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“They are like Children”: Father Wilbur and Paternalism at Fort Simcoe, 1860-1890

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“THEY ARE LIKE CHILDREN”:

FATHER WILBUR AND PATERNALISM AT FORT SIMCOE, 1860-1890

A Thesis

Presented To

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

History

by

Cassandra D. Carroll

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CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

“THEY ARE LIKE CHILDREN”,

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The Treaty of 1855 between Indigenous groups in the middle of the Washington territory and the United States government consolidated fourteen tribes under the Yakama Nation. The combination of Governor Isaac Stevens proclaiming their land open for settlement and nearby gold miners assaulting Yakama women led to the ensuing Yakama War, leading the US Army to build Fort Simcoe. Reverend James H. Wilbur was hired in 1860 by the Office of Indian Affairs to establish the Yakima Indian Agency at Fort Simcoe, following the war. Wilbur also opened one of the first on-reservation boarding schools for Native American children, where he was enforced a strict work ethic through forced labor. With Washington D.C preoccupied with the Civil War and Westward settlement, Wilbur had sparse funding and unlimited power. This thesis analyzes the paternalistic relationships that Wilbur sought to impose on the Yakamas, the events that caused the Yakamas to lose trust in his colonial authority, and the legacy of his twenty-year tenure as Indian Agent. Wilbur cultivated authority by creating an alternative fictive “paternity,” which was undermined by the Office of Indian Affairs when the bureaucracy took more control over the reservation. This thesis does not argue that the Yakamas did not resist colonialist authority, but that the resistance became much

more apparent after the trust between the Yakamas and Wilbur was broken by bureaucratic colonialism.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historiography.....	8
Organization.....	17
Terminology.....	20
II EMPIRE AND EXPLOITATION	
The First Students at Simcoe.....	23
The Cattle Incident.....	32
III WILBUR AND THE MEANING OF “FATHERHOOD”	
The Yakamas, Pre-Simcoe.....	51
Father Wilbur as the Patriarch.....	56
Paternalism Towards the Paiutes.....	61
Mentoring Methodists.....	66
Modeling Motherhood.....	73
IV THE LEGACY OF FORT SIMCOE	
The Dawes Act.....	84
A Standardized Simcoe.....	86
Turning the Power.....	96
Conclusion.....	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Indian Reservation.....	3
2 Hand-drawn map of early Fort Simcoe.....	5
3 Overview of Simcoe as a school and agency.....	26
4 Photograph of James Harvey Wilbur.....	60
5 Interior view of a Dreamer Church on Yakama Reservation.....	68
6 Children posing in front of Girl’s Dormitory.....	75
7 A group of white agency employees posing.....	78
8 Group of Indigenous women picking hops.....	91
9 Annual 4 th of July Celebration at Fort Simcoe.....	102

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period of settlement along the Pacific Northwest during the 1850s can best be characterized by the federal government coercing Indigenous peoples to give up vast tracts of land to settlers. The United States Congress ratified Washington as a territory in 1853, but settlers were skeptical about moving to a region where the infamous Whitman massacre had just taken place. The non-Indigenous people who lived in the Washington territory east of the Cascade Mountains were comprised of individuals: Catholic missionaries, fur traders, and government officials. Most of these individuals had not made permanent settlements with their families. Indian Agent Andrew J. Bolon met with eighteen hundred representatives from the various Native “bands” and “tribes” in the central Washington Territory in May 1855, to negotiate land treaties.¹ At this meeting, Bolon laid out Governor Isaac Stevens’ plan to transform the local Indigenous communities into agricultural communities, and to provide education for them.² This was part of a larger pattern of settlement that Stevens had set up, first in western Washington territory with Puget Sound Indigenous groups. Even though Plateau Indigenous communities were decentralized, and eight of the fourteen groups at this negotiation did

¹Jo N. Miles. "The Life and Death of A. J. Bolon, 1826-1855." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly (PNQ)*, 97, no. 1 (Winter 2005/06): 35.

²Jo N. Miles. "Kamiakin's Impact on Early Washington Territory." *PNQ*, 99, no.4 (2008): 165.

not have representation, Stevens felt that the present leaders could speak for the entire region.³

Historian Cliff Trafzer points to the treaty as the beginning of the tumultuous relationship between the United States government and Plateau tribes, stating that the treaty “limited their lands, concentrated several tribes onto a single land base, and destroyed much of their tribal autonomy, freedom, and independence.”⁴ A major outcome of the treaty is that fourteen smaller local Indigenous groups, including the Yakamas, Klickitats, Palouse, Pisuoses, and Klinkuits, were consolidated into the confederated tribes of the Yakama Nation, which is still recognized today.⁵ Before the treaty, these various bands occupied almost seventeen thousand square miles of land, extending from the Cascade Mountains to the canyons of the Columbia Basin.⁶ Andrew H. Fisher argues that in order to win over the Yakamas, Stevens chose to place the reservation (Figure 1) in the center of their traditional territory, with the expectation that this would lead the Yakamas to turn towards agriculture.⁷ Stevens’ hope was that the seasonally migratory Plateau Natives would confine future hunting and gathering to the reservation, leaving the rest of their territory open for settlement.⁸

³ Andrew H. Fisher, “This I know from the Old People’: Yakama Indian Treaty Rights as Oral Tradition,” in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring, 1999): 6.

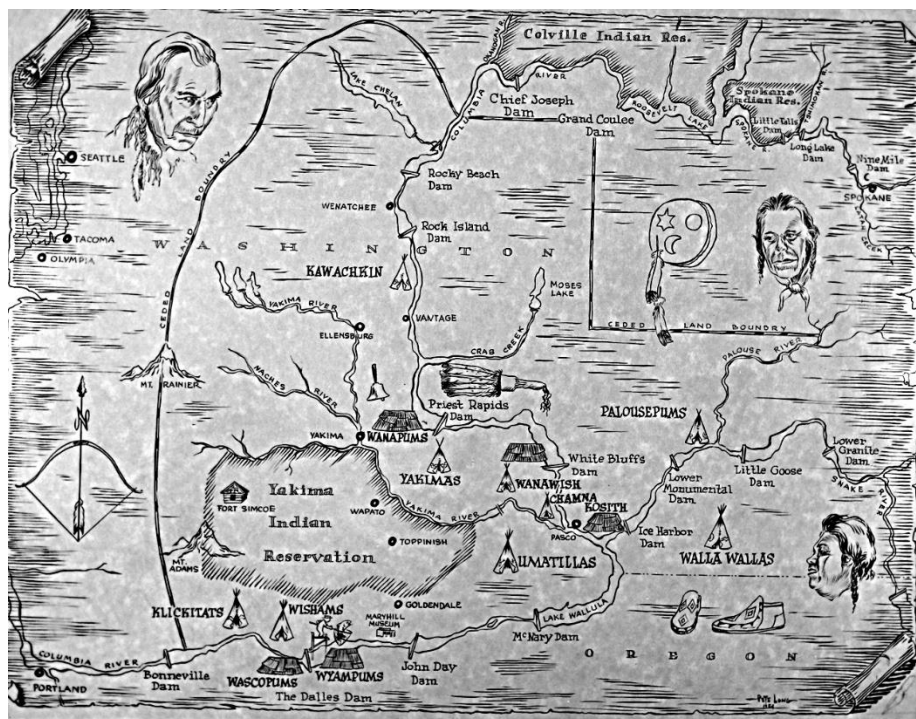
⁴ Clifford E. Trafzer, *Death Stalks the Yakama: Epidemiological Transitions and Mortality on the Yakama Indian Reservation*, (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1997), 8.

⁵ Thomas Priestly, “Report of the Yakama Agency” (1889), University of Washington Libraries, 1.

⁶ Richard Daugherty, *The Yakima People*, (United States of America: Imperial Lithographers, 1973), 1.

⁷ Fisher, *Yakama Indian Treaty Rights as Oral Tradition*, 6.

⁸ Fisher, *Yakama Indian Treaty Rights as Oral Tradition*, 6.



1. *Indian Reservation*. Accessed June 2020. Courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Click Relander Collection.

That summer, Stevens, acting in his capacity as governor of Washington Territory, proclaimed that the ceded lands were open for settlement, going so far as to run newspaper advertisements encouraging people to make central Washington their new home. Yakama historian Click Relander argues that this betrayal heightened the tensions between the Indigenous people and new settlers. “Gov. Stevens’ promises that tribes would not be removed to reservations until the Treaty was ratified were still strong in the Yakima ears,” he writes. “Land improved by the Indians was taken by settlers.”⁹

At the same time, gold had been discovered near Fort Colville, drawing hundreds of settlers hoping to make a new life.¹⁰ Not only did settlers have the express permission of Governor Stevens to make settlements in central Washington, they also had the allure

⁹ Click Relander, *Strangers on the Land: A Historiette of a Longer Story of the Yakima Indian Nation's Efforts to Survive Against Great Odds*, (Yakima: Franklin Press, 1962), 45.

¹⁰ Miles, 35.

of getting rich quickly through gold mining. Local Indigenous men were already angered by miners encroaching on land that was still legally theirs, but allegations that miners were sexually assaulting Yakama women made matters worse. When reports of rapes by miners circulated among the Yakamas, some of the Yakama men attacked those they thought responsible.¹¹ The murder of these miners marked the beginning of the Yakama War between the US government and the Yakama people. After two Yakama men killed Agent Bolon, the United States saw this as an act of war and sent troops to the Washington territory.¹²

US military forces determined that they would need a more permanent presence to suppress the Yakamas, prompting them get approval to build a military fort. The site they chose was on the Simcoe River, which runs between the Cascade Mountain and the head of the Yakama River. There, in the heart of the reservation, the military built Fort Simcoe.¹³ Military forces also built a road from The Dalles to Fort Simcoe, giving the US a significant logistical advantage over the Yakama.¹⁴ The U.S. also had a technological advantage. According to Jo N. Miles, developments in weaponry gave the US the ability to end the war in 1858. At this point, most Yakamas had already agreed to comply and move to the reservation. The military abandoned the fort, leaving it open for occupancy.¹⁵

¹¹ Miles, 167.

¹² Trafzer, *Death Stalks the Yakama*, 29.

¹³ Morris L. Uebelacker, *Time Ball: A Story of the Yakima People and the Land* (Yakima: Shields Bag & Printing Company, 1984), 15.

¹⁴ C. Marc Miller, *Appraisal of Patented Lands in the Yakima Indian Reservation: Case No. 17 Before the Indian Claims Commission* (New York: Clearwater Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), 23.

¹⁵ Miles, 169.

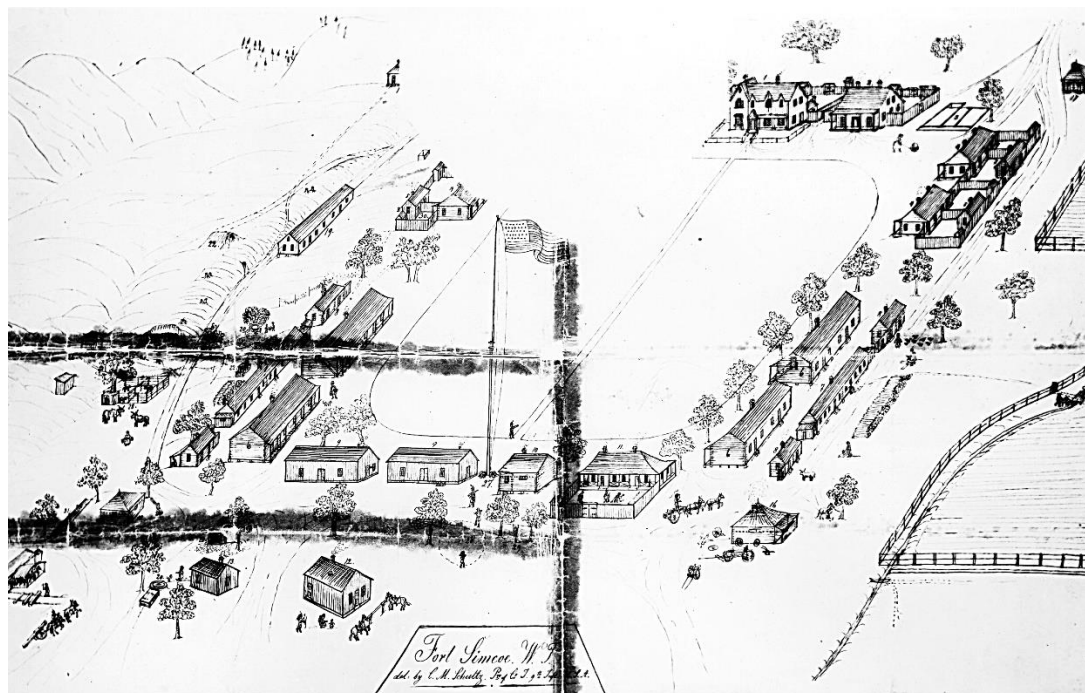


Figure 2. Hand-drawn map of early Fort Simcoe (artist unknown, circa 1860s). Accessed January 2020, Courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Click Relander Collection.

Methodist missionary “Father” James Wilbur took over as the Superintendent of the reservation and opened one of the first boarding schools for Native American children in the country, at Fort Simcoe (Figure 2). The school first opened in November of 1860, with 23 boys and 3 girls.¹⁶ This was just the beginning of what would be a larger pattern occurring in the United States. As the United States expanded westwards, the government looked for solutions to the so-called “Indian question.” While more and more tribes were pushed into reservations, the government began looking to Indigenous children as a bridge between Anglo--American culture and tribal life. The belief was that Natives should assimilate into white culture and relinquish tribal traditions. Children, went the thinking, would be easier to assimilate than adults. Throughout the 1870s, the boarding

¹⁶ James Wilbur, *Report of James H Wilbur, Superintendent of Instruction* (1862), University of Washington Libraries, accessed October 31, 2019.

schools on the reservations were viewed as the best way to achieve total assimilation, but as the decade came to a close, Indian agents began to advocate for off--reservation boarding schools. The main critique of the on--reservation schools was that the Native children were too close in proximity to their family and tribe, which allowed them to remain connected with their culture.¹⁷

For the first few decades of its existence, the federal government paid little attention to how James Wilbur ran the reservation and school. This gave Wilbur the ability to maintain unchecked power throughout his tenure, often at the expense of the reservation residents. Wilbur's personal ideas about assimilation and citizenship therefore became the philosophy of Simcoe, with a legacy lasting long past Wilbur's time as Superintendent. Yakamas who attended the boarding school as children regularly became employees of Simcoe as they reached adulthood.

Wilbur frequently wrote to the federal government requesting more funds and provisions to implement his paternalistic vision but would often end up using his own creativity to find the funds when the government failed to provide them. Some of these methods, such as using profits from the farm and cattle on the reservation, were harshly criticized by both Natives and whites. Wilbur was also criticized for only giving supplies and tools to Natives who worked for him on the Reservation, rather than allocating the goods to all Yakamas regardless of their relationship with the agent. The treaty never specified how the goods should be distributed, which allowed for Wilbur to come up with his own interpretation.

¹⁷ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 31-33.

Fort Simcoe continued to function as an on--reservation boarding school until the 1910s. As early as the 1890s, however, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) began pressuring Simcoe agents to transfer students to more popular off--reservation institutions, such as the Haskell and Carlisle Indian schools. Simcoe agents began to reach out to Yakama parents of able-bodied children, recommending enrollment in distant off--reservation boarding schools. More often than not, parents bore the responsibility of paying for their students to visit home, forcing poorer Yakamas parents to go years without seeing their children.

After Wilbur retired in 1882, other agents came in and out of power at Simcoe, never achieving the familial authority status that Wilbur did. As the years progressed and the popularity of the boarding school system spread across the country, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) took more control of how the schools should be run, standardizing rules, regulations, and curricula to conform with Richard Henry Pratt's "kill the Indian and save the man," rhetoric. That is not to say, however, that the government's standardization campaign necessarily changed the goals of the school. Long before the federal government became more directly involved in how Fort Simcoe was operated, James Wilbur had focused both on running the school economically and establishing himself as a "civilized" role model for the Yakamas.

Using Fort Simcoe as a case study of what scholars have called "intimate colonialism," I will argue that James Wilbur--who enjoyed almost unlimited power to run both the reservation and school as he saw fit--created a paternal persona in order to better exploit and assimilate Yakamas and make them into what he viewed as ideal citizens. While Wilbur tolerated some aspects of Yakama culture, he was fundamentally an

assimilationist who cultivated personal relationships with the Yakamas in order to advance his colonialist agenda. This study cannot make broad conclusions about all reservations and agents, as experiences can differ depending on a myriad of variables. It can, however, provide an insight as to how Wilbur sought to legitimize his authority by constructing and redefining the definition of “family,” and ultimately failed. Through intimate colonialism he was able to establish trust with individual Yakama allies, many of whom were children at the start of his tenure. These individuals would later go on to become proponents of Yakama culture, despite their relationship with Wilbur. Part of Wilbur’s failure to assimilate the Yakamas can be attributed to a specific incident towards the end of his career that showcased to the Yakamas that he was corrupt, but another important factor is that the Yakamas never ceased to hold on to their identity as Indigenous people. Ultimately, Wilbur’s use of intimate colonialism worked against his own goals of assimilation.

