped by the lake. Upon their arrival, he and his company killed twenty-nine Numa people.⁷⁷ In her autobiography, Winnemucca emphasizes that the attack was unprovoked and the soldiers "killed almost all the people that were there...It was all old men, women and children that were killed."⁷⁸ Luckily her father had taken the young men of his band on a hunting trip so they did not encounter the soldiers. One of Winnemucca's sisters, who was present during the massacre, managed to escape and related the tragedy to Winnemucca who was about twenty-one at the time.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 155.

⁷⁷ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 78.

⁷⁸ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 77.

⁷⁹ Peyer, "The Thinking Indian," 98.

In addition to the threat of death, close proximity with white settlers created specific dangers for Numa women. Traditionally, Numa women gathered the majority of their people's diet while the men hunted to supplement the rest of their caloric intake. However, Euro-American invasion of Numa lands forced women to alter their contribution to their people's survival. Some became wage workers in newly established settlements, while others extracted resources from new places such as discarded food piles. Both of these adaptations drew women further away from the safety of their homes and made them susceptible to sexual assault.⁸⁰ White settlers, prior to their trek west, believed in the dichotomy of "the 'Indian princess' to symbolize virtue...and her 'darker twin' the 'squaw'" to symbolize animalistic sexuality.⁸¹ Like the land, Euro-American men viewed Numa women as another resource, theirs for the taking.

To understand the type of violence Numa women encountered, their experiences must be viewed in the context of conquest. Numa women were not targeted solely because of their gender; they were also targeted because of their race and their position as a "conquered" people. Sarah Deer, a legal scholar who primarily focuses on the issue of sexual violence committed against Native people, points out that "the dehumanization of Native peoples, which was used to justify the seizure of land, is similar to the dehumanization of women, used to justify or minimize the harm of sexual violence."⁸² Rape is primarily about asserting power, not about satisfying sexual desires. When Euro-American men raped Numa women, they did not just assert their power over individual women, but caused fear among the Numa as a whole.⁸³ Winnemucca saw the potential for the Dawes Act to reduce this fear. Acquiring plots of land would give the

⁸⁰ Rose Stremlau, "Rape Narratives on the Northern Paiute Frontier: Sarah Winnemucca, Sexual Sovereignty, and Economic Autonomy, 1844-1891," in *Portraits of Women in the American West*, ed. Dee Garceau-Hagen (New York: Routledge, 2005), 44-45

⁸¹ Stremlau, "Rape Narratives," 46.

⁸² Sarah Deer, "Toward an Indigenous Jurisprudence of Rape," *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy* 14, no. 121 (2004): 132.

⁸³ Stremlau, "Rape Narratives," 47.

Numa a legitimate space to defend against sexual predators, and using these plots to farm would reduce the need for Numa women to travel far from home to support their families.

Winnemucca cites several examples of the Numa's fear of sexual assault in her autobiography. Speaking about the Numa as a whole, she states "my people have been so unhappy for a long time they wish now to disincrease [sic], instead of multiply. The mothers are afraid to have more children, for fear they shall have daughters, who are not safe even in their mother's presence."⁸⁴ This also connects directly to Winnemucca's first experience among white men without the protection of her grandfather, Truckee. While Truckee and his family were working on the Scott ranch in California, several white men attempted to rape Mary, Winnemucca's older sister. After directly asking her mother to give Mary to them and receiving a refusal, the men relentlessly pursued the teenaged girl even in the presence of Winnemucca's mother and uncles. They were all afraid of being killed, so at night Winnemucca and her family would leave their camp and hide. It was only after the situation escalated and her uncles were forced to fight the would-be rapists that the family was housed with their employer for protection.⁸⁵ Later in her life, Winnemucca was aware that traveling alone put her at risk of sexual assault. To protect herself, she carried a knife and relied on family members. For example, during a trip to the Yakama Reservation, her cousin Joe Winnemucca accompanied her for part of the journey. He informed Winnemucca that they had to pass a dangerous where "sometimes [the men] would throw a rope over our women, and do fearful things to them" and offered his protection.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 48.

⁸⁵ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 34.

⁸⁶ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 228.

In the context of starvation, violence, and rape, Winnemucca's desire for allotted land that would allow her people to live and farm together away from white settlers is understandable. Farming on designated land would contrast sharply from the Numa's traditional way of life, but that way of life was already being destroyed by the reservation system and the threat of Euro-American violence. In an effort to present an alternative to the reservation system, Winnemucca sent a letter to Major H. Douglas in 1870, briefly criticizing the system and then suggesting this remedy:

...if the Indians have any guarantee that they can secure a permanent home on their own native soil, and that our white neighbors can be kept from encroaching on our rights, after having a reasonable share of ground allotted to us as our own, and giving us the same required advantages of learning, I warrant that the savage (as he is called to-day) will be a thrifty and law-abiding member of the community fifteen or twenty years hence.⁸⁷

Winnemucca's primary concern for her people was keeping them safe with their community intact. After the Bannock war and the Yakama Reservation fiasco, she stressed this in the petition she sent to Congress in 1884. It states that the restoration of the Malheur Reservation to the Numa will allow them to "enjoy the lands in severalty without [losing] their tribal relations, so essential to their happiness and good character, and where their citizenship, implied in this distribution of land will defend them from the encroachments of white settlers, so detrimental to their interests and their virtues."⁸⁸ The wording of both her letter and the petition clearly shows that Winnemucca did not view allotment as an individualizing concept. Even when using the term severalty, she refers to the land as collectively owned. Her support for the Dawes Act does not mean Winnemucca advocated changing the Numa's collective identity, because she

⁸⁷ Sarah Winnemucca, "Letter From Sarah Winnemucca, An Educated Pah-ute Woman" in *A Century of Dishonor* by Helen Hunt Jackson, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 395-396.

⁸⁸ Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, "Petition from Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins for Land Rights for Piute Indians and for the Reunion of that Portion of the Tribe Forcibly Separated during the Bannock War" petition, 1884, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

still valued tribal relations. The Dawes Act she envisioned for the protection of her people never occurred.