Historiography

As this study focuses both on Simcoe as a reservation and as a boarding school, the history of the Indian Service must be taken into consideration. Cathleen D. Cahill, in her book *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (2011), discusses the important role that white employees of the Indian Office played in the United States’ assimilation tactics. Cahill argues that these employees cast themselves into parental roles over their Indigenous wards, in order to sever bonds between Native families and restructure Native households to white middle-class gender norms. She uses the theoretical framework of “intimate colonialism,” coined by Ann Laura Stoler, which explores the idea that personal relationships between

imperial powers and a colonized people can be used as tools of the state.¹⁸ Much of her study focuses on the “men and women who actually translated policy into practice on the reservations and in the schools,” and their relationships with their Native “wards.” She critiques past scholarship of the reservation system for treating Indian Service employees as “mere functionaries” rather than historical actors who could influence federal policies.¹⁹ In studying Fort Simcoe, my work borrows and complexifies Cahill’s concept intimate colonialism. Like Cahill, I will explore the ways in which white Simcoe employees used intimate colonialism to promote the United States’ assimilation goals to disrupt Native culture. Additionally, I will explore how James Wilbur went about constructing paternalist authority and how this shaped the culture at Simcoe.

Another historian who assessed the colonial relationship between Indigenous people and the United States is Jason Edward Black. In *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment* (2015), Black defines colonialism as, “the characteristics of an ideological system that demands and justifies ‘an appropriation of land, bodies, and labor followed by the insistence of [an imperial force’s] governmental structures, languages, and logics.’”²⁰ Borrowing Linda Kerber’s concept of “republican motherhood,” the idea that white women played a political role in raising patriotic children, Black describes a parallel construct within the federal government that he calls, “republican fatherhood.” The concept of “republican fatherhood,” argues Black, describes the colonial relationship between the United States and the Native Americans

¹⁸ Cahill, Cathleen D. *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 6.

¹⁹ Cahill, 102.

²⁰ Jason Edward Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2015), 4.

who were cast as the nation's "children." Black argues that republican fatherhood was implemented through governmental legislation such as the Dawes Act and normalized a familial relationship between Natives and the federal government. Just as white children were expected to obey and trust their parents, republican fathers (as well as "republican mothers" who oversaw the education of Native American girls).²¹

Margaret D. Jacobs similarly utilizes the concept of intimate colonialism to draw comparisons between the United States and Australia in her monograph, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (2009). Jacobs argues that middle-class white women who became reformers of Indian policy sought to undermine intimate bonds between Native parents and their children in order to instill a loyalty and affiliation with federal institutions.²² She states that white female employees of the OIA often adapted a "maternalist mentality," which she defines as the mindset that Native Americans were child-like people who could not make proper decisions for themselves, and therefore needed the help of white people.²³ These women viewed their gendered, Victorian ideal of "the home," as the foundation of "civilization." Their thinking followed the idea that if Indigenous women were taught to be ideal homemakers, Native peoples would be successful at assimilating into Anglo-American culture.²⁴

²¹ Black, 84-86.

²² Margaret D Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) xxxi.

²³ Jacobs, 148.

²⁴ Jacobs, 128.

My research employs both Cahill's "intimate colonialism" and Black's "republican fatherhood," in order to assess the relationship between the federal government, OIA agents at the Yakama Reservation, and the Yakama people. It will also highlight moments in which white female Simcoe employees worked with a maternalist mindset to prepare young Yakama girls to be "civilized" housewives. While there were many female schoolteachers at Simcoe's boarding school during the early years, these women were also expected to tend to all the needs of the school. Female teachers were typically hired to instruct the small population of Yakama students who were girls in Western protocols for cooking, cleaning, laundry, and sewing. Insofar as these female instructors were usually the wives of male industrial instructors, they were able to perform their expected duties as model wives for model husbands, as well as demonstrate to the Yakama girls their expectations for assimilation.

These theoretical frameworks allow for more nuance to my assessment and gives space for Native voice and agency within my thesis. Rather than view the Yakama as passively accepting the US government's impositions, I will look at the times in which Yakamas worked with the government in order to maintain a certain level of independence, as well as times in which Yakamas worked against the government to achieve their own goals.

It is worth noting that Black and Cahill put forward somewhat different arguments. Cahill's idea of intimate colonialism focuses on individual relationships between colonized peoples and OIA employees, whereas while republican fatherhood focuses on the discourse that the federal government created in order to justify colonial authority. James Wilbur and his colleagues engaged in intimate colonialism while

running Simcoe because they had personal and sometimes even familial relationships with the Indigenous people charged to their care. At the same time, Wilbur internalized the discourse of “republican fatherhood” and put it into practice. What is important, however, is that Wilbur constructed “republican fatherhood” not just by passively adopting a bureaucratic discourse, but by sometimes clashing with his OIA superiors, as well as by bending OIA rules and guidelines. Wilbur’s interpretation of federal policies allowed for him to present himself to his wards as the ideal republican father, a man who not only served as a model for behavior, but also protected his wards from federal overreach.

One of Wilbur’s major contributions to the Yakima Valley landscape, was the reservation cattle herd he taught the Yakamas to take care of. Wilbur, of course, was not the first OIA agent who sought to make Indigenous peoples into herders. In *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (1994), Peter Iverson discusses the history of Native Americans working in the cattle ranch industry in the American West. Iverson argues that although colonial authorities imposed cattle ranching on Natives, it became an important institution in many western Native communities. Iverson warns against viewing Native culture as an unchanging binary that was destroyed by outside forces, and instead advocates for discussing the flexibility of culture in the face of adversity. Just as any other society develops and changes how they define themselves, Indigenous groups in the west were able to turn cattle ranching into a symbol for a “new day,” allowing them to draw firmer lines around their reservations in

order to resist non-Indian expansion via grazing leases and simple trespass.²⁵ Iverson places Native Americans as an active part of the changing landscape during this era, rather than passive figures that history “happened to.” His discussion of how the cattle industry became a valued part of Native cultures informed my understanding of how Wilbur’s cattle herd became a part of Yakama culture.

While my research is about Simcoe as an Indian Agency as a whole, I give special attention to the boarding school that James Wilbur established. For this reason, some important scholarly works on the United States Indian Boarding School system influenced this thesis. My argument differs from those of previous scholars, insofar as I focus on how the on-reservation boarding school at Fort Simcoe was used to both solidify and undermine Wilbur’s intimate colonialism. Other scholars, by contrast, have tended to focus primarily on the harmful practices that occurred at the schools. Most studies, moreover, view on the boarding schools as separate institutions from the reservation, and do not focus on how individuals such as Wilbur could exert control over youths both during and after their time as students.

David Wallace Adams laid the foundation for further study when he published *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (1995). He observes that the founder of the government’s off-reservation boarding school system-Captain Richard Henry Pratt, viewed on reservation schools as a failure. Pratt, who would rise to the level of brigadier general, turned his experiments in “assimilating” Indigenous prisoners of war held at Fort Marion, Florida, into the blueprint

²⁵ Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994,) 14.

for “civilizing” Indigenous youths. Pratt taught his prisoners that the only way for them to survive was to embrace the white man’s culture. According to Adams, the traumatized prisoners began to gain small freedoms in exchange for obedience. Pratt brought in a local schoolteacher to teach the prisoners English and Christianity, which as he noted, came to the younger captives, than the older.

By 1878, the federal government directed Pratt to release the older prisoners but offered to allow him to continue to educate the younger ones. In order to secure additional private funding for what in 1879 became the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Pratt undertook a massive public relations campaign. To show his success in assimilating Indigenous youths, he displayed “before and after” photos of the prisoners, “before” they entered his educational program, with photos taken “after” entry. In the former, the youths appeared with long hair and tribal attire. In the later, the youths appeared in military-style uniforms with their hair cut short. to demonstrate how they had been “civilized.”²⁶ Adams argues that Pratt genuinely liked and cared about Native Americans but felt that their culture and traditions were inferior to those of whites. To Pratt, the problem was not racial, but cultural, which meant that changing the environment in which Indigenous children were raised, would allow them to “triumph over savagery.”²⁷

A scholar whose focus on a specific school informed my methodology is John R. Gram’s *Education at the Edge of Empire: Negotiating Pueblo Identity in New Mexico’s Indian Boarding Schools* (2016). Gram analyzes the ways in which parents of boarding school students in the New Mexico Indian boarding school system were able to

²⁶ Adams, 36-51.

²⁷ Adams, 51.

demonstrate agency in the face of assimilation tactics. Native children sent to off-reservation schools typically moved too far away from parents to have regular visits. Pueblo children, however, frequently attended boarding schools in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, allowing their parents to be close enough to advocate for their cultural rights. Gram argues that these schools struggled to assimilate the Native American students because they were too far away from Washington DC to get full federal support, but too close to the students' homes to prevent parents from visiting the school. Parents were able to co-opt the education being given to their children in order preserve cultural traditions, and still benefit from the education.

The two off-reservation schools Gram studied differed from Simcoe, which was on the reservation, but the situations are comparable. In the same way that Pueblo adults were able to frequently visit and inquire about their children, Yakama parents had access to their children at Simcoe. The school was built on the Yakama reservation, meaning that parents only had to travel anywhere from five to forty miles to see their children, rather than the alternative of the several hundred miles that other Native parents had to travel. In my research, I note that Yakama children, like Pueblo children, could and did remain close to their families and cultures, despite the OIA's dedication to assimilation.

In assessing the degree to which Yakama students and parents retained the ability to negotiate within the colonialist system imposed on them, I ask an additional question: did the Yakamas "turn the power," to borrow a phrase coined by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc in *Boarding School Blues* (2006)? "Turning the power," refers to Native boarding school students using the skills and knowledge they gained from their time as a student into something to their advantage. For some, this meant

taking vocational skills back to their tribes, or using money earned to support their family. For others, this meant becoming instructors in the schools themselves, which not only gave them more agency, but allowed students to have a closer tie to their culture. Tsianina K. Lomawaima discusses this in *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (1994), where she argues that assimilation was indeed a failure, insofar as the schools were never able to fully control the students' behavior and thoughts. By putting older students in charge of classes and instruction, administrators allowed Chilocco students to gain leadership skills. In a similar vein, Kevin Whalen's *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900-1945* (2016), discusses how the outing program at Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, assigned students to white employers, which allowed for Native students to experience independence and escape the confines of the boarding school. He does not argue that this made Sherman an overall positive experience for students, but instead that it gave them the opportunity to "turn the power," by allowing them to save money for their families.

Similarly, as I will argue, many first-generation graduates of Simcoe's boarding schools became employees of the agency and were able to maintain small spheres of influence over how the reservation was run. In this way, former students of the boarding school were able to turn the power back to themselves, by promoting better conditions for both the school and the reservation.

Organization

This research is presented both chronologically and thematically. The scope of this study is from 1860, when James Wilbur opened the Ft. Simcoe boarding school, to

the end of to 1890, when the federal government imposed rules and regulations in order to make Simcoe mirror the larger off-reservation boarding schools. This thirty-year period is a unique time in the American West, insofar as federal agents such as Wilbur were able to exercise almost unlimited control over the reservations. Though the OIA exerted authority over the reservation system, individual agents were often able to sidestep rules and regulations in order to run agencies as they wished. To better understand how “intimate colonialism” operated in their earlier context led me to focus on the early period of Fort Simcoe’s history.

While this introduction provides a brief background on the formation of Fort Simcoe, the second chapter will dive deeper into the first few years of James Wilbur’s time as superintendent, before highlighting an event at the end of his career that changed how the Yakamas viewed his authority. The first year that the school existed, Wilbur personally gathered and trained older Yakama boys in herding and farming, citing this as the first lessons taught at the school. Wilbur faced backlash from both the Yakama and federal officers, however, when a surprise inspection from the Indian Service revealed that Wilbur did not have permission to keep a herd on the reservation, and that he had been requiring Yakamas to work for governmental provisions that according to the treaty, were meant to be freely allocated. Critics accused Wilbur of misappropriating funds; a problem exacerbated by the fact that the federal government had provided little to support the agency. What Wilbur saw as “penny-pinching” was not necessarily a benign attempt to save the government money; at times it amounted to outright exploitation. This chapter will discuss the various accusations against Wilbur, his responses to the claims, as well as

the validity of these responses, before discussing how this event changed the culture at Simcoe.

The third chapter will explore the ways in which James Wilbur engaged in intimate colonialism with the Yakamas, and how this affected relationships at Simcoe. It will begin with a discussion of traditional, pre-reservation culture and familial roles among Yakamas. I will argue that Wilbur purposely cast himself in the role of a federal father, most obviously by requiring Yakamas to address him as “Father Wilbur,” despite being a Methodist reverend, and more subtly by cultivating paternalistic relationships with individual Yakamas. This chapter will also discuss how Wilbur attempted to set up a similar relationship with the Paiute prisoners that were taken to Fort Simcoe in 1879, continuing his pattern of setting up exploitative relationships with Native Americans. The chapter will conclude with a focus on the wives of Wilbur’s friends and colleagues, whom Wilbur hired in order to model Victorian womanhood to Yakama girls. By looking at the curriculum and hiring practices at the industrial school, I will analyze the familial and gender roles impressed upon the Yakamas, per Wilbur’s directive.

The final chapter will focus on the post-Wilbur era of Simcoe, the lasting legacies that were created by his influence, and what aspects of his philosophy fell out of practice once the OIA took measures to make the school conform to its standardized. I will also discuss Wilbur’s plans for allotting reservation tracts to individual Yakama heads of household, a plan that Wilbur had developed long before Congress passed the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act. Finally, I will discuss how Simcoe changed after Wilbur’s retirement.

Simcoe began educating Native children almost a decade before the popularization of off-reservation boarding schools. As the century came to a close, however, the federal government sought to implement reform. This chapter will also discuss the first generation of Yakama boarding school students, many of whom went on to become teachers and employees at Simcoe, and/or Methodist missionaries to nearby Indigenous peoples. I will discuss how this generation was able to “turn the power,” by using their Simcoe education to gain federal support in their contests with the white agents who came after Wilbur, as well as instances in which Simcoe graduates became activists on the behalf of the Yakama people. I will also discuss the first generation of Yakama students sent to off-reservation boarding schools such as Haskell and Carlisle by analyzing the frequent complaints from these schools that Yakama children are “chronic runaways.”

The work is organized chronologically so that I can examine how Simcoe changed from its origins to its standardization, but is also organized thematically, for the sake of argument. The work is not meant to be read as an indictment of Wilbur as a person, nor is it meant to be read as a celebration of colonialism. Rather, it is meant to assess the evolution of colonial relationships at Fort Simcoe, and how both Yakamas and agents used their personal relationships with one another to pursue their goals, even when those goals were at odds.

Terminology

I feel that it is necessary to dedicate a space to discuss terminology within my research. There are two groups of people being studied within this work: the Indigenous people who lived on the Yakama Indian Reservation, and the white employees and Indian Agents of that reservation. Due to the power dynamics between these two groups, it is even more important that I be respectful in my writing. As Native Americans are not a monolith, and the preferences over terminology varies from tribe to tribe, and person to person, there is no universal absolute name to describe the people who lived in the United States before colonization. This subject has elicited a great debate amongst scholars, who all have their own various reasons for why they use the terminology they do.

For hundreds of years, colonizers referred to Indigenous people as “Indians,” taking away their agency to name themselves. The term “Indian” has come in and out of fashion over the years, and more recently, has shifted to “American Indian,” especially among activists in the Red Power movement during the 1970s.²⁸ Much of the primary sources and older literature I refer to throughout my research solely uses the term “Indian,” as one would expect. It would be ahistorical to ignore this. Hence, I have refrained from altering quotations or institutional names (such as the Yakima Indian Industrial School) discussed in primary literature.

Other former British colonies such as Canada or Australia, refer to natives as “First Nations” and “Aboriginal.” While these terms may be appropriate, I will avoid using this term so that the focus remains on the Indigenous peoples of the United States. Twenty-

²⁸David Treur, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019), 288.

first century Americans generally use the term “Native American,” which, though meant to connote respect, is problematic insofar as it erases sovereignty; Some Indigenous people see themselves as members of their tribe before they see themselves as Americans. “Indigenous,” with a capital “I” has become more popular to use in recent years, as it does not designate a specific nationality, but acknowledges that Indigenous people comprise an ethnic group. There is no perfect term to use, especially since I can only write in English, a language forced upon the very people I am discussing. I have therefore chosen to employ the terms “Native American,” and “Indigenous,” more or less interchangeably when discussing Natives in general terms, as opposed to a specific tribe.

Anthropologist David Treur points out that many tribes prefer to be described by their Native name, explaining that members his own tribe calling themselves “Ojibwe,” rather than “Chippewa,” the name designated to them by settlers. However, he concludes that outsiders should simply ask what name the people they are talking about prefer to be called.²⁹ Although not every Indigenous person living on the Reservation during this time identified with the Yakama tribe, the Treaty of 1855 consolidated fourteen smaller tribes under the name of “Yakama.”³⁰ For this reason, as well as to acknowledge their sovereignty, whenever I am specifically talking about Indigenous people who belong to the Yakama Nation, I will refer to them as Yakamas. It is also important to point out that the spelling of the tribe differs from the city of Yakima, which borders the reservation. Due to the fact that the Yakama Nation officially changed the spelling of their tribe to promote proper pronunciation in the mid-1990s, some older scholarly sources may refer

²⁹Treur, 1.

³⁰ United States. Treaty with the Yakama, 1855, June 9, 1855. Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs.

to the tribe as “Yakima.” However, within my research, I have found that many Indian Agents used the modern spelling of the tribe in their reports to the federal government. Therefore, I will always refer to the Yakama with the proper, modern spelling, unless directly quoting a source.

Another focus of my research is the federal governmental agency that was designated to make decisions regarding Native Americans. Since the Continental Congress first met in 1774, federal officials have managed relations between Indigenous peoples and the United States.³¹ In theory, US appointees who lived among the tribes could express Indigenous needs to the federal government, and protect them from unfair trading deals.³² Over the years, officials called this system of appointed agents living among wards (and the bureaucracy that grew out of it) as the “Indian Office,” the “Indian Service,” and the “Office of Indian Affairs.” It was not until 1947 that it became officially known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This work will refer to the agency as the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) to reflect the time being studied.

³¹ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 38.

³² Prucha, 37.

CHAPTER II

EMPIRE AND EXPLOITATION

“I have kept us out of debt but have been compelled to use means in some instances slightly differing from my instructions.”-Reverend James H. Wilbur, 1868

Despite dealing with financial troubles and the butting of bureaucratic heads, James Wilbur worked in some capacity for the Office of Indian Affairs at the Yakama Reservation for two decades (1860-1882). During that time, he established what might be termed a “reservation culture,” at the Reservation by forming a paternalistic fictive-kinship relationship with Yakamas. This chapter focuses on the beginning and the end of Wilbur’s leadership; first by discussing how Wilbur established himself as an authority figure to the Yakamas, and then by discussing how the Yakamas’ perception of Wilbur was disrupted towards the end of his career. Although evidence of the Yakamas rebelling against colonial authority figures can be seen throughout the existence of Fort Simcoe, their dissatisfaction became more acute after a damning OIA investigation of Wilbur’s practices in the 1880s caused the Yakamas to doubt both his honesty and supposed benevolence.

The First Students at Simcoe

Writing to the federal government and requesting more funds was a frequent task of Wilbur’s, but these requests often fell upon deaf ears. Previous scholars have pointed out that during the Reconstruction era, the federal government was often too wrapped up

in rebuilding after the Civil War to give much thought to what was happening out West. This phenomenon can be seen at Simcoe as well, as the Yakama Reservation was formed a handful of years before the Civil War broke out. Wilbur was officially appointed as the Superintendent of Teaching at Fort Simcoe on September 1, 1860, and “immediately went to work,” opening the boarding school.¹ Accounts vary on how many students attended the first boarding school at Simcoe, but at least twenty children attended the first year, spending about half of their day learning, and half of their day working on the farm.²

This was nineteen years before Richard Henry Pratt would officially open Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, the off-reservation boarding school that would become the prototype for Native American assimilation in the United States.³ Pratt’s philosophy of “kill the Indian and save the man,” became the mantra of the boarding school system for decades.⁴ While Wilbur had similar aspirations of educating Native Americans in the ways of the white man, he did not have the enthusiastic federal support that Pratt enjoyed, leaving him to his own devices to keep the reservation solvent. Wilbur’s solution to lack of funding was to force the Yakama to generate the funds, themselves.

Wilbur’s personal account of starting the boarding school at Simcoe is not about hiring teachers or of building the facilities but is instead about the first lesson taught at the school: how to work with cattle. Before ever securing housing or a school, Wilbur

¹James H. Wilbur, *13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T* (1878) in the Yakima Valley Libraries, accessed October 31, 2019, 1.

²A.A Bancroft, “Report of A.A Bancroft, Indian Agent, Washington Territory,” (1862), in the University of Washington Libraries, accessed April 2020, 420.

³Adams,48.

⁴Adams,52.

gathered a group of older Yakama boys. He seemed to have believed he was doing these boys a great service by putting them to work, stating years later that “the children were taken from the camps of their parents in great destitution, not haven clothes enough to cover their nakedness.”⁵ It is true that some of the Indigenous people living on the Yakama reservation were living in poor conditions, especially when one takes into consideration that this was only five years after the Yakama War, which forced the remaining rebel Yakamas onto the reservation. However, the fact that the older Yakama children lacked clothing is more indicative of the season, than of poverty; based off Wilbur’s own timeline of events, he would have gathered these boys in June or July, in a region known for hot summers.

There are no records as to how this first generation of Simcoe students felt when James Wilbur arrived at their homes and took them away to work for him, although they may not have had any time to think about it. He set them to work right away, instructing them in yoking cattle, hitching them to the plow, and working the land. Wilbur’s “wild team and wild boys,” worked the land until they had plowed and fenced about twenty acres to function as a school farm.⁶ Aware that funds were limited, his goal was to create a profitable farm in order to make the school self-sustaining. That fall, once the harvest had proven that profits from the farm could support the boarding school, Wilbur ventured out into the reservation to collect more students.⁷ Wilbur was finally able to open the school in November of 1860, with a little under two dozen children.⁸ About one-third of

⁵ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 2.

⁶ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 2.

⁷ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 2.

⁸ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 2.

these students were from the ages of eighteen to twenty-one years old, while the rest were from the ages of nine to seventeen. As previously mentioned, the records vary on how many Yakama children were in attendance during that first year, however the reports do agree that three of these students were girls, who lived in a small part of the house occupied by the teacher's family, while the boys stayed in the attic of the school-house. They were not given school uniforms but were expected to wear Western clothing that the female students were taught to make. The students spent on average four hours a day in traditional instruction led by their teacher William Wright. Before and after school, the boys were taught how to work on the farm.



Figure 3. Overview of Simcoe as a school and Indian Agency (date unknown). Accessed June 2020, courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Click Relander Collection.

The Yakama Reservation (Figure 3) was quite large, and most students lived too far away to see their families daily. However, students were routinely allowed to visit their parents, “and after spending a few days with them were contented to return to school

and continue their studies.”⁹ The practice of allowing students to visit their families would become rare once off-reservation schools became the norm. It became the standard to keep the children on campus year-round, sometimes for an entire decade, in order to prevent them from being influenced by their families.¹⁰ Simcoe’s early administrators, however, made no attempt to keep Yakama children away from their families, and therefore did not see significant resistance from parents when it came to educating their children. The first full year of the Simcoe boarding school seemed to have been a relative success in the agents’ eyes, but that was not enough to keep the school going.

Despite positive reports from agents and little overt resistance from the Yakamas, B.F. Kendall, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the territory, arrived at Fort Simcoe and fired the teachers in October 1861, due to a short-lived law requiring Indian Agents to be military officers.¹¹ The Yakama Indian Agent at the time, A.A Bancroft, reported that the school was “in a flourishing condition when [Kendall] visited this agency and removed the superintendent of teaching and the two teachers, and the schools were broken up. I was instructed to discontinue the practice of feeding and clothing the school children.”¹² The Fort Simcoe boarding school had its doors open for less than a year before it was shut down.

Still over a decade before the Carlisle Indian School would open, Fort Simcoe’s boarding school had piqued interest in the white public eager to assimilate Native

⁹ Bancroft, 420.

¹⁰ Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 21.

¹¹ James Wilbur, “Report of James H Wilbur, Superintendent of Instruction” (1862), in the University of Washington Libraries, accessed October 2019, 421.

¹² Bancroft, 420.

Americans. Although the idea of assimilation was old by the 1860s, the idea that Native Americans could live better lives if they were taught skills that Anglo-Americans saw as useful, was still a relatively new concept in the Pacific Northwest. A *Washington Standard* article that disagreed with the closing of the school stated that the school had been “eminently successful and constantly improving, so that strong hopes were entertained by all who were interested in it, that many of the Indians would be permanently benefitted by being educated, civilized and Christianized.”¹³ The early 1860s was still a time of great violence between the ever-growing number of settlers and the Indigenous people in the Pacific Northwest. Washington was only a US territory at this point, and the only time that Native Americans received attention in the press was in reports of wars and skirmishes.

According to reports written during Wilbur’s absence, the reservation did not do well without the missionary. A newspaper editorial emphasized how badly the reservation needed Wilbur, stating that “the imbecility of the agent who had had charge of that agency has rendered a change absolutely necessary, if we wished to maintain peaceful relations with those Indians.”¹⁴ The public perception was that Kendall’s hires were incompetent, and did not foster a good relationship with the Yakamas. The *Washington Statesmen* echoed this tone, stating that the new hires “commanded neither the respect nor the esteem of the Indians, and [were] entirely unfit for the place.”¹⁵ A *Washington Standard* reporting that the school had been closed, stated that “the Indians

¹³ Editorial, “The Outrage at Simcoe Reservation,” *Washington Standard*, November 2, 1861. Accessed January 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

¹⁴ Editorial. *Washington Statesman*, July 15, 1864, accessed January 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

¹⁵ “Well Received,” *Washington Statesman*, August 12 1864, accessed January 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

have the impression that all of their best friends have been driven away and those who do not care for them put in their place.”¹⁶ Though we cannot know for certain how Yakamas themselves felt about Wilbur’s ouster, they may well have experienced dismay at his firing by a federal official they had never met.

In all likelihood, the officials who replaced Wilbur and his subordinates expected to pick up where Wilbur had left off; without working to build the same rapport that he had. If that were the case, they were soon disappointed. An *Albany Register* editorial lamented the decision to remove Wilbur stated that “the Indians love and respect him,” and that “to replace such a man with some inexperienced military officer, on the poor plea of doing the Indians a service and prevent them from being swindled, was unwise, for the military officer who attempts to succeed him will find it difficult to convince his charge that his predecessor was not a better man.”¹⁷ To be sure, such charges came from colonial voices. We have no records of what the Yakamas themselves said about Wilbur’s termination. Nevertheless, it appears that the sudden change in policy and personnel tended to undermine the agency’s claim to authority and permanence.

If Wilbur left the reservation after being terminated, he did not stay away for long. After getting fired, he wrote to Kendall to inform him that he had been appointed by the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Church to be the missionary of the Yakama reservation, and asked if he could remain on reservation as a missionary. Kendall responded that “things would not harmonise [sic] if [you] remained,” so Wilbur left the

¹⁶ “By his Acts Shall he be Judged,” *Washington Standard*, November 16, 1861. Accessed January 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers

¹⁷ “Yakima Indian Agency,” *Albany Register*, September 4, 1869. Accessed January 2020, Historic Oregon Newspapers.

reservation, according to the *Washington Standard*.¹⁸ However, the 1862 Annual Report sent to the OIA, written less than a year after Wilbur's termination, describes how comfortably settled into the reservation the minister was:

Upon the Sabbath the Indians, old and young, usually turn out in larger numbers to receive religious instruction. Two rooms are used for this purpose—one in which Indian children are taught by the employés [sic] and in the other the adult Indians are instructed by Rev. James H. Wilbur, who assisted by an interpreter, talks to them in a plain and familiar way the great truths of Christianity. An hour or more is thus devoted on the Sabbath exclusively to the Indians. They listen with great attention to what is said to them and express themselves as being anxious to know and to do that which is right.¹⁹

Kendall may have been able to succeed in removing Wilbur from his position, but he was not able to stop Wilbur's influence over the Yakama people. Wilbur may have simply returned after Kendall left, using his new missionary position to justify staying on the reservation. Another article from the same year in the *Washington Standard* confirms he stayed as a missionary, noting that he held a service every week, with a social meeting in the afternoon. "The social meeting, the reporter noted, "was perhaps the most interesting, as various Indians spoke and prayed at the meeting, unintelligible to your correspondent, but not to that ear to which all tongues are alike." He added that, "the Indians attend well and are evidently interested."²⁰ Unsurprisingly, Wilbur sought to replace Indigenous religion with Protestantism, however, he encouraged them to express their thoughts in their own language.

Wilbur's wife Lucretia Ann also remained on the the reservation. An 1864 report that she donated \$68.50 worth of Bibles and other materials to the boarding school, which

¹⁸ "By his Acts Shall he be Judged," *Washington Standard*.

¹⁹ Bancroft, 421.

²⁰ "Their Church and Educational Privileges," *Washington Standard*, September 20, 1862.

Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

had just reopened its doors to about thirty students.²¹ In an 1878 report, Wilbur states that he had been living “among Indians,” for the past eighteen years, with no reference to an absence from the reservation.²² Despite no longer being an employee of the OIA, Wilbur maintained his role as a paternal figure to the Native Americans, relying on interpreters to work with adult Yakamas. Wilbur, unlike the Jesuits, never learned any of the multiple Indigenous languages spoken at Simcoe, and instead utilized the available multilingual Yakamas to spread his message.

Wilbur was reinstated as an Office of Indian Affairs employee in the summer of 1864, this time not as the Superintendent of Teaching, but as the Agent for the entire reservation, replacing the retired Agent Bancroft.²³ During the time that the school was closed, Simcoe employees spent their time teaching Yakama adults agriculture, which allowed for the farm to be kept up.²⁴ In the five years that the reservation had been running, the Yakamas had been taught to manage crops and erect fences, as well as how to build homes out of lumber, but were frustrated by the lack of supplies. Many felt discouraged about adopting prescribed sorts of housing and economics, as the fences provided were often too weak to prevent cattle from getting into the crops.²⁵ Despite the fact that the federal government had started to provide more supplies to Simcoe, Wilbur was still left to his own devices when it came to managing funds on the reservation.

²¹ AA Bancroft, “Report of A.A Bancroft, agent at Yakama agency,” (1864), in the University of Washington Libraries, accessed April 2020.

²² Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T” (1878), 14-15.

²³ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T” (1878), 1.

²⁴ Wilbur, “Report of James H Wilbur, Superintendent of Instruction” (1862), 422.

²⁵ H.C Thompson, “Report of H.C. Thompson, farmer at Yakama agency,” (1864), University of Washington Libraries, accessed April 2020, 74.

The Cattle Incident

It can be argued that one of James Wilbur's lasting influences on the reservation was his introduction of cattle herding to the Yakama. Wilbur claimed that the cattle functioned to make money for the reservation. While discussing a pattern of religious (as opposed to secular) agents mismanaging reservations in the Pacific Northwest, historian Robert E. Ficken states that Wilbur "ran something akin to a personal cattle empire on the Yakama reservation, maintaining records confusing enough to defy comprehension on the part of auditors."²⁶ The latter part of Ficken's statement is correct; the financial records and accounting books kept during Wilbur's time as Indian Agent are almost impossible to interpret, and were clearly kept by someone with no accounting experience. Many pages are ripped out, and the ones that remain in between are too vague to get an actual understanding of what the writer was keeping track of. There are several pages that appear to track provisions given to various Yakama, totaling up how much each individual owed. These lists lack consistency, some are detailed and organized, other appear as quick notes such as: "Tecumseh: seven knives." Numbers with no labels indicating what they represent, dance across the pages, often with strikes through them. Other notes simply state, "paid." Some pages resemble a child's scratch paper for a math exam, with long numerical equations with no explanations as to what is being computed, other than "Oats." The 1879 Issue Book even included a list of Yakama children and

²⁶ Robert E. Ficken, "After the Treaties: Administering Pacific Northwest Indian Reservations," in *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2005), 445. Accessed April 24, 2020.

adult Paiutes who were baptized that July.²⁷ Unorganized accounting alone did not raise suspicion, but when presented with other accusations, they raised eyebrows.