Zitkala Sa, who did not become active in Indian affairs until after the act's passage, witnessed the devastation the Dawes Act caused. The act failed as a tool to change all Native Americans into farmers, but was highly successful in making Native American land holdings accessible to Euro-Americans. Native land holdings decreased from 138 million acres to 55 million acres between 1887 and 1934. In addition to the sale of reservation lands that were not allotted to Native Americans, some land loss resulted from Native owners selling their allotments after the trust period ended.⁸⁹ Zitkala Sa, alarmed by the rapid loss of land, appealed to chiefs and headmen of Native tribes in a letter published in 1919, asking them to encourage their people to retain their inherited lands. She feared that "[Native Americans] are selling their lands too fast without consideration for the future children of our race."⁹⁰ However, allotments of land did not guarantee that Native Americans would be able to sustain themselves. Many Natives were given infertile land and therefore could not produce enough crops to become self-sufficient. Preparing land for farming also required equipment that Native peoples could not always afford.⁹¹ Bearing this in mind, it is not difficult to understand why they would sell their land in an attempt to escape poverty. Zitkala Sa's letter seems to overlook these factors.

However, a year after she published the letter, Zitkala Sa was exposed to issues other than poverty that Native Americans faced when trying to retain their land. In 1920 on the Yankton Reservation, Zitkala Sa's birthplace, a non-Native woman named Ellen C. Bluestone

⁸⁹ Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 269.

⁹⁰ Zitkala Sa, "Letter to the Chiefs and Headmen of the Tribes," in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 199-200.

⁹¹ Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 269.

petitioned for a Yankton allotment, claiming to be the daughter of a Dakota woman. Bluestone gained an allotment and was added to the tribal rolls, meaning that in the eyes of the U.S. government, she had the right to claim a Yankton allotment.⁹² The nature of the Dawes Act allowed for cases like this to happen. Requesting an allotment and pretending to have Native American ancestry was an easy way for non-Natives to gain land should have been reserved for Native Americans. Zitkala Sa contacted the Indian Office to dispute Bluestone's claims and, in March of 1921, a hearing began to investigate Bluestone. David Simmons, Zitkala Sa's brother, built a case against Bluestone by gathering affidavits from Yankton elders, who testified that Bluestone did not have Native ancestry. Unfortunately, despite strong evidence against her, the Indian Office upheld Bluestone's allotment claim.⁹³

Though she and her brother were unsuccessful in the Bluestone case, the case encouraged Zitkala Sa to become more involved in protecting Native Americans from further land loss. Working as an investigator for the General Federation of Women's Clubs' Indian Welfare Committee, Zitkala Sa and two men, Charles H. Fabens from the American Indian Defense Association and Matthew K. Sniffen from the Indian Rights Association, investigated cases of land loss of the "Five Civilized Tribes," or the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole, in Oklahoma in 1923.⁹⁴ Originally, the Dawes Act did not require the five nations to undergo the allotment process. However, Euro-Americans pressured the government to allot the five nations' territory. Oklahoma lands were highly desirable because they contained rich farming and grazing lands and a significant amount of oil. In 1893, Euro-Americans got their

⁹² Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 174-175.

⁹³ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 175.

⁹⁴ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 178-179, 182, 184.

wish as the five tribes were forced to undergo the allotment process. Fifteen million acres of land were labeled as “surplus” and opened for purchase.⁹⁵

Influenced by the push for Oklahoma to achieve statehood, Congress passed the Burke Act in 1906, which made Native landownership even more vulnerable. The act allowed the secretary of the interior to declare Native Americans with allotments incompetent, and extend their trust period, meaning the land remained under the ownership of the government.⁹⁶ Then, in 1908, Congress opened Native lands in Oklahoma even further to Euro-Americans by lifting the trust restrictions and “took from the Interior Department all jurisdiction over Indian probate matters in Eastern Oklahoma and transferred it to the local county courts.”⁹⁷ After declaring all Native peoples in Eastern Oklahoma incompetent, the courts appointed Euro-American guardians and attorneys to oversee their estates. Euro-Americans scrambled to gain control of these estates and guardians often forced their dependents to lose any claim to their estate.⁹⁸

Zitkala Sa, Febens, and Sniffen’s 1923 investigation yielded disturbing results. They examined 14,229 probate cases in six counties and found that many Native Americans were forced to pay excessive fees to administrators of their estates. In cases where the estates were willed to children, some guardians were guilty of severely neglecting their dependents so as to gain control of the property when the child eventually died. Native Americans with oil on their property were in particular danger of being threatened or harmed by their guardians, who wanted ownership of such lucrative property.⁹⁹ Each of the investigators gathered different sets of

⁹⁵ Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 263, 265; Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 182-183.

⁹⁶ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 228.

⁹⁷ Gertrude Bonnin, Charles H. Fabens, and Matthew K. Sniffen, *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians: An Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes –Legalized Robbery* (Philadelphia: Office of the Indian Rights Association, 1924), 5.

⁹⁸ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 183-184.

⁹⁹ Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, 5-7.

information, which were later compiled into a report published in 1924. Sniffen and Fabens were responsible for gathering evidence that revealed corruption within Oklahoma's courts. Court judges awarded lucrative guardian appointments to those who supported political careers. Zitkala Sa collected anecdotal evidence of Native peoples who had been abused and stripped of their land.¹⁰⁰

Her talents as a writer enabled Zitkala Sa to effectively communicate the horrors individual Native Americans experienced in Oklahoma. One case involved an eighteen-year-old Native American woman named Millie Neharkey, who was kidnapped, raped, and forced to sign over the rights to her oil-rich land by employees of the Gladys Belle Oil Company not long before her eighteenth birthday. Neharkey's property was valued at \$150,000, and although her guardian was prosecuted, she was denied access to her property while her case was being investigated.¹⁰¹ After Neharkey's case, Zitkala Sa details two more cases in which Native owners of oil-rich land lost their properties to their guardians and summarizes another seven cases. Zitkala Sa, Fabens, and Sniffen concluded that they gathered more than enough evidence to prove the existence of corruption within the Oklahoma courts and the dangers guardians pose to their Native American dependents, and demanded justice for the victims.¹⁰² Their report successfully prompted a Congressional investigation, but the hearings that followed resulted in the exoneration of the county courts. Fortunately, newspaper editors throughout the United States caught wind of the story and publicly denounced the outcome of the hearings. Driven by the Oklahoma Bar Association's push for a bill to further investigate the courts, the Oklahoma

¹⁰⁰ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 185; Bonnini, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 10-36.

¹⁰¹ Bonnini, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 23-26.

¹⁰² Bonnini, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 26-39.

legislature passed the Frye Bill. Though a small victory, this bill placed maximum limits on the fees guardians and attorneys could charge their dependents.¹⁰³

Zitkala Sa and Sarah Winnemucca held two completely different perspectives of the Dawes Act. Unaware of the devastation the act would cause once it passed, Winnemucca viewed the act as a way for the Numa to escape the indignity and danger of reservations. In theory, allotments could have allowed the Numa to become self-sufficient by producing their own food, instead of relying on the government for rations. Initially only Natives who were considered “civilized” and capable of becoming farmers were awarded allotments. However, the expense of farm equipment and lack of fertile land prevented Native Americans from surviving without government aid. In addition to this, because the Dawes act stipulated that allotments be held in a trust for twenty-five years, Native Americans with allotments did not actually own their land and were still wards of the government.¹⁰⁴ Zitkala Sa not only saw these effects of the Dawes Act, but also witnessed Euro-American attempts to gain access to Native lands. Unlike Winnemucca, Zitkala Sa was only eleven-years-old when the Dawes Act passed and therefore only saw the act’s appalling results, not its potential.