Ficken's claim that Wilbur ran a personal cattle empire through the reservation nonetheless calls for a more complicated discussion. As part of the Treaty of 1855, the US government was required to give yearly provisions to the Yakama Nation, as well as aid them with building houses and setting up farms. The treaty also states that the reservation Indian Agent should inform Congress of the wishes of the Yakamas, and that the federal government should make decisions as to how to use Congressional allocations, based on the Agent's recommendation.²⁸ Once that decision was made and the money and supplies were dispersed to the reservation, it is up to the agent to allocate the provisions to the individuals. The Indian Agent acted as a liaison between the Yakama Nation and the federal government, or more specifically, Congress. By design, the 1855 treaty forced the Yakamas to depend on whomever was appointed to the Agent position, an arrangement that supported paternalism and made it all but impossible to escape. Perhaps ironically, the government's repeated failure to provide sufficient annual funds buttressed paternalism even further. While Wilbur fulfilled his duty by making yearly requests for appropriations, the funds were never enough to fully sustain the Yakamas. This often led Wilbur to implement creative alternative solutions, a fact that he never hid from the OIA. One year, Wilbur concluded his annual report by stating: "I have

²⁷ AC Fairchild, "Fairchild's Issue Book" 1879, Yakima Indian Agency Ft. Simcoe, WA, MsSC16, Washington State Historical Society.

²⁸ United States. Treaty with the Yakama.

kept us out of debt, but have been compelled to use means in some instances slightly differing from my instructions.”²⁹

What Wilbur did that was “slightly differing,” from his instructions was only provide provisions and supplies to the Yakamas who worked on the reservation, something that was not specified in the 1855 Treaty. It was not unusual for a treaty to outline the amount of money given annually to a tribe, the idea being that the supplied provisions compensated for the lands ceded in the treaties. Historian Francis Paul Prucha argues that this treaty followed the pattern of Western settlement, in that it existed as a way to move Natives out of the way of white settlers “to limited reserves within their old, more extensive territorial claims.”³⁰ The treaty also specified that the payments for the ceded land would not be solely monetary, but “in goods conducive to the agricultural development of the Indians and for their moral improvement and education.”³¹ Per Wilbur’s decision, and not the federal government’s, only Yakamas who worked at the Agency could receive these goods.

The flexible language of the treaty allowed Wilbur to have unchecked power over the Yakamas, as he had the sole decision-making power over distributing annuities and/or goods paid for by the government. Wilbur worried that freely giving supplies to Native Americans would make them too dependent on white people. In an annual report, Wilbur predicted that the Yakamas would begin to ask for more provisions than necessary, and fight against the government if they did not receive them, causing a

²⁹ James Wilbur, “Annual Report of Yakama Agency (1868)”, in the University of Washington Libraries, accessed October 2019, 120.

³⁰ Prucha, 401.

³¹ Prucha, 402.

second war between the Yakamas and the United States.³² The only people who could receive provisions without first working, were those who were too sick or elderly to work.³³ That was the rationale, at least, that Wilbur employed when explaining his actions to the OIA. If it happened that Wilbur saved the OIA money as well, then that was be a bonus. Wilbur explained that “if in chopping, sowing, hoeing, plowing, moving or whatever work they may be put to do, if there is not immediate profit to the Department, there is profit to the Indians, in contracting the habit of work-the manner of doing it, and the pay he receives for it.”³⁴ In other words, if holding the provisions hostage for work did not save the OIA money, Wilbur was still felt that he was justified in exploiting Indigenous labor, because it benefited the Yakamas.

Wilbur strongly believed in cattle investment, believing that setting the Yakama on a course for the cattle business would help them to become industrious and self-sufficient. In 1872, he wrote to the OIA recommending that the remaining installments of money owed to the Yakamas be invested in a cattle herd as it “could not fail to make the whole nation financially independent in a few years.”³⁵ Instead of making an annual decision on what supplies and provisions the Yakamas needed, the OIA could invest the rest of the money into the cattle, and the cattle would benefit the Yakamas. Blackfeet agent John Young attempted a similar scheme in the 1870s, hoping that an agency cattle herd would develop into a long-term stock industry. Historian Michael D. Wise argues that this was a means for the OIA to transform the Blackfeet “from hunters to herders,

³² Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 7.

³³ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 6.

³⁴ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T”, 6.

³⁵ Rev. Wilbur Proposes Big Indian Cattle Herd in “US Commissioner of Indian Affairs-annual reports-1872-1879,” in Yakima Valley Libraries, Click Relander Collection, 11.

from so-called predators to producers.”³⁶ Young forced the Blackfeet to become “industrious” by criminalizing traditional hunting, which led to the majority of adult Blackfeet men working in the reservation slaughterhouses under the supervision of the white agency farmer.³⁷ In a similar fashion, the Yakamas were forced to become “industrious” by Wilbur with his cattle herd.

The OIA never gave an official approval to pool the remaining money towards the existing herd, but Wilbur spent a great deal of resources tending to the herd, regardless. Fort Simcoe had already had a cattle herd since its formation, but now Wilbur wanted the federal government to help financially support it.

Wilbur’s explanation of why he forced the Yakamas to work for him did not satisfy everyone at the OIA, however, because in December 1880, an investigative officer named William Pollock arrived at Simcoe to evaluate the reservation.³⁸ This happened to coincide with Wilbur’s absence-as he had taken a several month break from his duties to visit Washington DC with his wife to consult on Indigenous issues.³⁹ Several employees, as well as a few Yakamas, gave extensive accounts of the following incident to Wilbur upon his return, which he would later use to try and clear his name. While the biases of these selected testimonies are sometimes blatantly in Wilbur’s favor, they provide insight into how an outside agent was able to cause a huge rift between Wilbur and the Yakamas, and permanently alter their relationship.

³⁶ Michael D. Wise, *Producing Predators: Wolves, Work, and Conquest in the Northern Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 50-51.

³⁷ Wise, 57.

³⁸ James Harvey Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” Willamette University Archives and Special Collections, accessed October 2019, libmedia.willamette.edu, 1.

³⁹ *The Vancouver Independent*, Volume 6, Number 10, October 28, 1880. Accessed October 2019, Washington Digital Newspapers.

J.H Fairchild, a teacher at the boarding school and friend to Wilbur, was left as interim Indian Agent while Wilbur took his short leave of absence. Fairchild suspicious of Pollock's intentions, but readily showed him the accounting books when asked. Perhaps aware and even a little embarrassed that the books were a mess, he tried to point out some matters "not technically in accordance," but Pollock responded that this did not matter as long as "the Agency conducted with an honest desire for the best interest of the service, a substantial compliance was all that was required."⁴⁰ Pollock was not at Fort Simcoe to catch small accounting errors; he had his sights set on James Wilbur.

Inspector Pollock's opinion of how the Agency was conducted quickly turned negative as he analyzed the accounts, complaining that it was "incomprehensible how a set of accounting officers with common sense could pass such accounts," and that, in the whole of the department there "was but one, or at most two, clerks capable of clearly and intelligently understanding a set of accounts."⁴¹ He spent some time investigating the books further, but could not find evidence of any actual fraud. Pollock's problem with Fort Simcoe was not just the account books, however, but with how Wilbur ran the reservation.

Pollock informed Fairchild during his visit that he was against Wilbur's system of distribution of goods. In his own report, Pollock stated that Wilbur's method "enabled [Wilbur] to pay for much service that should have been reported as regular...and for many things which do not appear on his official accounts."⁴² A loyal friend to Wilbur,

⁴⁰ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 1.

⁴¹ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 5.

⁴² Wm. J. Pollock, Pollock's final report to Hon Carl Shurz (1881), in Yakima Valley Libraries, Yakama Indian Agency Records (1848-1904), accessed June 2020, 7.

Fairchild tried to explain Wilbur's philosophy on work ethic, and utilize some of the justifications Wilbur had used in the past, but also agreed to change the policy if the OIA requested.⁴³ Pollock told Fairchild not to concern himself with making changes yet, because he was only there to conduct an investigation, not implement changes. Instead, Pollock turned his attention to the cattle herd, stating that he "intended to thoroughly look up the cattle business," and that if Wilbur "got out of it without trouble, he would be the first agent to do so," as it was not OIA policy to allow reservations to keep a herd.⁴⁴ It could be argued that Wilbur kept the herd without department permission, but Wilbur had never hidden the cattle from the OIA, nor was he expressly told not to keep the herd.

Inspector Pollock was known in the Office of Indian Affairs for travelling to the various reservations and "settling Indian troubles and disputes."⁴⁵ Before his investigation at Fort Simcoe, he had collected testimonies regarding a battle between settlers in Colorado and the Utes. When asked about his position as Inspector at the OIA, he told a reporter that, "I go to learn the facts. I shall go to the agencies. Of course, I shall receive all or any propositions that may be made and forward them to Washington. I shall not conclude anything."⁴⁶ Presumably, Pollock conducted his investigation of Wilbur and the Yakama Reservation on the same premise: that he would only report the facts and not arrive at his own conclusions. While it is true that Pollock never officially made conclusions about his investigation, he did, in effect, convey to the Yakamas that Wilbur

⁴³ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 3.

⁴⁴ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 3.

⁴⁵ *The Vancouver Independent*, Volume 6, Number 33, April 7 1881. Accessed April 2020, Washington State Digital Newspapers.

⁴⁶ "The Facts: They are the Objects of Chief Solicitude with the Interior Department," in *Denver Republican*, October 22nd, 1879. *Ely Samuel Parker scrapbooks: Vol 7, 1828-1894*, American Indian Histories and Cultures, accessed May 2020, 14.

was untrustworthy and might be stealing from them. At Simcoe, he arranged to have a meeting with a council of Yakama at the school house on December 23rd, 1880, and encouraged them to speak their minds.⁴⁷ With the aid of a Native man named Frank Olney as interpreter, Pollock informed the Yakama that he had been sent by the Great Father to see if they were receiving the goods that Wilbur had claimed to give them. Reminding the council that “an Indian never forgot anything,” he asked them to answer whether they had received cattle, based on the list he had.⁴⁸

The first name that was read was Yesmowit, who answered that he had never received cattle. John Lumley was then called and answered that he too had not received cattle. More and more names were called, each stating that they had never received cattle from the Agency. Pollock asked Frank Olney to “tell him to think well and be sure,” and to “ask him if he knows why his name is on this paper if he got no cattle.”⁴⁹ Fairchild watched in horror as people whom he knew did not possess cattle had their names called. Each man called looked more confused and angrier than the previous. Inspector Pollock closed the meeting by stating that “the Great Father had sent these cattle to the Indians-- that they were their property--that Agent Wilbur had said he had given the cattle to some of the Indians who had not received them ... the Great Father would be much deceived [and] surprised when he saw that paper--that the papers all appeared to be wrong and he could not understand them.”⁵⁰ While all accounts of Pollock’s investigation refernce his

⁴⁷ James Harvey Wilbur, “Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881),” Willamette University Archives, accessed September 2019, 1-2.

⁴⁸ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” 6.

⁴⁹ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” 7.

⁵⁰ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),”9.

list of men who, in theory, should have received cattle, none of those accounts specifies what precisely the list was or where Pollock had gotten it.

A few days later, a second meeting was called, wherein Pollock created more tension between the Yakamas and Wilbur's staff. He informed the Yakamas that they did not need to work for the government annuities that Wilbur distributed, that they would not be required to pay the charges against them in these books, and that if Wilbur wanted to put them to work, he would have to pay them himself, with money.⁵¹ Pollock went on to tell the gathered men that since the Great Father could not be there to see them himself, he had sent Pollock to make sure that Agents were not cheating them. He added that he was not sure yet if Wilbur had committed fraud but hoped that he had not. "Some Agents are bad men and cheated the Indians," he told them.⁵² Pollock closed this meeting by telling the Yakamas that he believed that there were many more cattle on the reservation than what was being reported, and offered to help identify and count them, if any men wanted to help drive them.⁵³ According to Pollock, Wilbur had reported 2300 head of cattle, but he suspected that there were many more. To effectuate the roundup and cattle census, he offered one adult steer or cow plus one calf to anyone willing to participate.⁵⁴ The official report for that year stated that the government owned 2028 heads of cattle, and that the Yakamas collectively owned 4000, but none of the accounts state what Pollock used as a reference for his claim that Wilbur was underreporting.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),"2.

⁵² Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),"10.

⁵³ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),"9.

⁵⁴ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),"16.

⁵⁵ R.E Trowbridge, "Statistics Accompanying Annual Report of 1880," Yakima Valley Libraries, accessed October 2019..

Understandably upset and confused, Yakama men requested a third meeting.⁵⁶ Emboldened by the two previous meetings that exposed Wilbur, the Natives had their own grievances to air. They complained that Wilbur refused to let them have wagons or other tools unless they worked at the reservation. Frustrated, a Yakama man named John Brown spoke out: “I have got a lot of things from the agent which are charged to me. Am I to pay for the items or not? I need to know.”⁵⁷ Pollock assured him that he would not have to pay, and asked Frank Olney to tell Brown and the others that they would no longer have to pay for the provisions.⁵⁸

The Yakamas began to clap and cheer, and a few of them started to ask for a potlatch—a gift giving ceremony common among Northwest tribes. While they liked what Pollock had to say, it probably seemed too good to be true. If Wilbur was lying to them, they wanted more concrete proof than Pollock’s words: “If you give us these things now, if you will give us plows, harness and wagons right here, our hearts will be glad,” said a Yakama man at the meeting. “We shall know that you tell us straight, otherwise when the Agent comes back, he may say that you had no right to make promises and refuse to give us these things.”⁵⁹ John Brown agreed, asking for the provisions immediately, stating, “if you give me the things now, I will believe you. I don’t want to wait ‘til next week. If I take the things home with me, then I will know you tell me the truth.” Embarrassed, Pollock told the gathered Yakamas that it was not his responsibility to provide the provisions, only to investigate if they were being treated fairly.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),”3.

⁵⁷ Wilbur, “Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881),” 5

⁵⁸ Wilbur, Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)”, 16.

⁵⁹ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” 16.

⁶⁰ Wilbur, “Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)”,16.

The days crept into 1881, and seventy-five Yakama men gathered for Pollock's proposed cattle drive, despite the ten inches of snow on the ground.⁶¹ Not all Yakamas felt that the drive was appropriate, as several leaders went to Pollock to point out that the snow was dangerous and that the cattle would die as a result.⁶² Not wanting to bear the responsibility for dead cattle, Pollock nervously asked that Fairchild give the actual order for the drive. Fairchild, wanting to keep both his job and the peace at the reservation, refused to give the order. Eventually, Pollock changed his mind altogether and sent out the order to countermand the drive, but it was too late, as many driving parties had already left for the cattle herd, nearly forty miles away.⁶³ At this point, the snow on the ground had reached eighteen inches.⁶⁴

The teams did not receive the message to cancel the drive "till several parties had started to remote points on the Reservation, and driven the cattle from their shelter among the bushes along the creeks."⁶⁵ Many of the teams abandoned their cattle in the open prairie without food or shelter as soon as they received the message, declaring that they would rather see the cattle die than be robbed.⁶⁶ Frank Olney, who had been appointed by Pollock as the captain of one of the driving parties, had gathered up about a hundred cows before receiving the message. He, like the others, abandoned them.⁶⁷ Thomas

⁶¹ James Wilbur, "Statement of Franklin P. Olney (1881)", Willamette University Libraries, accessed September 2019, 6.

⁶² Wilbur, "Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)", 1.

⁶³ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 13. Wilbur, Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)", 2.

⁶⁴ Wilbur, "Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)", 1-2.

⁶⁵ James Harvey Wilbur, "Affidavit of E.K. Miller (1881)," Willamette University Libraries, accessed September 2019, 4.

⁶⁶ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 13

⁶⁷ Wilbur, "Statement of Franklin P. Olney (1881)", 6.

McKay, a reservation employee, testified that about seven-hundred cattle had already been moved by the time the message reached all parties.⁶⁸

Indeed, many of the cattle died, although it appears that the leaders who warned Pollock against the drive were not the only ones who knew that the weather would cause a problem. When asked later why they would go out in such conditions, a volunteer confirmed that he and others knew that many cattle would die in the process, but their “hearts became very small,” and they felt that “the cattle might as well perish from exposure, as to be stolen from them.”⁶⁹ Although Pollock calling off the drive did not indicate that they were to be stolen from, it clearly frustrated the men to the point that they did not feel that they could trust OIA agents any longer. These men did not volunteer for the drive solely to get the promised payment of a cow and calf, but instead to demonstrate their anger against Wilbur.

The testimonies used to write this narrative were all taken by Wilbur, months after the incident occurred. One cannot help but wonder how much influence Wilbur had while documenting these testimonies, which demonstrate bias against Pollock every bit blatant as Pollock’s seeming bias against Wilbur. Frank Olney ended his testimony by stating that he was recently shown the issue books from the meeting, and saw that neither John Lumley nor Yesmowit were charged for provisions, as Pollock had told them, and concluded that Pollock must have been lying.⁷⁰ Fairchild ended his testimony by explaining that he had sought out the angry Yakamas and showed them the books to

⁶⁸ James Harvey Wilbur, “Affidavit of Thomas McKay (1881)”, Willamette University Archives, accessed November 2019, 1-3.