Obtaining Citizenship

The failure of the Dawes Act signaled the collapse of Senator Henry Dawes’s goal to transform Native Americans into respectable farmers with male-headed family households. Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa had also believed acquiring land would help Native Americans become respectable in the eyes of Euro-Americans. However, there were other ways to obtain respectability. Zitkala Sa and Winnemucca both appealed to Euro-American notions of

¹⁰³ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 190-193.

¹⁰⁴ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 41-42, 228; Uteley, *The Indian Frontier*, 269.

respectability by reshaping and redefining aspects of Native identities. This included promoting Euro-American education among Native Americans, shaping the way Euro-Americans viewed Native cultures through writing, and condemning Native practices that were deemed unrespectable. Prior to the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa attempted to use respectability as a tool to gain access to resources available to U.S. citizens, while still preserving aspects of Native cultures. Winnemucca did not live long enough to see the passage of the act, but Zitkala Sa did and was able to use the act to appeal to the government on the grounds of citizenship, rather than respectability.

Euro-Americans saw the English language as a mark of “civilization.” Because of this, Sarah Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa were able to use the English language and Euro-American education as negotiation tools. Euro-Americans were not going to learn their languages, so Native Americans learned English to gain some amount of power against their oppressors. Learning English was double-sided: an aspect of assimilation, but also a weapon. Zitkala Sa and Winnemucca were able to publicly condemn certain Euro-American practices because they could speak and write in English. Zitkala Sa in particular saw English as a form of universal language among the many different tribes. She wanted to use English, not as a form of submission, but as a form of unification. In a letter published in *American Indian Magazine* in 1919, Zitkala Sa urged chiefs and headmen of Native American tribes across North America to encourage their people to learn English. “Very often I have wished that you could write to me in a language we both would understand perfectly. I could then profit by your advice in many things, and you would know you were not forgotten.”¹⁰⁵ The Indian Office was one of the driving forces behind pushing Native American children into schools, but Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa also encouraged

¹⁰⁵ Zitkala Sa, “Letter to the Chiefs and Headmen of the Tribes,” 199.

schooling because they viewed it as a way for Native Americans to gain an advantage. Unlike the Indian Office, both women believed that remaining in the Native American community was important, so they favored Native American schools that were close to or on tribal lands. When Winnemucca opened a school in 1885, her students were primarily Numa children and her pupils could return home fairly easily.¹⁰⁶ Like Winnemucca, Zitkala Sa valued family ties and insisted that the government needed to provide more funds for reservation schools, not boarding schools, so that Native children could remain close to home. She also lobbied for school programs that prepared Native Americans for higher education, not industrial training.¹⁰⁷

Native Americans experienced Euro-American education in three ways: at day schools on the reservation, as well as in boarding schools located both on and off the reservation. Reservation day schools primarily focused on teaching English, but also taught rudimentary level arithmetic and gendered industrial skills. Boys were often taught carpentry and agriculture while girls learned how to sew, clean, and cook. Day schools were a tool for the government to enforce Euro-American gender roles, work values, and Christianity. Native American parents objected to this method of schooling the least. Their children could return home and grow within their community. Neither parent nor child had to suffer the psychological trauma that accompanied boarding schools.¹⁰⁸ Though some Native Americans such as Charles Eastman (Dakota), a physician, writer and reformer, did not find their boarding school to be traumatic, others like Zitkala Sa experienced callous and cruel physical and psychological treatment. Beatings, public

¹⁰⁶ Jennifer Bailey, "Voicing Oppositional Conformity: Sarah Winnemucca and the Politics of Rape, Colonialism, and "Citizenship": 1870-1890," MA diss., Portland State University, 2012, 75-76.

¹⁰⁷ David L. Johnson and Raymond Wilson, "Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, 1876-1938: "Americanize the First American," *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no.1 (1988): 28-30.

¹⁰⁸ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 28.

humiliation, and extreme manual labor were not uncommon, and most boarding school administrators strove to obliterate their pupils' Native identities.¹⁰⁹

Unfortunately, by the late 1870s many policymakers came to view day schools as a poor method of assimilation. Because they remained in their communities, Native American children were able to maintain cultural ties and their parents had the power to refuse to send their children to school. Reservation boarding schools began to replace day schools "as the most promising method of educating Indians."¹¹⁰ As with day schools, reservation boarding schools included both academics and industrial training, but boarding schools contained a wider variety of material in their curriculum. They also gave teachers complete control over their students' lives for the majority of the year. Children only returned home during the summer months and sometimes during Christian holidays. This restricted Native American children's exposure to their parents' culture, but unlike off-reservation schools, they were not completely cut off from their communities. In most cases, parents were able to visit their children at school and maintain some type of contact throughout the year.¹¹¹

Indian agents and policymakers viewed off-reservation boarding schools as a way to force Native American children to cut all tribal ties. Instead of returning home during the summer, children were kept away from their parents for years at a time. Parents met this assimilation tactic with strong resistance. Many children were forcibly taken from their parents and school officials often played upon the children's curiosity by promising train rides and fresh

¹⁰⁹ Peyer, *"The Thinking Indian,"* 255; Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 79; Christine Bolt, *American Indian Policy and American Reform: Case Studies of the Campaign to Assimilate the American Indians* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 222-223.

¹¹⁰ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 30.

¹¹¹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 30-31.

fruit.¹¹² The Numa were one of countless Native American peoples who experienced the removal of their children. In 1887, the *Silver State* reported that “the Indians [in Nevada] are dissatisfied at the course of Superintendent Davis of the Government Indian School at Grand Junction, Colorado. They say he took three boys without the consent of knowledge of their parents.”¹¹³ To resist this fate, some parents hid their children while others encouraged them not to talk to the school recruiters.

Winnemucca wished to reform Numa children’s education, but she also disliked the Indian Office’s education practices. She valued education and, though she had little formal schooling of her own, Winnemucca’s experiences gave her the skills she needed to be an effective teacher. While she did not seek to undermine Numa culture, Winnemucca particularly emphasized the necessity of learning English. As previously mentioned in section one, Winnemucca learned the importance of English literacy from her grandfather. She knew that, without this skill, Numa people would be increasingly dependent on translators to survive as Euro-Americans continued to settle the West. Winnemucca fluently spoke English, Spanish, and three Native languages. She used these to teach Numa children on the reservations, and later in her life, to open and run her own school.¹¹⁴

Winnemucca publicly expressed the desire to teach as early as 1870. The *Daily Alta California* reported her saying on August 29, 1870, “I am anxious to teach our children to read and write; do you think that I could get some of the old [school books]? If I can, my father, brother and myself will for a school at Camp McDermot [sic], and compel our people to send the

¹¹² Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 79.

¹¹³ “Dissatisfied Indians,” *Silver State* (Winnemucca NV), April 29, 1887, in *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkin’s Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891*, edited by Cari M. Carpenter and Carolyn Sorisio, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 271.

¹¹⁴ Bailey, “Voicing Oppositional Conformity,” 73-74.

children to school so that they may learn something, as I have.”¹¹⁵ Roughly six years later, Winnemucca worked along Parrish’s sister-in-law in the school house her people had built on Malheur. Parrish noted that her multi-lingual abilities were extremely beneficial, for most of the Numa children only spoke their own language. Unfortunately, despite its success, Rinehart closed the school after his arrival.¹¹⁶

After obtaining the support of Elizabeth Peabody, an education reformer from Boston, Winnemucca was able to open a school in Lovelock, Nevada in 1885 outside the control of the Indian Office. The Peabody Institute, named after Winnemucca’s primary donor, was extremely popular with Numa parents. Unlike other nearby boarding and reservation schools, she taught reading, writing and arithmetic alongside Numa customs, rather than attempting to erase her students’ culture.¹¹⁷ Winnemucca taught children from ages six to sixteen and, according to Peabody, “within its range, in short, the education was superior, instead of inferior, to the average white education in our primary schools.”¹¹⁸ Unlike Native American schools run by Euro-Americans, Winnemucca first taught her students in their own language before transitioning to English. This plus the fact that Winnemucca shared a cultural heritage with most of her students facilitated their learning process. However, the school’s popularity among the Numa, the local Euro-American community, the press and the patronage of Peabody did not ensure its survival.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ “An Indian Princess in the Sage Brush” *Daily Alta California*, August 29, 1870, in *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkin’s Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891*, edited by Cari M. Carpenter and Carolyn Sorisio, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 43.

¹¹⁶ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 134; Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 114.

¹¹⁷ Bailey, “Voicing Oppositional Conformity,” 75-76; Stremlau, “Rape Narratives,” 55.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Sarah Winnemucca’s Practical Solution of the Indian Problem* (Cambridge: J. Wilson and Son University Press, 1886), 18.

¹¹⁹ Anne Ruggles Gere, “Indian Heart/White Man’s Head: Native-American Teachers in Indian Schools, 1880-1930,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2005): 42.

Though much of Winnemucca's curriculum mirrored that of government run schools, the fact that she was Native American and running her own school outside of the Indian Department's control undermined Euro-Americans' position as "civilizers." Including Numa customs in her curriculum also challenged assimilationist goals. An article in the *Reno Evening Gazette* presents Winnemucca as a threat by bluntly remarking, "[Winnemucca] protests against the Government educating [her people]. She dislikes the Government and the dislike is mutual...If Sarah could handle the Government's money...there would never be a whisper by her against the Government educating the Piute people to which, unfortunately for them, she is a member." The author of this article viewed Winnemucca's desire to teach her own people only as a challenge to government run schools, rather than seeing the benefits of her teaching techniques. Peabody recognized the reasons behind Winnemucca's success, but regrettably "what Peabody saw as the essential strength of Sarah's school –its creation by an Indian –made it unacceptable to government officials."¹²⁰ After four years Peabody could no longer afford to support the school and Winnemucca did not have enough money of her own to keep the school open. Unable to secure government funding, she was forced to close the Peabody Institute in 1889.¹²¹

By the time Zitkala Sa began her teaching experience at the Carlisle Industrial Indian School in 1897, eight years after the Peabody Institute closed, Native American students in boarding schools outnumbered those in reservation day schools. Colonel Richard Pratt, Carlisle's founder, offered Zitkala Sa a position at his school the year of its opening. Under the patronage of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Carlisle served as a model for the off-reservation boarding school approach. Pratt strongly believed that for Native Americans to be "civilized" total

¹²⁰ Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 272-273.

¹²¹ Gere, "Indian Heart/White Man's Head," 42-43.

assimilation was necessary. He considered Native American cultures to be of no value and saw no reason for his students to preserve their cultural ties. Pratt's approach to the "Indian Problem" was to "kill the Indian in him and save the man" and he shaped his school's policy around this idea. Carlisle provided students with basic levels of education, but primarily focused on vocational training.¹²²

Because Zitkala Sa valued Native American cultures, she quickly grew to dislike Pratt. In a letter to her then fiancé, Carlos Montezuma, she describes him as "woefully small and bigoted for all his imposing avoirdupois."¹²³ While she was not particularly fond of teaching, she initially saw Carlisle as an opportunity to use her talents. In a sense it was. Outside of her teaching duties and without Pratt's assistance, she used her time at Carlisle to establish literary contacts in Boston and Washington D.C. This networking paid off for, shortly after she resigned from Carlisle, Zitkala Sa had two articles published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, and her first book *Old Indian Legends*.¹²⁴ Two of her short stories in particular, "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," reflect her both her brief time as a teacher at Carlisle and her over all opinion of off-reservation boarding schools. "School Days," Zitkala Sa's autobiographical account of her boarding school experience, highlights the traumas many Native American students experienced. She recounts her extreme loneliness, the physical abuse of a friend, and the severe culture shock she experienced. Her story repeatedly emphasizes her feeling of displacement, or as Zitkala Sa puts it "hang[ing] in the heart of chaos" evidence of the

¹²² Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 51-52; Hazel W Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 16-17.

¹²³ Zitkala Sa, Letter to Carlos Montezuma, March 5, 1901, *Montezuma Papers*.