⁶⁹ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” 12.

⁷⁰ Wilbur, “Statement of Franklin P. Olney (1881)”, 7.

prove that Pollock had deceived them.⁷¹ The reservation physician, Dr. Kuykendall also spent much of his testimony defending Wilbur, stating that “the issue paper,” meaning Wilbur’s record of allocations to the tribal members, “after all that could be said, was virtually correct, and that the utmost that could truthfully said against the paper was that there was slight technical error.”⁷²

There is no denying that the accounting books at Simcoe were an unorganized mess. The question remains whether Wilbur was actively stealing from the Yakamas, or if bad accounting made it appear so. In Pollock’s report, he bemoaned Wilbur’s “method of issuing on paper, regardless of the facts,” and questioned how Wilbur was able to keep a herd of cattle without losing any to death or otherwise.⁷³ An analysis of a remaining account book from the agency reveals that the employees at Fort Simcoe were not sophisticated enough to doctor the books.⁷⁴ That is not to say that an employee could not deliberately cook the account books in order to siphon government funds to their own pockets. Fraud probably did happen at Simcoe, given the exploitative nature of colonial relationships, but likely did not occur as pervasively as Pollock suspected. It is more likely that accounting was simply an afterthought at Fort Simcoe, rather than a conspiracy to hide stolen goods. Although his intentions may have been justified in his mind, Wilbur’s biggest crime in this investigation was refusing to give provisions that rightfully belonged to the Yakamas’.

⁷¹ Wilbur, “Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881),” 21.

⁷² Wilbur, “Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881),” 18.

⁷³ Pollock, 11.

⁷⁴ Fairchild, 1879.

Both Fairchild and Dr. Kuykendall were under the impression that everything Inspector Pollock did at Fort Simcoe was to undermine Wilbur's authority as Indian Agent. Dr. Kuykendall noted that Pollock was not a religious man, often swore in front of the Yakamas, and that he felt that the Inspector had a bias against the "singing and praying" kind of Superintendent.⁷⁵ Evidently the physician and the inspector did not get along, as Pollock described Dr. Kuykendall as "a weak, vain, Janus-faced sycophant," who was "an enemy to the Department."⁷⁶ Although Pollock's opinion of Fairchild was fairly neutral, Fairchild felt that another visit from Pollock would "set the Indians back where they were 10 years ago, and that he had only visited the reservation to "dig up something on which he may base an unfavorable report."⁷⁷

It is possible that Pollock did arrive at the reservation with preconceived notions about Wilbur and how he ran the Agency. He often made comments about how suspicious he found Wilbur. It is unlikely, however, that this was a personal vendetta against Wilbur. The two men had never met prior to Pollock's investigation. Pollock's report discussed the concerns that he vocalized during his visit but omitted the cattle incident altogether. Nowhere in his report did he condemn Wilbur as a person, despite the Simcoe employees' assumption that it would. In fact, he ended his report by stating that the agents at Simcoe were so cavalier about Wilbur's methods that he was "beginning to fear neither the Regulations nor the policy of the Indian Office are rightfully understood by me."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Wilbur, "Statement of G.B Kuykendall (1881)", 7-8.

⁷⁶ Pollock, 4.

⁷⁷ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 9, 20-21.

⁷⁸ Pollock, 20.

Pollock arrived at Simcoe looking for fraud, so he found fraud. If he seemed overly enthusiastic about his investigation to the employees, it may have been because he felt like he was succeeding, and therefore advancing his career. If it is true that Pollock had a bias against Christians, then it could also be true that he was biased against Wilbur in that sense and was proud to catch a religious authority doing harm. Pollock's report, however, discussed a church service that he attended on the reservation, which he described as "very affecting."⁷⁹ It stands to reason that Pollock would work to keep his report as neutral as possible, but other accounts show his possible bias against Wilbur. While travelling with a Simcoe employee, Pollock even proposed a bet, "not as an officer but as a man," that Wilbur would lose his job for making a personal profit off the Yakamas.⁸⁰

Yet, Pollock was no friend to the Natives, either. Just a year before the Yakama investigation, Pollock had investigated a conflict between settlers and Utes at White River, Colorado.⁸¹ During his visit, he spoke to the governor of Colorado to advocate genocide. "Indians," he insisted, "must be removed from the state or exterminated by the state if not by federal forces."⁸² It appears, however, that Pollock later came around to assimilation and removal, rather than genocide, as he began to advocate for a different approach.

A *Denver Republican* reporter managed to get an interview with Pollock, who told the reporter that "we are stronger and wiser than the Indians. We can surround them

⁷⁹ Pollock, 3-4.

⁸⁰ Wilbur, "Affidavit of E.K. Miller (1881)," 6.

⁸¹ "The Facts: They are the Objects of Chief Solicitude with the Interior Department," 14-15.

⁸² Editorial. *The Vancouver Independent*, Volume 5, Number 9, October 23 1879, accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

and close in upon them and kill them all. Shall we do so? We must act like civilized being in dealing them.”⁸³ In other words, Pollock felt that it was possible to wipe out the Native Americans, but perhaps Americans were too “civilized” for that. Clearly, the interests of Native Americans were not actually Pollock’s concern, regardless of how he presented himself at Fort Simcoe. Pollock was part of a large majority at the end of the nineteenth century that felt that Native Americans were a dying race, and that their extinction was inevitable. Others, such as Wilbur and Richard Henry Pratt, felt that Indigenous people were just as capable and intelligent as white people, but were held back by their tribal culture. While this colonialism perspective infantilized Natives--some have even called it cultural genocide-- it served in the moment as an alternative to exterminationist rhetoric. Pollock’s investigation, however, was likely more about career advancement than it was about making sure that Indigenous people were treated fairly.

When asked by a translator if Pollock was going to pay the men who gathered the cattle, he was incredulous, proclaiming, “damn them, I was making the drive for their own benefit and am not going to pay them anything!”⁸⁴ It seemingly did not matter to Pollock if the Yakamas ever received the provisions they were owed, or if they were paid back for their labor, because that was not part of his job. Once he left the reservation and filed his report, the Yakamas were no longer his concern. His investigation failed in catching Wilbur in fraud, but it did succeed in changing the culture at Simcoe. The Yakamas now realized that they could not trust Wilbur. They also realized, however, that they could not trust those who opposed Wilbur. Whether or not this was intentional, as

⁸³ “The Facts: They are the Objects of Chief Solitude with the Interior Department,” 14-15.

⁸⁴ Wilbur, “Affidavit of E.K. Miller (1881),” 4.

Fairchild and Kuykendall suspected, is of little importance. According to an employee, Pollock's visit emboldened them to resist Agency authority and advocate for their needs:

After his departure, the Indians were no longer the same people-in the place of their former cheerfulness and readiness to oblige, they were sullen and discontented. When they wished for anything it was demanded-they insisted that everything should be turned over to them-each one considered himself entitled to the first choice of harness, plows, and wagons and demanded that they be immediately given up, and if his demand was refused, seemed to think he had the right to take his own property by force.⁸⁵

Inspector Pollock's visit to Simcoe may not have revealed that James Wilbur was personally profiting from having a cattle herd, but it did inform the Yakamas of what was rightfully theirs. Wilbur had spent his career emphasizing the importance of work to the Yakama Nation, only to have an authority figure tell them that "their agent, whom they have learned to love and trust, is a fraud and cheat."⁸⁶ Wilbur had spent the last two decades establishing himself as a patriarchal authority by cultivating personal relationships with the Yakamas. In a brief investigation, Pollock managed to delegitimize him. Perhaps this should not come as a great surprise. It is likely that Wilbur greatly overestimated the degree to which Yakamas looked up to him. Nevertheless, Pollock's visit undermined both Wilbur's authority and that of the federal government.

In a response to the entire affair, Wilbur asked if he was really meant to pay the Yakamas for everything that they do, if the tasks were for the benefit of the agency.⁸⁷ From his perspective, he was not hurting the Yakamas by forcing them to work; he was teaching them an important lesson. Although it appears that there were no repercussions

⁸⁵ Wilbur, "Affidavit of E.K. Miller (1881)," 19.

⁸⁶ Wilbur, "Statement of J.H Fairchild (1881)," 10.

⁸⁷ James Wilbur, "Letter from James H. Wilbur to Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1881)", Willamette University Archives, accessed September 2019, 2.

towards Wilbur after the incident, he retired a year later in 1882. The cattle incident, in short, along with his age, may have pushed him to retire.

Wilbur had cultivated a relationship with the Yakama Nation that scholars would qualify as “intimate colonialism,” a totalizing strategy that focused on changing the culture by establishing paternal relationships to influence them.⁸⁸ This parent-child relationship that Wilbur sought to create will be further analyzed in the next chapter. What is important to note here, is that Pollock’s visit drastically changed the attitude of the Yakamas by demonstrating that Wilbur did not always have their best interests at heart. At Simcoe, what one might call “bureaucratic colonialism,” unintentionally undermined the “intimate colonialism” that Wilbur had spent decades developing. Armed with the knowledge that they should not be charged for provisions, Yakamas began to feel rightfully entitled to supplies they should have already received. Although not his intention, Pollock’s search for corruption undermined Wilbur’s colonial approach. Ironically, Pollock, a man who saw the extinction of Native Americans in the near future, became the catalyst for the Yakamas to resist colonialism and assimilation for generations. This does not suggest that the Yakamas had not, or could not, contest Wilbur’s authority before Wilbur arrived. In fact, later chapters will discuss individuals who undermined Wilbur’s authority long before Pollock’s arrival to Simcoe. What it does suggest, however, is that Pollock’s intrusion undermined whatever authority and permanency Wilbur managed to establish despite Yakama contestation. Pollock’s visit only redoubled the Yakamas’ contention.

⁸⁸ Cahill, 58.

CHAPTER III

WILBUR AND THE MEANING OF “FATHERHOOD”

“They are like children, and like children look to those in authority for advice and guidance.”

-Reverend James H. Wilbur, 1880.

In order to fully understand the importance of the Yakamas’ rebellion against James Wilbur during the cattle incident, the complexities of intimate colonialism must be further discussed. Much of what Wilbur did throughout his career as Indian Agent mirrored his counterparts at other reservations when it came to assimilation rhetoric and conversion to Christianity, but his utilization of intimate colonialism to create personal relationships with the Yakamas sets him apart. Wilbur worked hard to create and maintain a paternal persona that placed him as the ultimate authority over his wards, rather than just a liaison between the Yakamas and the government. This chapter will discuss Yakama culture, prior to colonization, before analyzing how Wilbur’s intimate colonialism sought to break up that culture, but ultimately failed.

The Yakamas, Pre-Simcoe

As this thesis discusses what Wilbur sought to change about the Yakamas, it is important to first discuss who the Yakamas were before being forced onto the reservation. It is difficult to paint a full and accurate picture of who the Yakamas were before the Treaty of 1855, as the Confederated Tribes were once 14 smaller bands of various Indigenous peoples, each had their own traditions and beliefs. Andrew H. Fisher

argues that the boundaries between the different groups were not very clear-cut, and that “the waters of the Columbia River typically united rather than divided human populations.”¹ Their identities were more tied to the region and close-knit kinships, rather than a specific tribal affiliation. One can, however, offer a basic and generalized understanding what it was like in the region before colonization. Acknowledging that there are differences between these groups, the following discussion will refer to the 14 Confederated Tribes as the Yakamas unless otherwise specified.

The Yakamas spoke languages from three different language families: Sahaptian (now referred to by the Yakama Nation as *Ichishkín*²), Salish,³ and Chinook.³

Archeologists have determined that the Yakamas had been living near the Columbia River and developing their own culture independently, until about seven thousand years ago when they began to trade with coastal Natives.⁴ The population began to dramatically increase around 0 BCE, and trade relations with Coastal, Plains, and Great Basin tribes became an important part of the culture. Additionally, the Yakamas began to place greater emphasis on social and ceremonial activities.⁵ Towards the end of the eighteenth-century the Yakamas acquired the horse, which anthropologist Richard Daugherty states was “quickly woven into the fabric of Yakama culture, permitting increased mobility, broader and stronger trade relationships, and heavier utilization of their economic

¹ Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 14.

² Michelle M. Jacob, *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013), 54.

³ Daugherty, 1.

⁴ Daugherty, 13.

⁵ Daugherty, 13.

resources.”⁶ Although the horse came to the Yakamas much later than it came to other Plateau Natives, it became deeply important to the culture, and often signified wealth.⁷

The incorporation of the horse into Yakama life was also extremely helpful to their migratory lifestyle, as they tended to move into higher elevations in the summers to escape extreme heat.⁸ In the winters, Yakamas established villages in clusters along the rivers, offering them protection during severe weather.⁹ Food was also gathered on a seasonal basis, with a root-digging season in the springtime, and a fishing season in the early summer.¹⁰ Travelling along the river was also an economic decision, as it allowed for the different villages to trade food and other resources with each other.¹¹ Although their emphasis on trade may have made them aware of agriculture, the Yakamas themselves never adopted any form of agriculture, instead preferring to use the resources that the land provided for them.¹²

The Yakamas largest political organization was the villages, where political decisions of everyday life were made.¹³ Apart from the Wishram, who loosely followed hereditary leadership, most of the 14 bands did not have a chief position that was strictly passed down through one family. Although the idea of chiefs had been adopted into Yakama culture through contact with Plains tribes, this position functioned “primarily in the matter of warfare and relationships with other bands and tribes.”¹⁴ However, for the

⁶ Daughery, 22.

⁷ Relander, 31.

⁸ Helen H. Schuster, *The Yakima* (United States of America: Main Line Book Co., 1990), 23.

⁹ Schuster, 25.

¹⁰ Schuster, 20-25.

¹¹ Fisher, *Shadow Tribe*, 18.

¹² Daughery, 13.

¹³ Fisher, *Shadow Tribe*, 25.

¹⁴ Daughery, 36-48.

most part, leaders were selected based off of their personal abilities and knowledge, and their word was not considered absolute law.¹⁵ Elder women would also occasionally hold leadership positions, and exert influence over decisions, especially those who had special skills.¹⁶

Not only did Yakamas hold skilled female elders in high regard, but descent was tracked both paternally and maternally.¹⁷ Although this does not necessarily indicate that Yakamas were completely egalitarian before colonization, it does show that they placed value on the contributions made by both men and women. Both men and women in Yakama culture were respected for their experience and wisdom, though the roles of the two sexes differed. Labor was divided by gender, with about 50-70 percent of a village's food source coming from the gathering of plant food. While Euro-Americans at the time saw this as an example of Native Americans forcing women to carry the majority of the workload, (a common belief among colonizers at the time) Fisher argues that this gave women in the region "greater status and influence than that of their contemporary American counterparts."¹⁸

Family relationships held importance in Yakama culture. Education was informal but was typically facilitated by family members. Boys were taught from an early age to hunt and travel, while girls were taught by older female relatives how to care for their family.¹⁹ Specifically, girls were taught how to weave baskets, make shelter mats, tan

¹⁵ Daughery, 36-48.

¹⁶ Schuster, 29.

¹⁷ Kathleen Kuiper, *American Indians of the Plateau and Plains* (New York, NY: Britannica Educational Publishing with Rosen Educational Services, 2012), 12.

¹⁸ Fisher, *Shadow Tribe*, 18.

¹⁹ Daughery, 58-59.

skins, sew moccasins, do bead work, and cook. They were also taught where and how to find roots, berries, and herbs.²⁰ Often, it was the duty of the grandparents or other older relatives who taught these skills to the children, while the parents were away hunting and gathering. Relationships between elders and children were considered important, as it was the grandparents who taught the legends and traditions to children.²¹

An important development in Pre-Simcoe Yakama history, is the rise of the *Washani* religion in the nineteenth century. The term *Washani* is a Sahaptian term meaning “dancers.”²² Part of the larger Prophet-Dreamer movement among Indigenous populations in the West, *Washani* developed along the Columbia River, gaining legitimacy among many Yakamas eyes after prophecies of evil whites seemed to be fulfilled by the Yakama War in 1855.²³ Famous leaders in the Dreamer community in the region were Smohalla, a Wanapam, and Skolaskin, who was Nespelem. The pair combined native traditionalism with aspects of Christianity, which scholars Robert Ruby and John Brown argue stemmed from contact with nearby Catholic missions.²⁴ Their teachings were particularly popular among Pacific Northwest Natives who were under pressure to convert to Christianity, as it allowed a connection to their traditions while adopting other traditions from whites.²⁵ A notable part of *Washani* was the expression of the *Washat* dance, and the incorporation of *Pom Pom*, which means “drums beating like hearts.” *Pom Pom* can refer to either the dance, or it can be used to describe a ceremony

²⁰ Relander, 31.

²¹ Schuster, *The Yakima*, 32.

²² Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau: Smohalla and Skolaskin* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 29.