¹²⁴ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 15-17; Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, xviii.

negative psychological effects off reservation boarding schools.¹²⁵ “An Indian Teacher Among Indians” provides the other side of Zitkala Sa’s boarding school experience. She did not bond with her white co-workers for she could clearly see the harm some of them caused their students. One teacher particularly disgusted her:

When I saw an opium-eater holding a position as teacher of Indians, I did not understand what good was expected until a Christian in power replied that this pumpkin-colored creature had a feeble mother to support. An inebriate paleface sat stupid in a doctor’s chair, while Indian patients carried their ailments to untimely graves, because his fair wife was dependent upon him for her daily food. I find it hard to count that white man a teacher who tortured an ambitious Indian youth by frequently reminding the brave changeling that he was nothing but a “government pauper.”¹²⁶

Along with distrusting her colleges, Zitkala Sa resented the spectacle Pratt made of his students. He allowed Euro-Americans to come into the school to see the “civilization” of the Native American for themselves.¹²⁷ Zitkala Sa did not believe that Carlisle, or any other boarding school, should take credit for Native American achievements. She insisted that “education has developed the possibilities in me –were they not there, no school could put them in!”¹²⁸

Though their teaching careers were limited, Sarah Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa valued Euro-American education, particularly literacy, and viewed its acquisition as a key component of survival. However, both women objected to using education to achieve total assimilation. Winnemucca included Numa culture and values in her curriculum and Zitkala Sa used her writing abilities to record and share Dakota stories and legends with the Euro-American public. Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa knew that, in the white community, formal education was a mark of “civilization” and that educated Native Americans were considered more respectable than

¹²⁵ Zitkala Sa “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 83-100.

¹²⁶ Zitkala Sa “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 111.

¹²⁷ Zitkala Sa “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” 111-112.

¹²⁸ Zitkala Sa, Letter to Montezuma, April 12, 1901, *Montezuma Papers*.

uneducated Native Americans. Gaining this respectability allowed Native Americans to engage in the dialogue of the “Indian Problem” and have some amount of control in the conversation; however, maintaining that respectability while preserving their Native identities was a challenge Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa sought to address. Changes in education contributed to changes in the ways Euro-Americans viewed Native Americans as individuals, but it did little to transform the way Euro-Americans viewed Native American cultures. As long as Native cultures were considered “uncivilized” by the white majority, they were in severe danger of being destroyed. Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa attempted to address this problem by presenting their cultures as respectable. Winnemucca explained her own customs and compared them with Euro-American culture while Zitkala Sa transcribed parts of Native culture she values and condemned practices she felt were dangerous. Along with celebrating their own cultures, both women stressed Euro-American hypocrisy and provided examples of white savagery. However, in order to be taken seriously, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa also had to be respectable figures.

Both Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa were aware of the stereotypes they faced as Native American women. Stemming from early European and Native encounters, many Euro-Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries believed there were two types of Native American women: the squaw and the Indian princess. The squaw stereotype depicts Native women as dirty, subservient, and sexually promiscuous. In contrast, the Indian princess is beautiful, pure, and eager to help white men.¹²⁹ The dichotomy of the squaw and the Indian princess developed and cemented by Euro-American literature provided only one respectable option: the Indian princess.

¹²⁹ Devon A. Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 1996), 61.

Winnemucca attempted to employ the Indian Princess image to her advantage. This view of Native American women, though harmful in its own respects, was more positive than the squaw. It was also a form of hierarchy that Euro-Americans understood. Whites often did not understand the power dynamics of Native American tribes. They viewed the chief as a monarch figure and, because Sarah Winnemucca's grandfather and father were chiefs, she was seen as a princess by the white American public. Though she never refers to herself as a princess in her autobiography, when she began lecturing in the 1870s, she often dressed to match the romanticized depiction of an Indian princess. It is not difficult to figure out why she did not protest the title of "princess." Being known as a princess gave her some level of authority and simultaneously provided her with a pure image. She knew that this image was very important to her white female audience because she was keenly aware of Victorian values and discourse.¹³⁰ In her autobiography, Winnemucca recounts several occasions in which she or a relative had to defend her purity. This highlights that she cannot be classified as a squaw, and establishes purity as a common value between Numa women and Euro-American women, allowing her to appeal to Euro-American women as potential allies.¹³¹

Winnemucca's "Indian Princess" image did not go unchallenged. After animosity between Rinehart, the Malheur reservation agent, and Winnemucca flared, Rinehart started a campaign against her. In 1880, he compiled a series of letters attacking Winnemucca's character, and sent them to the Indian Office so as to bar Winnemucca from working for them as an interpreter. Addressing the agency, Rinehart wrote "before submitting [Winnemucca's] name to your office as a proper person to fill the important position of interpreter, I deem it my duty to

¹³⁰ Malea D. Powell, "Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing," *College Composition and Communication*, 53, no. 3 (2002): 407; Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 197; Milhesuah, *American Indians*, 61.

¹³¹ Powell, "Rhetorics of Survivance," 411.

advise your office of her notoriety as an untruthful, drunk prostitute, by directing your attention to the affidavits accompanying my letter.”¹³² In the testimony that follows, Winnemucca is repeatedly accused of being a prostitute and an alcoholic. One letter, written and signed by nine citizens of Grant County, Oregon reference Winnemucca’s multiple marriages and conclude that “this woman has been several times married...by reason of her adulterous and drunken habits.”¹³³ To combat Rinehart, Winnemucca and her editor, Mary Mann, decided to include letters of support at the end of Winnemucca’s autobiography, which was published in 1883. General Oliver Howard, one of Winnemucca’s army contacts testified that “her conduct was always good, and she was especially compassionate to woman and children who were brought in as prisoners [during the Bannock War of 1878].”¹³⁴ Several others praise her for her assistance to the military, but one letter in particular addresses Rinehart’s accusations, “I take pleasure in saying that I have known you personally and by reputation ever since 1869. Your conduct has always been exemplary, so far as I know. I have never heard your veracity or chastity questioned in this community.”¹³⁵ These letters and the support of Mann and Peabody helped to preserve her reputation and her connection to her Euro-American audience.

Winnemucca also sought to create a positive reputation for the Numa, within the Euro-American community. Her book compares Numa culture to Euro-American culture. She describes the Numa’s courting rituals, coming of age ceremonies, mannerisms, method of subsistence, and child rearing practices. Far from criticizing her people’s customs, Winnemucca emphasized the hypocrisy of Euro-American respectability as evidence to claim that Numa

¹³² Rinehart, *The Special Case File of Sarah Winnemucca*, March 20, 1880, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹³³ Citizens of Grant County, Oregon, *The Special Case File of Sarah Winnemucca*, January 14, 1880.

¹³⁴ General Oliver O. Howard, “letter for Sarah Winnemucca” in *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, 249.