²³ Ruby and Brown, 25-29.

²⁴ Ruby and Brown, 13.

²⁵ Ruby and Brown, 3.

incorporating drums. According to Ruby and Brown, the exact origins of Washani have not been traced, but many Yakamas have stated that it began when Natives along the Columbia River were dying “like flies,” during an epidemic.²⁶ The first recorded epidemic of smallpox occurred in the Plateau between 1775 and 1782, suggesting that Washani and Washat developed nearly ninety years before James Wilbur established Fort Simcoe. Wilbur would spend much of his career fighting against the Yakamas practicing Washani, in order to promote his Methodist teachings.

Father Wilbur as the Patriarch

Wilbur was a Methodist minister, not a Catholic priest. In fact, he often feuded with nearby Catholic missionaries-trained in seminaries, who universally assumed the honorific of “father.” Methodists did not attach the same honorifics to their ministers, instead preferring the term “reverend” or “minister,” and yet Indigenous and settlers alike called Wilbur, “Father.”²⁷ Even newspapers referred to Wilbur by his honorary title, “Father.” The *Puget Sound Dispatch* article in 1878 noted that “he is familiarly called [Father] by almost everybody,” apparently meaning both Natives and the settlers in the Yakima Valley.

It was not the first time that people in the region had interacted with missionaries who went by “Father,” as Catholic missionaries had contact with individual Yakamas as early as the 1830s. In 1848, along the southwest of the Simcoe River, missionaries and Native laborers had built a mission, having obtained permission from an influential

²⁶ Ruby and Brown, 30.

²⁷ George W. Olney, “Story of James H. Wilbur, as the Yakima Indian Agent at Fort Simcoe” (1951), Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections Public Access, accessed April 2020, 1.

leader, Kamaaikin.²⁸ Some may suggest that Wilbur required Yakamas to call him “Father” in order to underscore his religious authority, however, I argue that it was also a personification of his paternalist role.

It is important to discuss the historical context of the term “father,” when it comes to the relationships between Indigenous people and colonizers. Wilbur was not the first to cast himself as a familial authority over Native Americans; he was the product of a paternalistic attitude that extends backwards in time and eastward across the continent. Francis Paul Prucha in *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (1984), notes the term of “Father” was a common paternalistic name for the federal government, dating back to the colonial period.²⁹ Historian Richard White, similarly, has examined the pattern of powerful white men projecting themselves as father figures to Indigenous people. Seventeenth-century Algonquians and Iroquois saw the French governor of Canada as the title *Onontio*, as the head of the alliance. White argues that Natives “regarded Onontio and the Frenchmen who followed him as their allies, protectors, suppliers, and as the mediators of their disputes. Or, in Algonquian terms, Onotio was their father.”³⁰ White notes, however, that the French had their own reasons for using the discourse of “father” and “children”; they wished to underscore their paternal superiority to Indigenous peoples. This pattern would continue in the Pacific Northwest as Wilbur utilized paternalism in order to influence the Indigenous

²⁸ Joseph J. Pucci, *The Yakima Valley Catholic Centennial, 1847-1947: A Commemoration of the First One Hundred Years of Catholicity in the Yakima Valley* (Yakima, 1947), 10-11.

²⁹ Prucha, 35.

³⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics of the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). 36.

people of the Yakama Reservation, and create a culture of fictive kinship—a culture that allowed Wilbur to better exploit the Yakamas.

During his thirty-year career as Superintendent, for most of which he had little federal oversight, Wilbur developed personal relationships with the Yakamas might be described, to borrow Jason Edward Black’s “republican fatherhood.” Republican fatherhood, notes Black, “allowed the government to teach its Native wards citizenship through the practice of cultivating the soil,” with an emphasis on “property holding, and the standards of morality.”³¹ This was James Wilbur’s *modus operandi* throughout his career, as he strove to teach morality through hard work on the reservation farm. Black characterizes republican fatherhood as cemented through legislation, ignoring the actual concerns of Native Americans, and an emphasis on civilization through education.³² While Wilbur was just one man, he projected himself as the ultimate government authority while concurrently playing the role of a fictive father to a fictive Yakama family.

An extreme example of Wilbur’s republican fatherhood is his pseudo-adoption of the Olney brothers. Wilbur invited Nathan Olney, a friend of his from his time as a teacher at The Dalles, to take up a homestead in the Yakima valley.³³ Accompanying Olney were his Native wife, Annette, and their children, George and Frank.³⁴ Although there is little information about Annette and her heritage, George and Frank lived on the reservation and identified themselves as Yakama for the rest of their lives. This was not

³¹ Black, 85.

³² Black, 86.

³³ Olney, 1.

³⁴ Dr. Thomas Griffith, “Speech at Fort Simcoe given graveside for Nathan Olney,” Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed March 2020, 3.

uncommon among Plateau Natives; throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Yakamas frequently intermarried and traded with other Plateau, Plains, and Pacific Coast Indigenous peoples, and adopted skills and ideas from their neighbors. Clifford Trafzer describes the Yakamas as “pragmatic and dynamic,” pointing out that many who were forced onto the Yakama Reservation were incorrectly identified as “Yakama.”³⁵ This can be seen throughout the annual reports submitted to the OIA, where it is mentioned that the Yakama Nation is made up of multiple tribal affiliations, “though now so mingled by intermarriage and the accessions from outside tribes that it is difficult to distinguish them.”³⁶ It would stand to reason that two Indigenous people—such as the Olney brothers—who were raised on the Yakama Indian Reservation, and who were surrounded by Yakamas, would come to see themselves as part of the Yakama Nation.

Nathan Olney, the boys’ father, died when they were children, making it that much easier for Wilbur to develop a paternal relationship with them. According to a memoir written by George as an elderly man, he spent a portion of childhood living with Wilbur, in “the house that was built for the agents to live in,” and took frequent trips with Wilbur to act as his interpreter.³⁷ Despite both boys attending the boarding school, they lived in Wilbur’s home with him, suggesting that their mother Annette was absent, as well. Frank also worked as an interpreter for Wilbur, as evidenced by his appearance throughout the cattle incident from the previous chapter. As previously mentioned, the

³⁵ Trafzer, *Death Stalks the Yakama*, 27.

³⁶ Wilbur, “Report of Yakama Agent” (1882), 1.

³⁷ Olney, 1.

Indigenous peoples who made up the Yakama Nation spoke three different languages, so the Olney brothers were likely a huge asset to Wilbur, both at Simcoe and in his travels.³⁸

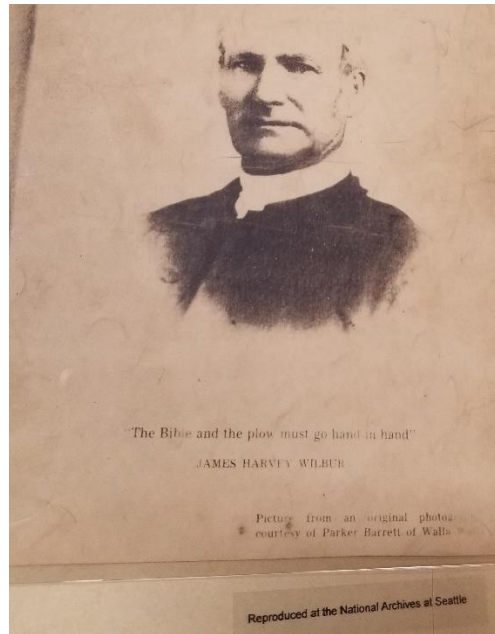


Figure 4. Photograph of James Harvey Wilbur, date unknown. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle Washington.

Wilbur, presenting himself as a father figure who knew what was best for his children, utilized the republican obsession with agriculture as a signifier of civilization (Figure 4). George Olney spoke of how he enforced a strong work ethic:

The Indians learned to till the soil and raise food under Wilbur. Father Wilbur went to see his wards, and if they were idle, he put them to work. He would hold the plow, drive the team, to show them how it was done. When leaving his man, he would tell them, ‘now you must have so much of the work done, or else. They all minded the Father. He was a strong man with a strong character.’³⁹

Although George spoke highly of Wilbur, he also depicted him as strict (and perhaps even a little threatening) when he felt his charges were not working hard enough. To Wilbur, the best way to instill Christian morals into the Yakamas, was by teaching them

³⁸ Trafzer, *Death Stalks the Yakama*, 30.

³⁹ Olney, 3.

to “work” in accordance with American standards. Yakama historian Click Relander described Wilbur as someone who dominated the reservation, stating “his policy was enforced Christianization. His doctrine was the Bible and the plow.”⁴⁰ The previous chapter discussed how Wilbur utilized Indigenous labor to keep the Agency running, but Wilbur also justified this by claiming that this would allow the Yakamas to become independent. There was no downside to exploiting their labor, because it supposedly benefitted them. Wilbur would often point out in his reports how much labor was being done by the Yakamas, proud that “this gives them the knowledge they need, makes them industrious and furnishes means for their substance and general improvement.”⁴¹ According to Black, however, a characteristic of republican fatherhood is that the autonomy and self-sufficiency promised to Indigenous people if they assimilate, is never achieved.⁴² If Wilbur’s theory that the Yakama could become self-sufficient agriculturalists through his parental guidance was true, then there would come a time where Wilbur could step back. Instead, the Yakamas would remain under his thumb until his retirement.

Paternalism Towards the Paiutes

Wilbur was so confident in his role as a paternalist that, when Paiute prisoners were unexpectedly delivered to the Agency in 1879, Wilbur began to impress upon them same rhetoric he had been using with the Yakamas for almost two decades.⁴³ Having

⁴⁰ Click Relander, *Strangers on the Land: A Historiette of a Longer Story of The Yakima Indian Nation’s Efforts to Survive Against Great Odds* (Yakima: Franklin Press, 1962), 56.

⁴¹ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T,” 11.

⁴² Black, 102.

⁴³ James H. Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record book- Transcript (part 2)” (1879), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 6.

suffered through abuse at their previous reservation, the Malheur Agency in Oregon, as well as surviving the Bannock War, the Paiutes arrived to Simcoe in the middle of winter, “starving and destitute of sufficient clothing to cover their nakedness.”⁴⁴ As Fort Simcoe was not prepared to house and feed more people, Wilbur once again had to think creatively to make ends meet. He requested more funding to pay for food and clothing but was informed that the \$3,000 allotted for the Paiutes was located at the Malheur Agency and could not be transferred to Fort Simcoe immediately.⁴⁵ Until the funds arrived, the Paiutes were at the mercy of Wilbur’s generosity. He instructed the Yakamas to build a large shed for the five hundred and forty-three prisoners to live in.⁴⁶ He put these prisoners to work alongside the Yakamas, teaching them to work in the sawmill and on the farm.⁴⁷

Despite regularly complaining to the OIA about the added workload, Wilbur felt that all remaining Paiutes should be permanently moved to Simcoe, rather than be sent home. “I think from all I know of [the Paiutes] they have made more improvement since they came here than in all the years previously spent in instructing and taking care of them...if kept steadily at work [the Paiutes] will soon become self-supporting.”⁴⁸ This was not the first time Wilbur advocated for non-Yakama Native Americans to be moved to Simcoe; he believed that all the reservations should be consolidated into “good

⁴⁴ Gae Whitney Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 140-150. “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record-Transcript (part 6)” (1880), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 6.

⁴⁵ Acting Commissioner to Wilbur, October 13, 1880, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur 1875-1921, box 1, folder 1880, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle, Washington (henceforth referred to as “NARA, Seattle”). See bibliography for notes on upcoming archives changes with this collection.

⁴⁶ Canfield, 155.

⁴⁷ James H. Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record book-Transcript (part 4)” (1879), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 10.

⁴⁸ Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record book,” 19.

Reservations,” like the one he supervised in order to keep the Indigenous peoples remote from immoral settlers. The latter, according to Wilbur, would counteract the “good morals” that agents had supposedly instilled. Thus, Wilbur was more than happy to take on more wards.⁴⁹ His plan for the unexpected visitors was to move their family members to the reservation, allot a portion of land to them, and appoint a sub agent to assist them in establishing schools and farms.⁵⁰

The OIA ignored Wilbur’s frequent communications requesting to keep the Paiutes at Fort Simcoe permanently, and instead allowed individual Paiutes to decide which reservation to live at. Some, such as Sarah Winnemucca, an outspoken Paiute author, left in the summer of 1880 to visit Vancouver, Washington, to complain about the conditions at Simcoe. She was informed that the government would support the Paiutes’ decision to return to the Malheur Agency, which she relayed back to the prisoners.⁵¹ The Malheur Agency, however, would be abolished before any Paiutes could make it back. Some leaders decided to leave immediately for the Warm Springs Agency in Oregon, which the OIA decided to support, as well.⁵²

Wilbur felt that the OIA’s decision gave the Paiutes too much freedom, which would prevent them from becoming “civilized.” “It is a grave error,” he wrote, “to suppose the option can be left with them to go or remain. They are like children, and like children look to those in authority for advice and guidance ... [there is] no hope of any

⁴⁹ Wilbur, “13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T,” 7-9.

⁵⁰ US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency record book-Transcript (part 6)” (1880), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 16.

⁵¹ Canfield, 158-159.

⁵² Commissioner to Wilbur, June 28, 1880, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 1, folder 1880, NARA, Seattle.

improvement till their location is decided on.”⁵³ Despite the fact that the Paiutes were already making decisions for themselves about where to live, and were doing well with their jobs at Simcoe, Wilbur did not feel that they were ready to exert substantial authority over their own lives. This contradicts the self-sufficient rhetoric that Wilbur had been using to justify his exploitation of their labor. If learning how to work in the mills and on the farm was the “test” for graduation from Wilbur’s “civilization” lessons, then the Paiutes—once they had learned those skills—should have had freedom to determine where they would live. Instead of recognizing that the Paiutes had learned those skills, and were therefore ready to become self-sufficient, Wilbur worried that allowing them to leave the safe haven of Simcoe would corrupt their newfound morality. The self-sufficiency promised by republican fatherhood, by design, could never come to be.

By the fall of 1881, most Paiutes were under the impression that they would be returning home soon. News that the government had abolished the Malheur Agency had not yet reached them, prompting them to “take no interest in any plans for their benefit,” according to Wilbur. The prisoners were not interested in temporarily sending their children to Wilbur’s boarding school, or being molded into the perfect citizen, as their focus was on their departure.⁵⁴ Frustrated that he could not command control over the Paiutes, he wrote to the OIA that most of the Paiutes were comfortable at the Yakima Indian Agency. According to Wilbur, the only ones who wanted to leave had made their decision based on whim—in that they simply wanted “a change in scenery.” Clearly,

⁵³ Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency (part 8),” 13.

⁵⁴ James H Wilbur and RH Milroy, ““As an illustration of their feelings I may mention that unknown to myself or any of my employees, horses, cattle, provisions, clothing etc. were distributed among the Paiutes as Christmas presents by the Yakamas....” (1881), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 43.

Wilbur held no understanding, much less any interest in Native Americans' spiritual and emotional attachment to specific geographies. At the end of October Wilbur was finally given the answer he was looking for: the Malheur Reservation had been dismantled, and the Paiutes were to remain on the Yakima Reservation.⁵⁵

Though various Paiutes escaped over the years, Wilbur had charge of the prisoners up until his retirement. When even more ran away in the spring of 1884, Wilbur's successor, Robert Milroy, an Army General who wielded much less control over the Yakamas than Wilbur did, wrote to the OIA that he was comfortable with the Paiutes staying away, and that they had never been happy at Fort Simcoe.⁵⁶ Wilbur was not able to cultivate the same sort of intimate colonialism with the Paiutes as he had with the Yakamas, partially because of their attachment to their homeland. Additionally, part of what makes intimate colonialism so effective is that the relationships develop over the course of decades. By the time the Paiutes had arrived at Simcoe, they had already gone through the abuses of one Superintendent, so it would have been hard for them to trust another powerful white man in the government. This, combined with the lack of supplies Wilbur had to support the Paiutes, made it difficult for him to connect with the Paiutes in the same way that he had with the Yakamas. Wilbur's republican fatherhood over the Paiutes ultimately failed.

⁵⁵ Canfield, 189.

⁵⁶ Canfield, 213.