¹³⁵ M. S. Bonnifield, “letter to Sarah Winnemucca,” in *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, 266-267.

culture was already respectable. For example, when discussing child rearing practices she states “My people teach their children never to make fun of any one, no matter how they look...If you make fun of bad persons, you make yourself beneath them...I never in my life saw our children rude as I have seen white children and grown people in the streets.”¹³⁶ Her autobiography also deliberately points out similarities between Euro-Americans and the Numa. While recounting her people’s first experience with farming, she emphasizes how quickly they picked up the skill. This alone may seem to support assimilation, but it must be remembered that Winnemucca simultaneously criticizes some Euro-American behaviors, while valuing others. Her narrative does not show that the Numa should assimilate to white culture; instead, Winnemucca “[forces] readers to acknowledge and make space for cultural differences even as she forces them to acknowledge a common humanity.”¹³⁷

Unlike Winnemucca, Zitkala Sa’s public image was shaped by her success as a writer and a musician, so as a respected and educated woman, she did not have to defend herself against attacks on her virtue. She used her reputation and talent to show Euro-Americans the value of her own culture in ways they could understand. Zitkala Sa cherished her childhood memories of listening to the elders tell stories and wanted to make sure their wisdom and stories were not lost. She expressed this in a letter to Carlos Montezuma, telling him “while the old people last I want to get from them their treasured ideas of life.”¹³⁸ In a later letter, Zitkala Sa reiterates her desire to return to the Yankton reservation for this purpose. Far from giving up her literary career to live in South Dakota, she said “I am going to combine the two! I am going to my mother because she cannot come to me. I can write stories and have them published in the East for the so-called

¹³⁶ Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 51.

¹³⁷ Senier, *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance*, 84.

¹³⁸ Zitkala Sa “Letter to Carlos Montezuma” February 20, 1901, *Montezuma Papers*.

civilized peoples.”¹³⁹ She recorded Dakota legends and stories, not only to preserve them, but to impress their value upon Euro-Americans. Her talent as a writer helped her blend traditional stories with English. Her efforts resulted in the publication of her books *Old Indian Legends* and *American Indian Stories*, and her drive to preserve Native identities inspired many of her contributions to the SAI’s *American Indian Magazine*.¹⁴⁰

While in Utah in 1913, Zitkala Sa used her musical gifts to celebrate an aspect of Native culture she valued: dance. She collaborated with William F. Hanson, a local music teacher, to produce *The Sun Dance Opera*. The opera was a blend of traditional Dakota dances and music and Euro-American instruments and staging. In bringing two cultural traditions together, Zitkala Sa may have hoped to show the “civilized” world that Native Americans were capable of the same type of cultural complexity.¹⁴¹ She thought that the best way to establish the Sun Dance as respectable was through a medium of Euro-American entertainment. Her efforts to portray the Sun Dance in a positive way were in response to the U.S. government’s effort to ban traditional Native American dances. Government officials and missionaries repeatedly tried to eradicate the Sun Dance in particular, believing it to be barbaric. In 1883 the commissioner of Indian Affairs banned the Dakota Sun Dance and the Department of the Interior did so again in 1904. Many Christian groups advocated the ban of this ritual.¹⁴² But Zitkala Sa felt the ban was absurd long before she helped compose the *Sun Dance Opera*. In an article originally published in the *Red Man and Helper* on August 22, 1902, Zitkala Sa criticizes the government’s campaign against Native dances: “I do not know what special step might be considered most barbaric. In truth, I

¹³⁹ Zitkala Sa “Letter to Carlos Montezuma” April 19, 1901, *Montezuma Papers*.

¹⁴⁰ Zitkala Sa, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, edited by Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 7-67, 68-163, 164-218.

¹⁴¹ P. Jane Hafen, “A Cultural Duet: Zitkala Sa and *The Sun Dance Opera*” *Great Plains Quarterly*, 18 (1998): 103-105.

¹⁴² Davidson and Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, xx.

would not like to say any graceful movement of the human figure in rhythm to music was ever barbaric. Unless the [government] intends to put an end to dances the world over, I fail to see the necessity of checking the Indian dance.”¹⁴³

However, Zitkala Sa only supported aspects of Native cultures she considered to be respectable, so as to limit challenges to Native American respectability. She campaigned adamantly against peyote usage and the Native American Church. Peyote is a mildly hallucinogenic cactus that was used in rituals as early as 5000 BCE in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. After the Spanish arrived, they described Peyote rituals as witchcraft and attempted to end the use of the “diabolical root.” But peyote usage survived and eventually spread from Mesoamerica into North America.¹⁴⁴

As Peyotism spread throughout the West, opposition from the federal government, state governments, Christian denominations, and humanitarian groups increased. Assimilationists believed it impaired the progress of “civilizing” Native Americans. Peyotists responded to this opposition by seeking protection under the First Amendment and adding Christian elements to the religion. This included use of the Bible during ceremonies and emphasizing similarities to Christian theology.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the assault against Peyotists continued, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the forefront. Once Congress passed the Harrison Narcotic Act in 1914, the BIA tried add Peyote to the list of narcotics but was unsuccessful. Undeterred, the BIA continued to push for legislation against Peyote. In 1916 and 1917 Representative Harvey L. Gandy

¹⁴³ Zitkala Sa “A Protest Against the Abolition of the Indian Dance” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 237.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Constantine Maroukis, *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 14-16.

¹⁴⁵ Hertzberg, *The Search for An American Indian Identity*, 150; Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 45-46.

introduced a bill prohibiting Peyote to the House of Representatives and the Senate, but it failed both times. Many were hesitant to ban a substance that was tied to a religion.¹⁴⁶

The BIA did not abandon its campaign against Peyotists after these failures. In 1918 the Bureau asked Arizona Representative Carl Hayden to introduce another bill against Peyote in 1918, but instead of directly banning the substance, the Hayden Bill proposed to include it as an intoxicant in the liquor traffic laws. This drew more attention than the Gandy Bill. In February and March of 1918 a sub-committee of the Committee of Indian Affairs held hearings to assess the case against Peyote. These hearings allowed groups and individuals to present evidence for or against the Peyote faith. Expert witnesses were called to debate the bill, but perhaps the most memorable were Zitkala Sa and James Mooney, a Euro-American ethnologist and an avid defender of the Peyote faith.¹⁴⁷

Zitkala Sa was first introduced to Peyote while living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in Utah. She considered the drug to be highly dangerous, calling it “the twin brother of alcoholic beverages and first cousin to habit forming drugs.”¹⁴⁸ Considering Zitkala Sa had formed close bonds with Mormon missionaries on the reservation, her stance against peyote is hardly surprising. However, another and perhaps even more influential factor is that the Peyote faith differed from the aspects of Native American culture she was attempting to preserve. It was a Pan-Indian religion that did not spread throughout North America until the nineteenth century, and because many Euro-Americans associated peyote with alcohol and narcotics, the Peyote

¹⁴⁶ Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 51.

¹⁴⁸ Zitkala Sa, “The Menace of Peyote,” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 239.

faith could not be culturally showcased in the same way as Native American legends and dances.¹⁴⁹

Prior to her involvement with the Hayden Bill, Zitkala Sa strove to outlaw peyote use in Utah and Colorado. In 1915, she and her husband Raymond Bonnin, alongside Mormon and Episcopal missionaries, lobbied for a law banning peyote usage in Utah. Two years later, after the Gandy bill failed, Zitkala Sa persuaded the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League to help her lobby for the same law in Colorado. She and her allies were successful in both states.¹⁵⁰ Her actions prepared Zitkala Sa to testify against peyote in the sub-committee hearings in 1918. She strongly supported intervention from the federal government. In an article she wrote for *American Indian Magazine* in 1917 Zitkala Sa expressed that during her time on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, "a great longing filled me for some message from the Great White Father telling his red children that peyote was bad for them and asking them to refuse to use or sell it. Federal Action is needed."¹⁵¹

On the other hand, the ethnologist James Mooney staunchly opposed Zitkala Sa's views. By the time of the hearings, Mooney had been studying and participating in Peyote meetings and ceremonies for twenty-five years. He was therefore able to give a detailed account of the history of the Peyote faith and its ceremony during his testimony. Insisting that peyote was not dangerous and that it was a legitimate religion, Mooney supported the protection of Peyotism under the First Amendment.¹⁵² In her testimony, Zitkala Sa adamantly opposed this religious interpretation of Peyotism. She believed that "no one in the state of drunkenness, by whatsoever

¹⁴⁹ Welch, "Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader," 133-134.

¹⁵⁰ Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 52.

¹⁵¹ Zitkala Sa, "Chipeta, Widow of Chief Ouray with a Word About a Deal in Blankets," in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 176.

¹⁵² Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 54.

cause, can be in his rational mind; and he cannot practice religion.”¹⁵³ Using anecdotal evidence from Ute men and women she knew from the reservation, Zitkala Sa depicted Peyotism as the epitome of sin, a force of degradation and death, and claimed that peyote usage was strongly linked with alcoholism.¹⁵⁴

The sub-committee voted in favor of the Hayden bill, and it passed the House, but ultimately failed in the Senate because enough senators felt that peyote had become a First Amendment issue. After the outcome of the sub-committee, Mooney and other Peyotists worked quickly to ensure the Peyote faith was protected under the First Amendment. They created a new religious organization, giving Peyotism a governing body, an organizational structure, and a new name: The Native American Church. Once the Hayden bill made it to the Senate, senators who were against the bill were successfully able to argue the First Amendment prevented a legal federal ban of peyote.¹⁵⁵ However, this outcome did not sway Zitkala Sa. She never altered her stance on Peyote.

Zitkala Sa’s desire to address poverty and poor living conditions on reservations distinctly differs from her attempt to eliminate Peyote. While the spread of the Peyote faith was an aspect of Pan-Indianism, reservation conditions were the result of government oppression and incompetence and corruption within the BIA. During her time on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, she worked to change the reservation’s living conditions. Upon her arrival, she applied to teach on the reservation, but the BIA repeatedly denied her the position. While she was not particularly fond of teaching, Zitkala Sa was eager to work with the Ute community and was not interested in remaining at home while her husband, Raymond Bonnin, whom she

¹⁵³ Zitkala Sa, “The Menace of Peyote,” 240.

¹⁵⁴ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 140-141.

¹⁵⁵ Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 56-58.

married in 1902 after ending her engagement to Carlos Montezuma, worked as a clerk. So, without any compensation from the agency, Zitkala started a music program for the Ute school children. She also organized a basket-weaving class for the Ute women. Weaving baskets allowed Ute women to produce something they could sell for extra income, but it also gave Zitkala Sa the opportunity to suggest different hygiene practices and encourage parents to send their children to school.¹⁵⁶

After becoming associated with the SAI, Zitkala Sa organized a community center on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in the fall of 1915. This was not much different than the work she had been doing before. Unsatisfied with sitting at home and unable to get a job on the reservation, Zitkala Sa took it upon herself to perform the duties of a field matron without actually being hired. On reservations, field matrons were responsible for teaching Native women household skills. Zitkala Sa spent much of her time teaching sewing, health care, and cooking classes.¹⁵⁷ She supported the community work and saw an important difference between white people helping Native Americans and Native Americans helping other Native Americans. When writing about her experience, she informed her readers that “our aged grandparents hunger for tenderness, kindness and sympathy from their own offspring. It is our first duty, it is our great privilege to be permitted to administer with our own hands, this gentle affection to our people.”¹⁵⁸

Zitkala Sa saw Native American legal citizenship and enfranchisement essential to obtaining equality. After the Dawes Act passed in 1887, Native Americans could become U.S.

¹⁵⁶ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 44-45, 58.

¹⁵⁷ Welch, “Zitkala-Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 72-73; Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 45.

¹⁵⁸ Zitkala Sa, “A Year’s Experience in Community Service Work Among the Ute Tribe of Indians,” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 171-172.

citizens, but only by giving their land to the government or serving in the U.S. military. The thousands that refused remained non-citizens.¹⁵⁹ In an article titled “America’s Indian Problem,” she draws attention to the dangers of not having legal citizenship by quoting a BIA investigation published by the Bureau of Municipal Research in 1915:

The need for special care in the management of Indian Affairs lies in the fact that in theory of law the Indian has not the rights of a citizen. He has not even the rights of a foreign resident. The Indian individually does not have access to the courts; he [cannot] individually appeal to the administrative and judicial branches of the public service for the enforcement of his rights. He himself is considered as a ward of the United States. His property and funds are held in trust...The Indian Office is the agency of the government for administering both guardianship of the Indian and the trusteeship of his properties.¹⁶⁰

Without legal citizenship and enfranchisement, Native Americans could not use the government or the legal system to protect themselves from Euro-Americans, nor could they influence laws that affected their lives. During and after World War I Zitkala Sa used the patriotism of Native American men, instead of respectability, to call for government restitution and protection from BIA corruption. In 1918, she used her editorial comments in *American Indian Magazine* to discuss the patriotism of Native Americans. Noting that some of the SAI members were absent from the annual conference due to the war, Zitkala Sa lays bare the hypocrisy of the American government, stating “the sunburst of democratic ideals cannot bring new hope and courage to the small peoples of the earth without reaching the remotest corners within America’s own bounds.”¹⁶¹ Native Americans were fighting and dying for a country in which the majority of their people were not considered citizens.