Mentoring Methodists

Much like other Indian Agents, Wilbur believed that conversion to Christianity was the best way to instill morality in the Natives. One way that Wilbur guaranteed that his specific Protestant beliefs would take root, was by training the men at Simcoe to become ministers. According to George Olney, Wilbur, “trained young Indians to be ministers. One was a full brother to Joe Stivere but had difference in name. He was George Waters. . . . they also brought many Indians into the faith.”⁵⁷ George Waters was among the first Yakamas to graduate from the Fort Simcoe school, after which he apprenticed as a blacksmith.⁵⁸ He soon became very invested in Father Wilbur’s weekly sermons, and had notably memorized one hundred Bible verses by 1862.⁵⁹ Waters subsequently became a part of the first generation of Simcoe-educated Yakamas who worked for the school as industrial teachers.⁶⁰ He moved to Portland in 1871 to become an ordained minister, following in Wilbur’s footsteps.⁶¹ The Methodist church appointed him to “missionary at large” for the Oregon region, and he spent the next several years travelling from reservation to reservation, preaching to Indigenous people.⁶²

After the turn of the century, Reverend Waters returned to Simcoe to minister to the Yakama people. He focused his teaching on Christian moral codes, much as Wilbur had, and was well-regarded by whites as a person who could positively influence Native

⁵⁷ Olney, 2.

⁵⁸ “A Trip to Fort Simcoe,” *Washington Standard*, Volume II, Number 45, September 20, 1862, accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁵⁹ “A Trip to Fort Simcoe,” *Washington Standard*.

⁶⁰ E.J. Brooks, “Resignation of 2 people approved by DOI, Office of Indian Affairs” (1880), Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection. Accessed April 2020.

⁶¹ “Indian Preacher Here,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 17, Number 15, April 11, 1906. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶² “Appointments of the M.E. Conference,” *Oregon City Enterprise*, September 6, 1872. Historic Oregon Newspapers, accessed April 2020.

Americans. An article in the *Indian School Journal* stated that Reverend Waters “labored long in the cause of his race and has done much, through personal influence, to raise the standard of his people.”⁶³ Like Wilbur, Waters believed that the only problem with Indigenous people, was the lack of good Christian morals. He spent much of his career as an extension of Wilbur’s philosophy, stating that, “my people are not too difficult to influence and convert. I speak the Indian language, and explain everything so they can understand it.”⁶⁴ Waters, in the footsteps of his mentor, fought against Washani and other Indigenous beliefs. In 1889, while serving as a Reverend at Simcoe, Waters was horrified when he realized that some members of his church were skipping his Sunday service in order to participate in a Pom Pom ceremony.⁶⁵ An example of a Washani gathering can be seen in Figure 5. Writing to the Superintendent at the time, Thomas Priestly, he demanded that the tribal police be implemented to “stop this foolishness.”⁶⁶

⁶³ “A Preacher-Chieftain,” *Indian School Journal*, Volume 10, Number 7, May, 1910. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶⁴ “Indian Preacher Here,” *The Yakima Herald*.

⁶⁵ Donald M. Hines, *Ghost Voices: Yakima Indian Myths, Legends, Humor, and Hunting Stories* (Issaquah: Great Eagle Publishing, 1992), 1992. Note: Older sources may spell it “pum pum,” however, the modern spelling is “pom-pom.”

⁶⁶ George Waters, “Pum-pum dance” (1889), in Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed January 2020.



Figure 5. Interior view of a Dreamer Church on the Yakama Reservation. Accessed June, 2020.
Courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection.

Wilbur's influence over how the Yakamas selected their leadership also contributed to his authority. After the Yakama War, Kamiakin refused to come to Fort Simcoe and be paid the annual stipend allotted for chiefs, based on Treaty of 1855 stipulations. Wilbur wanted assistance on the Reservation and encouraged the election of a new chief. Joe Stwire, more popularly known as White Swan, was the Klickitat who was elected to serve as chief of the Yakama Nation in 1868.⁶⁷ White Swan was George Water's brother, and the two men were early students of Wilbur. In 1910 the Yakamas elected Reverend Waters as the next chief, following the death of White Swan.⁶⁸ Wilbur's influence over Waters led the latter to promote the same morals that Wilbur did. Unlike Wilbur, however, Reverend Waters would also spend the rest of his life speaking out for the rights of Yakamas and other Indigenous peoples, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

If instilling Yakamas with morality was Wilbur's first priority, his second was keeping Yakamas away from "degraded whites," who would ruin their progress towards

⁶⁷ Relander, 56.

⁶⁸ "Minister is Yakima Chief."

civilization.⁶⁹ Wilbur constantly worried about settlers corrupting Native Americans' morality. Beneath his anxieties about "immoral" settlers corrupting the Yakamas, was contempt for the Yakamas themselves. The average Yakama, he stated, "is ignorant, treacherous, and cruel by nature; he is destitute of moral character; he is poor in every respect. He needs everything that enters into the comforts of civilization, but his first great want is character."⁷⁰ Despite working with Yakamas for decades, and cultivating personal relationships with his students, Wilbur still had a fundamental misunderstanding of who Yakamas were.

While discussing how Wilbur ran the reservation, Relander states that "he was a terrible fighter of 'the demons' rum, gambling, tobacco, plurality of wives, Indian religion and Catholicism."⁷¹ In order to combat this, Wilbur was careful to only hire those he felt would align with this belief, stating, "I would as soon put wolves among sheep, or rattlesnakes among children, as immoral men upon an Indian agency."⁷² This infantilizing statement portrayed Indigenous people as in need of as much protection as an animal or a child, further establishing that the Indigenous were his vulnerable wards, and that he was their protector. Wilbur, like many other agents, wanted to turn Indigenous people in to model Christians, but wanted to achieve this by isolating them from white society.

While Wilbur concentrated on keeping ostensibly immoral settlers away from the agency, he could not prevent Yakamas from leaving the reservation. By leaving,

⁶⁹ Wilbur, "13th Annual Report of the Yakama Indian Agency W.T," 7.

⁷⁰ Wilbur, "Annual Report of J.H Wilbur," 2.

⁷¹ Relander, 56.

⁷² Wilbur, "Annual Report of J.H Wilbur," 2.

Yakamas found that they could engage in activities-including traditional rites and rituals, as well as social events-that Wilbur forbade. George Olney praised Wilbur for his efforts, but also noted he sometimes failed to stop all immoral behavior: “Father Wilbur did not allow gambling and horse racing, also drinking intoxicants, on the Reservation, so the Yakima Indians would go to this camping ground on a prairie, away from Father Wilbur’s presence.”⁷³

Wilbur saw gambling as sinful and banned it from Simcoe, but gambling was a part of Yakama tradition. Before Simcoe was established, when the Yakamas would seasonally travel in order to gather food, much of June and July was spent in fishing encampments, where Yakamas regularly played games in their leisure time. Yakamas placed enormous cultural value on holding large gatherings where people could visit with each other, according to anthropologist Helen H. Schuster. She states that the fishing season was a time where the Yakamas “visited, traded, played sports, and gambled. *Paalyut*, known as the bone game or stick game, was a favorite activity and often lasted all night. Women also played games with dice made from beaver teeth.”⁷⁴ To the Yakamas, gathering amongst friends and gambling was a way to connect with others, but to Wilbur, it was a sign that his wards were being corrupted by immoral whites.

Wilbur could do his best to instill certain morals into the Indigenous residents of Simcoe, but as a colonial authority figure, and not an actual family member, he could never fully control their behavior. Once, when a Native visited Wilbur’s home, Wilbur asked him to remove his hat. He refused. After Wilbur repeatedly asked the man to

⁷³ Olney, 1.

⁷⁴ Schuster, 26.

remove his hat, the man “he threw his hat on the floor and sprang at Father Wilbur, and a regular rough and tumble fight ensued in which Indians rather got the best of it.”⁷⁵

Rebellion against Wilbur was not common, but when it occurred, it demonstrated that he was not completely successful at transforming the Indigenous into who he thought they should be.

Another example of Wilbur’s failure to make his wards into model Christian citizens was Frank Olney. Though Wilbur “tried to make [Olney into] something,” he “failed.”⁷⁶ While Olney worked as an interpreter and carpenter at Simcoe for many years, Wilbur described him as “more trouble than any five or ten of the meanest Indians we ever had in the agency.”⁷⁷ When Olney tried to gain legal recognition as a member of the Yakama Nation, Wilbur wrote to the OIA to protest, stating that Frank was indeed a Native American, but had no claim to being Yakama.⁷⁸ Frank’s mother was Indigenous, but was likely not a Yakama, as the Olneys had married before moving to Simcoe. As previously stated, tribal affiliation in the region was more focused on the small villages, rather than ethnicity or tribal affiliation. Frank Olney lived his entire life in the Yakima Valley, however, and never claimed membership to a different tribe. He was so integrated into the Yakama Nation, that, in 1890, he wrote an extensive correction to an issue of the *Yakima Herald*, which had suggested that the famous Yakama leader, Kamiakin, was related to another Yakama leader named Kotiakin. Though noting that Kotiakin was not

⁷⁵ James H. Wilbur, Anon; J.H Fairchild, “He is engaged in collecting the Indians,” (1898) Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 16.

⁷⁶ James H. Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record book- Transcript (part 5)” (1879), in the in Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed May 2020, 4.

⁷⁷ Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency (part 5)”, 4. Olney, “Story of James H Wilbur,” 3.

⁷⁸ Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency (part 5)”, 4.

related to Kamiakin, Olney praised Kotiakin for being “a master of the Pum Pum dance society,” the same Washani ritual that Wilbur had spent his career trying to suppress.⁷⁹ Although essentially raised by Wilbur, Olney still felt a deep connection to the Native culture that Wilbur fought against.

In 1880, Wilbur wrote to the OIA, requesting that he be allowed to remove Frank over the vague charge of “bad conduct.”⁸⁰ It does not appear that the OIA granted this request, as Olney remained at Simcoe and the Yakama Indian Reservation for his entire life. His brother George, on the other hand, was married by Wilbur to Betsy Yesmowit, when he was eighteen years old.⁸¹ As will be discussed in the next section, Wilbur held marriage in high regard, believing that monogamy, fidelity, and responsibly raising families tended to promote what he viewed as morality. That Wilbur performed the ceremony himself shows a personal touch of paternalism. George Olney spoke fondly of Wilbur for the rest of his life, referring to him as “the finest man and friend I ever had.”⁸²

Wilbur’s rejection of Frank Olney, when compared to his embrace of George, reveals the degree to which the fictive kinship that Wilbur sought to construct depended on obedience to his authority. Wilbur, however, was no more able to force George Olney to always practice “good” morals than he was able to force them onto George’s brother. An 1899 newspaper notes George Olney was caught purchasing alcohol.⁸³ Alcohol was

⁷⁹ “Local Brevities,” *Yakima Herald*, Volume 1, Number 49, 2 January 1890. Accessed January 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁸⁰ Acting Commissioner Young to James H. Wilbur, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 1, folder 1880, NARA, Seattle.

⁸¹ Olney, 3.

⁸² Olney, 3.

⁸³ “Reportial Shortstops,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 11, Number 49, December 21, 1899. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

another great sin to Wilbur, who worked hard to prevent bootleggers from getting near the Yakamas, going as far as arresting some men who sold whisky, and keeping them in the Simcoe prison.⁸⁴ While George attempting to buy alcohol does not alone prove that he was rebelling against Wilbur, it does show that Wilbur could not always control individual actions, even among his proteges.

Modeling Motherhood

Black was not the first scholar to discuss the kin-like relationships between Native Americans and colonizers. Mirroring Prucha's paternalism, Margaret D. Jacobs' *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (2009), discusses how white women became involved in the Office of Indian Affairs as a way to politically advance themselves in a sexist society. She defines maternalism as "a belief that indigenous people were like children and did not know what was good for them." She goes on to add that "white women maternalists contributed to policies that were designed to undermine indigenous women and their families and to bring them under increasing state control."⁸⁵

Cathleen D. Cahill addresses intimate colonialism in *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (2011). Her methodology-in particular, her focus on the role of white women on reservations-informs much of this thesis. According to Cahill, white women became a tool of the colonial state by being influential "object lessons," who taught through example. The OIA was a partly

⁸⁴ Olney, 1.

⁸⁵ Jacobs, 148.

maternalist agency that focused on impressing upon Indigenous women the importance of women in the home, as mothers.⁸⁶ Victorian ideals about gender and motherhood were present throughout colonial institutions, and Simcoe was no exception. James Wilbur often encouraged the female employees of Simcoe to act as maternal figures to the Yakama, in order to shape the gender and familial roles. Here, it can be seen that intimate colonialism requires a maternal authority to complement the paternal authority figure. Wilbur cultivated a specific model of middle-class, monogamous, Christian marriage. In order for that model to be complete, he needed to construct a Christian model of marriage and parentage. The wives of Wilbur's male instructors not only modelled the "moral" values that Wilbur wanted to instill in Indigenous peoples for the children of the boarding school, but they also served as a model for Indigenous couples to reproduce such values in their own families.

The first year that Simcoe had a boarding school, only three girls were enrolled as students. While all students were expected to work on the campus, the labor was divided by gender. Wilbur's first report as Superintendent of Instruction perfectly demonstrates his attitude on educating Native American children:

The boys were taught all kinds of useful work upon the reservation, as to prepare them in maturity of years properly and profitably to pursue the various avocations of life. The girls were taught to do all they were capable of doing to make them useful to themselves and others.⁸⁷

Boys at Simcoe were taught skills Wilbur felt necessary to be "industrious" outside the home, whereas the girls learned how to be helpful to their husbands within the home. According to Wilbur's philosophy, Native Americans needed help learning how to

⁸⁶Cahill, 65.

⁸⁷ Wilbur, Report of James H. Wilbur, Superintendent of Instruction (1862), 1.

become moral and industrious, but the separation of education at Fort Simcoe shows that this philosophy only applied to the male students. Wilbur consistently boasted that the Agency ran on Native labor, but the school itself ran on the labor of children (Figure 6).

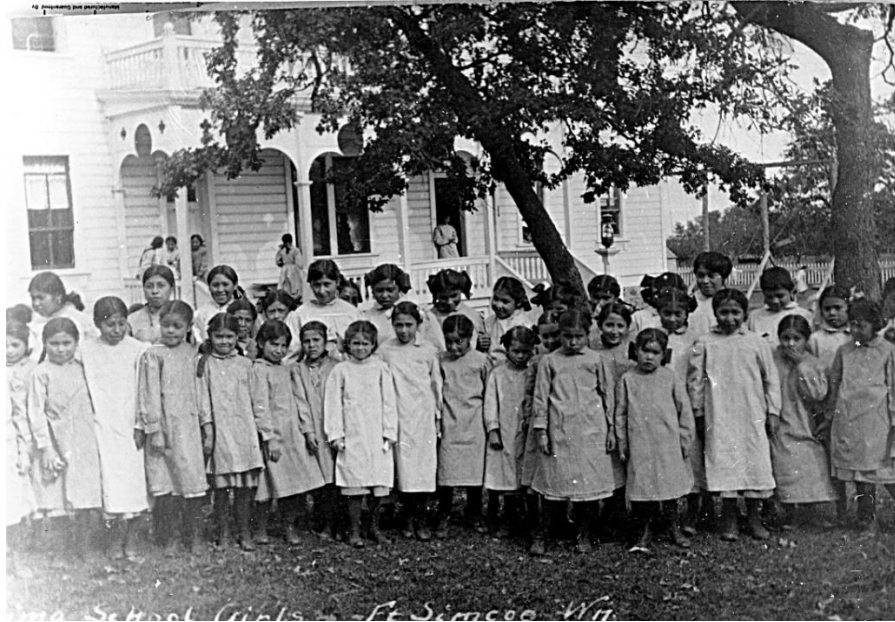


Figure 6. Children posing in front of the Girls Dormitory, Yakama Reservation. Accessed June 2020, courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Early Yakima Valley Collection.

Each day, the student woke at 5:00 for their 6:30 breakfast, then headed to their assigned jobs at 7:00. Students were expected to be at their workstations by the time the bell rang. If it was summertime, the boys would work on the farm, and if it was winter, they would split wood. The girls would go inside to either mend and sew clothes for the boys, or work in the kitchen and dining room, with their female teacher. At Fort Simcoe, the female teacher assigned to teach domestic skills was typically the wife of another Simcoe employee. At 8:30 the students put their tools away and were expected to be in their seats for school when the bell rang. The students were taught in a single room from 9 to 5, with a break for lunch at noon. Then, Wilbur took the boys to the school room to

sing and pray with them.⁸⁸ The message to the Yakama children about their futures was clear: the boys were preparing for a life of work, and the girls were preparing to become wives. Katrina H. Paxton argues that culturally specific domestic skills became a part of the nationwide boarding school curriculum originally in order to “decrease operational costs,” that evolved into gendered cultural assimilation.⁸⁹ In the case of Simcoe, the two motives for assigning the work this way appeared to develop at the same time. Wilbur assigned the female students to the operational duties of the boarding school both to decrease costs-as he did with most of his decisions-and to impress upon Native girls the gendered expectation that they would one day run a household.