¹⁵⁹ Willard Hughes Rollings, “Citizenship and Suffrage: The Native American Struggle for Civil Rights in the American West 1830-1965,” *Nevada Law Journal* 5, no. 126 (2004): 127.

¹⁶⁰ Zitkala Sa, “America’s Indian Problem” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 158.

¹⁶¹ Zitkala Sa, “Editorial Comments” in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, ed. By Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 182.

Finally in 1924, Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act, granting U.S. citizenship to all Native Americans. However, citizenship did not guarantee them the same rights as other American citizens. At this time, states still controlled enfranchisement and many western states used this power to incorporate poll taxes, English language tests, and literacy tests into their voting laws so as to deny many Native Americans their voting rights.¹⁶² Despite its shortcomings, the Indian Citizenship Act gave Zitkala Sa new grounds to demand aid for Native American peoples. She was able to step away from using the language of respectability and insist that, as citizens, Native Americans had the right to government aid and to be taken seriously by lawmakers. Zitkala Sa also strove to form a Native American voting bloc to play an active role in government. In 1926 she and her husband Raymond Bonnin founded The National Council of American Indians, for the purpose of organizing this voting bloc and to promote “the protection and preservation of the American Indians and their property.”¹⁶³ She and her members were successful in forming a large enough voting bloc to prevent the election of two Senators in South Dakota and Oklahoma, but unfortunately, Zitkala Sa was unable to expand her organization enough to maintain this level of success.¹⁶⁴

Zitkala Sa’s switch from appealing to Euro-American notions of respectability to demanding rights for Native Americans as legal citizens is significant. Prior to the Indian Citizenship Act, she and Winnemucca could not claim access to government resources as citizens and had to rely on respectability. While allying themselves with reformers such as Elizabeth Peabody, Mary Mann, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa could use respectability to gain

¹⁶² Rollings, “Citizenship and Suffrage,” 135.

¹⁶³ P. Jane Hafen, “‘Help Indians Help Themselves’: Gertrude Bonnin, the SAI, and the NCAI,” *American Indian Quarterly*, 37, no. 3 (2013): 205-206.

¹⁶⁴ Welch, “Zitkala Sa: An American Indian Leader,” 201-203.

resources for Native American peoples and meet their own reform goals. However, these alliances put them in the vulnerable position of having to prove Native Americans deserved the assistance of these reformers. Though not always successful, claiming access to government resources on the grounds of legal citizenship is a much stronger stance, because citizens are able to use the legal system to make demands when their needs are not met.

Conclusion

The context of Sarah Winnemucca's and Zitkala Sa's lives shaped their roles as reformers and activists and affected their success. The two women grew up in completely different atmospheres. Though she traveled to lecture, Winnemucca remained in the Great Basin region for most of her life and therefore primarily focused on helping the Numa. Zitkala Sa, on the other hand, spent the majority of her childhood away from her family and spent the majority of her life away from the Yankton Reservation. She encountered Native peoples from many different tribes and therefore had a broader reform and activist goals. Winnemucca also differed from Zitkala Sa in that, during Winnemucca's lifetime, many Euro-Americans still viewed Native American peoples as "hostiles." This affected her ability as a translator to negotiate with her Euro-American allies. For example, after the Bannock War, Winnemucca had a difficult time advocating for her people, because the military no longer saw the Numa as docile. However, by the time Zitkala Sa was a young adult, large military encounters between Native peoples and the United States had ended. She did not have to convince the government that her people were not dangerous. Also, instead of being one of a few in her tribe who could speak English, as Winnemucca was, Zitkala Sa was one among many Native American intellectuals of her time, such as Carlos Montezuma, Arthur C. Parker, Charles Eastman, and Rosa La Fleshe. Because many Native Americans in Zitkala Sa's generation had experienced formal education,

organizations like the Society of American Indians were able to exist. Winnemucca did not have the same opportunity to work within a Pan-Indian organization.

Both women legitimized their roles as activist and reformers in different ways.

Winnemucca used her father's status as a Numa chief to claim authority as an advocate for her people. Because Euro-Americans considered her to be an "Indian Princess," even though no such title existed among the Numa, Winnemucca was able to use this to her advantage when lecturing. Her position as a translator also placed her in a position of power among her people. Zitkala Sa had a completely different experience. She was able to use her intellectual achievements to gain positions the Society of American Indians, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and to found her own organization called the National Council of American Indians. Her position of power within each of these organizations legitimized her role as an activist and a reformer.

As activists, both women lectured and wrote to influence a wider Euro-American audience. Their goals were similar. Winnemucca and Zitkala Sa both strove to show Euro-Americans the suffering of their people, and present Native American cultures as respectable, and therefore worth preserving. Winnemucca's talents as an orator captured the attention of Elizabeth Peabody and Mary Mann, who encouraged her to write and publish her only written work. The purpose of her autobiography was to expose injustices committed against the Numa, but it also served the purpose of furthering her education reform goals. Winnemucca's publication helped to fund her school for the four years that it was open. Some of Zitkala Sa's publications captured stories and legend she treasured from her childhood, but others expressed reforms she felt were necessary within Native American communities. Her membership and roles as secretary and editor in the SAI allowed her to use the organization's magazine to promote

her own activist and reform goals. It was in *American Indian Magazine* that she published her distain for peyote and her desire for Native children to have access to formal schooling.

Winnemucca's and Zitkala Sa's struggle for land rights were distinctly different because they were working on opposite sides of the Dawes Act. Because Winnemucca promoted the acts passage, she sought to reform her people's method of subsistence in exchange for the physical safety land allotments may have provided. Because the Dawes Act passed, it can be viewed as a success for Winnemucca. However, one must keep in mind that the act did not have the effect she intended and, while she was able to critique Senator Dawes's ideas, Dawes did not include her input in the bill. Unfortunately, the Dawes Act had devastating effects for Native peoples. In response, Zitkala Sa denounced Euro-Americans who used the allotment system to victimize Native American landholders. She used her alliances with reform groups to advocate for the victims of Euro-American cruelty. Winnemucca died four years after the Dawes Act passed and therefore could not attempt to help address the act's affects.

When evaluating Zitkala Sa and Sarah Winnemucca's success as reformers and activists, one must keep their actions within the context of their lives. They cannot be evaluated against one another. Zitkala Sa had advantages in schooling that Winnemucca did not and faced a different set of struggles. Considering these differences, their achievements cannot be equally compared. Overall, neither Winnemucca nor Zitkala Sa supported complete assimilation. They actively resisted the erasure of Native American cultures. Both women sought to secure physical and cultural survival for Native Americans by accepting some aspects of Euro-American culture, and rejecting others.

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