In *Education for Extinction*, Adams argues that women employees of the OIA had a harder time than the men, because of the regulation of their personal lives. According to Adams, “the strict social atmosphere stemmed from the expectation that women teachers, as missionaries of Christian civilization, should serve as Victorian role models of Indian girls.”⁹⁰ One way that Superintendents such as Wilbur insured that female students learned the codes of colonial womanhood was by hiring married women along with their husbands. In fact, hiring married women was so common within the OIA, that one-third of female employees were married.⁹¹

Cahill points out that the OIA’s tendency to hire married couples was an extension of intimate colonialism insofar as--“policy makers hoped to position these

⁸⁸ Wilbur, 13th Annual Report (1878), 13-14.

⁸⁹ Katrina A. Paxton, “Learning Gender: Female Students at the Sherman Institute, 1907-1925,” in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, ed. Clifford E Trafzer; Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 176-177.

⁹⁰ Adams, 91.

⁹¹ Cahill, 85.

employees symbolically as federal fathers and mothers to their Native wards.”⁹² Wilbur followed this pattern within his own hiring practices, hiring his wife Lucretia Ann as the first domestic instructor of the school.⁹³ Lucretia’s instruction aligned with Wilbur’s ideas about self-sufficiency, as the work that the girls did provided clothing for their fellow students. She “taught the girls to card and spin, to knit and sew, and to cut and make their own clothes.” In Yakama culture, it was normal for girls to be taught domestic skills from a young age—including weaving, basket making and tanning and sewing skins—from a young age, but such skills were passed down from family members.⁹⁴ Lucretia Wilbur and the other female teachers put themselves into the role of mother to the Yakama children by teaching the Anglo-American equivalent of the domestic tasks. As previously discussed in the “Pre-Simcoe,” section, in Yakama culture, women were celebrated for their domestic abilities and seen as a vital part of keeping the village functioning. At Simcoe, the work that women did was not seen as an important task, unlike in traditional Yakama culture, as skills being taught to the girls were seen as a form of subordination to the men. Figure 7 depicts a group of Simcoe teachers, both male and female posing in front of an employee home.

⁹² Cahill, 83.

⁹³ William Wright, “Annual report of William Wright, superintendent of teaching, Yakama agency” (1867), in University of Washington Libraries, accessed January 2020, 1.

⁹⁴ Relander, 31.



Figure 7. A group of white agency employees posing in front of one of the agency homes at Fort Simcoe. Courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Early Yakima Valley Collection.

Another teacher during the first decade of the boarding school, and wife of the head instructor, Mrs. Pearce, taught the girls “all matters of the housekeeping.”⁹⁵ This also saved the Agency a lot of money, as none of this labor needed to be paid for. Reports to the OIA routinely discussed the amount of labor performed to a dollar amount, estimating that each month, the boys performed about \$500 in labor for their work on the farm, while the girls performed a little over \$450 for their miscellaneous tasks.⁹⁶ Wilbur sought to prove that he could save the school money, while at the same time teaching students proper gender roles. Fairchild, an employee who wore many hats during his time at Simcoe, stated that “I think it is not saying too much that order, economy, cleanliness, and a Christian example characterize the boarding house.”⁹⁷

The theme of leading by example continued through Wilbur’s time as Superintendent, especially as the boarding school grew. In the 1870s, Wilbur enlarged the boarding so that it could house over fifty children. To accommodate more female

⁹⁵ A.C Fairchild, “No. 5—Annual report of A.C Fairchild, teacher, Yakama agency” (1868), University of Washington Libraries, accessed January 2020, 2.

⁹⁶ Fairchild, “No.5—Annual report of A.C Fairchild,”2-3.

⁹⁷ Fairchild, “No.5—Annual report of A.C Fairchild,” 2.

students, Wilbur added a second story to the boarding-school, to serve as a girls' dormitory. Female instructors continued to teach the girls various domestic skills, including how to "make their own dresses and the clothing for the boys," while the boys were instructed in "everything that is useful to white boys to learn."⁹⁸ By this time, the school's intimate colonialism had become overt- Wilbur and other employees often described the school as if it was an actual family. In annual reports to the OIA, Wilbur used the family metaphor to emphasize the importance of the assigned roles: "Mrs. Headley directs the girls in cooking, making and mending all the children's clothes, with a thousand little things that are to be done in a family of fifty-six children, with efficiency, patience, and tact."⁹⁹ In Yakama culture, familial elders such as grandparents, were charged with the important duty of educating the children, and importance was placed on extended kinships.¹⁰⁰ Simcoe, however, created an alternative family structure with alternative lines of authority emanating from paternalist superintendent to maternalist instructor, which in turn emanated to elder female students and finally to younger ones. Rather than learning solely from the biological family members who had helped raise them, Yakama children were taught to view their white teachers as parents. By referring to the school as a family, and the required tasks needed to keep the school running as part of family duties, the Fort Simcoe boarding school presented itself as a model for family life.

⁹⁸ James H. Wilbur, "Report of agent at Yakama agency" (1877), University of Washington Libraries, accessed January 2020, 2.

⁹⁹ Wilbur, "Report of agent at Yakama agency" (1877), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Schuster, 32.

Another way that Wilbur promoted his ideal family structure was by placing an emphasis on hiring married couples to work at Simcoe. It was no secret that Wilbur, like other agents, made it his policy to hire couples rather than single men and women. While reaching out to a friend about working at Simcoe, Wilbur described the complementary duties of the male Superintendent of Teaching and his wife. Wilbur informed the prospective applicant that “it would please me to have the supervision of the teaching in school and in the boarding under the same management of one family.”¹⁰¹ Wilbur held marriage in high regard, as he regularly promoted it as part of being a moral Christian. Before colonization, Yakamas valued marriage, but did not see it as the upstanding moral institution that Wilbur did. It was normal for couples to live together before marriage, and while not commonplace, some wealthier leaders would take on multiple wives.¹⁰² Wilbur set up Simcoe as a model for the nuclear family, with little room for Yakama tradition.

The main goal of intimate colonialism was to break up Indigenous concepts of family and culture and replace them with Anglo-American culture. Before being forced onto Fort Simcoe, the Yakamas also divided their labor by gender.¹⁰³ However, the Yakamas placed cultural value on friendship and community, so the gathering and preparation of food and supplies were communal activities.¹⁰⁴ At Simcoe, the boys were taught various industrial skills whereas the girls were taught how to take care of their future homes. Lucretia, acting as the model wife to Wilbur, ran a small school for adult Yakama women, teaching them to how to make Western style clothes, just as their

¹⁰¹ James H. Wilbur, “US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yakima Indian Agency, letter record book-Transcript (part 4)”, 4.

¹⁰² Schuster, 30-32.

¹⁰³ Schuster, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Schuster, 26.

daughters were being taught, and encouraging them to “adopt the habits and customs of the whites.”¹⁰⁵ Not only were the children of Simcoe taught the strict gender roles that Wilbur subscribed to, but the adult women were taught under Lucretia and other female teachers on what proper motherhood should be.

By impressing upon the boarding school students that they were modeling a “proper” household, one where the father works and the mother takes care of the home, Simcoe employees were teaching that the Yakama community-based familial structure, was improper. While nuclear families were common among Plateau peoples, there was still a heavy emphasis on extended kinship and family ties, and the decentralized community.¹⁰⁶ Wilbur’s paternalism contradicted this style of family by placing an importance on the authority of the father, and by extension, himself. By enforcing strict gender roles on both the children and the adults at the boarding school, and by hiring married couples to model relationships for the Yakamas, Wilbur demonstrated how heavily he relied on intimate colonialism to assimilate the Yakamas. Just as other scholars have noted, assimilation ultimately failed because Yakamas preferred to maintain their traditions. The Yakamas continued to value generosity and extended social ties while at Simcoe, as evidenced by how they had volunteered to share their goods with the Paiute prisoners in the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰⁷ Despite the fact that the Yakamas had to work the land in order to survive at Simcoe, many saw how badly the Paiutes were suffering without provisions, and shared what they had. When the Yakamas saw people

¹⁰⁵ Wilbur, “Report of James H. Wilbur, Superintendent of Instruction,” 1.

¹⁰⁶ Kuiper, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Wilbur and Milroy, ““As an illustration of their feelings...” (1881), 8.

suffering, they simply ignored Wilbur's teachings about self-sufficiency and independence; they acted instead as philanthropic communalists.

CHAPTER IV: THE LEGACY OF SIMCOE

“The Indians merely want a square deal.” -George Olney, 1909

In discussing how Simcoe was shaped by Wilbur’s intimate colonialism, it is helpful to discuss how Simcoe changed after Wilbur’s retirement. At the beginning of Wilbur’s Simcoe career, the federal government had little concern over what their Indian Agents were doing out west, allowing Wilbur to run Simcoe as he saw fit. What Wilbur saw as important in order to “civilize” the Yakamas, did not necessarily align with what the OIA saw as important. After his retirement, however, the OIA exerted greater oversight, thus transforming the agency in important ways. The result was that the OIA further undercut “intimate colonialism,” while strengthening “bureaucratic colonialism.”

When General Robert Milroy replaced James Wilbur as Yakima agent in 1882, neither the Yakamas nor the agency’s employees were surprised. Only a year after Inspector Pollock had conducted his cattle audit, Wilbur made the decision to step down from his decades-long career as Superintendent. The *Northwest Enterprise*, a paper in Anacortes, Washington, approved the decision, stating that “Old Father Wilbur has held the position for so many years that he had commenced to get mouldy; it is about time he was bounced.”¹ Wilbur—whom both settlers and Yakamas still called “Father,” had spent his years at Simcoe building up a paternalistic persona, one that his successors could never fully emulate in part because they were subjected to greater and greater OIA

¹ “Fortunate,” *Northwest Enterprise*, Volume 1, Number 18, 22 July 1882. Washington Digital Newspapers, accessed September 2019.

scrutiny. The various men who filled his position throughout the 1890s and into the twentieth century tended to follow the OIA's instructions rather than their own personal philosophies. This final chapter discusses the changes implemented after Wilbur's retirement, as well as some notable Simcoe alumni who became advocates for the Yakama Nation, before arguing that these alumni were able to use the bureaucracy in order to protect Yakama culture.

The Dawes Act

A lasting legacy of Wilbur's authority at Simcoe, was his preparation for the allotment of reservation lands to individual Yakamas. According to Relander, Wilbur "did not establish the allotment system...[but] he advocated landholding years before the Allotment Act."² In 1887, Congress gave Wilbur's plans a boost by passing the Dawes Severalty Act, which authorized agents to allot individual plots of land to individual Indigenous people in order to promote homesteading, agriculture, and individualism.³ This aligned perfectly with Wilbur's views on making Yakamas into self-sufficient individualists. Indeed, he had spent the last few years of his career at Simcoe playing with the idea of allotting land to the Natives.

To better understand Wilbur's policies in regard to allotment, it is important to step back three decades to the 1855 treaty. According to Article VI, the US President had discretion to "cause the whole or such portions of such reservation as he may think proper, to be surveyed into lots, and assign the same to such individuals or families of the

² Relander, 58.

³ Prucha, 667.

[Yakama Nation].”⁴ Wilbur, in his role as the republican father to the Yakamas and, by extension as the authoritarian lawmaker, interpreted this clause to mean that he could allot land as he saw fit. Wilbur spent time drawing allotments on maps of the Yakama Indian Agency, with each claim anywhere from eighty to two-hundred acres.⁵ His efforts almost perfectly aligned with what came to pass under the Dawes Act, which stated that heads of households would receive one hundred and sixty acres of land.⁶ As Wilbur occasionally visited Washington DC “to be consulted on Indian affairs,” one cannot help but wonder if Wilbur had a hand in convincing members of Congress to favor land allotment.⁷

In a discussion of the land allotment to the Yakama Nation, Barbara Leibhardt points out that during the first thirty years of Simcoe’s existence, the Yakamas “assumed that what little remained of their homeland would be left intact.”⁸ Evidently, Wilbur had planned to allot reservation lands without first consulting the Yakamas, whose lives would be greatly impacted by such a policy.

After Wilbur’s retired and the Dawes Act passed, the issue of land allotment became a tense topic among Yakamas, as some used this as an opportunity to make claims on ancestral lands that had been ceded by the government.⁹ Others, such as White Swan and Frank Olney, favored allotment because they believed that it would give

⁴ United States. Treaty with the Yakama.

⁵ Relander, 59.

⁶ Prucha, 667.

⁷ *Vancouver Independent*, 28 October 1880.

⁸ Barabara Leibhardt, “Allotment Policy in an Incongruous Legal System: The Yakima Indian Nation as a Case Study, 1887-1934”, in *Agricultural History*, Vol. 65, No. 4, Autumn 1991, 85.

⁹ Leibhardt, 86.

Indigenous people the opportunity to make a living.¹⁰ It is notable that men who had been among the first to attend the reservation school tended to support allotment. In that regard, they served Wilbur as loyal lieutenants, even after his retirement.

Other Yakama leaders protested the idea of land allotment, because, according to the agents at the time, it meant “a severance of the paternal ties which bound them to the Government, and that they would be thrown upon their own resources at a time when they were unprepared to become self-sustaining citizens.”¹¹ Webster Stabler, the Superintendent at the time, stated that it was only “lazy” Yakamas who felt this way. This was common rhetoric among OIA employees who wanted to abolish the reservation system altogether, and it was assumed that Natives who opposed allotment simply did not want to work for a living. As it will be later discussed, many Yakamas were concerned with land encroachment by settlers, so it is likely that these Yakamas had much more complex reasons for opposing allotment than “laziness.”

A Standardized Simcoe

After Thomas Jefferson Morgan was appointed to Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1889, he moved quickly to introduce “a standardized curriculum for Indian schools, [and] made education for Indian children compulsory.”¹² Much of what had made both the Fort Simcoe boarding school and reservation unique during James Wilbur’s tenure, was the years Wilbur had spent cultivating intimate colonialism with the Yakamas.

¹⁰ Relander, 64.

¹¹ Webster L. Stabler, “Report of Yakama Agency” (1890), University of Washington Libraries, 1.

¹² Myriam Vuckovic, *Voices from Haskell: Indian Students Between Two Worlds, 1884-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 27.

Rather than come up with their own curricula and standards, teachers were given specific instructions as to how the school should be ran, the OIA became more involved in the 1890s, and developed a complicated bureaucracy that sought to regulate every aspect of the schools.

When Simcoe was first established in 1860, the effort that Wilbur went into “civilizing” the Native Americans in the region was considered a marvel by those around him.¹³ Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, both agency employees and neighboring whites viewed the on-reservation boarding school structure as extremely successful, because the newly educated students could influence their family members, during vacation.¹⁴ Critics of the system pointed out that Native children who spent their vacation time with their parents, remained attached to their tribal culture. While Wilbur was indeed dedicated to the cause of assimilation, he could never cut off the Yakama children from their families in the same way that the off-reservation schools did. In fact, in order to properly utilize intimate colonialism, Wilbur needed to keep families nearby, so that the children could influence their parents in the ways of Anglo-American culture.

As the success of Carlisle spread, more militaristic off-reservation boarding schools began opening throughout the late 1880s and mid-1890s.¹⁵ As the popularity of these militaristic, off-reservation schools rose, OIA bureaucrats became more involved in regulating the education at Simcoe, making it almost indistinguishable from other off-reservation schools. It was common for the OIA to write to the Superintendents and inform them of changes needed to be made, such as incorporating uniforms, or adopting

¹³ Editorial, “The Outrage at Simcoe Reservation,” *Washington Standard*.

¹⁴ Adams, 30-31.

¹⁵ Adams, 57.

specific books into the curriculum.¹⁶ Wilbur's successors never engaged in intimate colonialism in the same way that Wilbur did, because they relied on bureaucratic colonialism to push assimilation. The agency no longer focused on individuals, but instead pushed for standardization of education. Some of Wilbur's policies and practices remained survived, while others were quickly legislated out.

Attendance at Simcoe varied throughout the years, rising and falling depending on what else was going on at the reservation. The boarding school struggled to enroll more than forty students each year until 1881, when enrollment finally reached over a hundred. This was only the second time since its opening that Fort Simcoe needed to add housing to the reservation, and the first time that a school with more than one classroom was constructed.¹⁷ According to the annual statistics report from 1880, the Yakama Indian Reservation had an estimated six hundred and fifty school-aged children, but the boarding school only had the space to house sixty.¹⁸ There simply was not enough space and supplies to have every Yakama child enrolled.

According to Wilbur's thinking, however, low enrollment was not necessarily a problem. In his 1881 annual report, he noted that "the influence of the boarding-school cannot be measured merely by the numbers attending. Those who go out from the school have acquired much of the manners and customs of civilized life, and each becomes a center of influence among his people."¹⁹ Wilbur's philosophy was that the success of the

¹⁶ Superintendent to LT Erwin, February 25, 1897, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, Letters from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 7, 1897-February 27, 1897, NARA.

¹⁷ James H. Wilbur, "Report of Yakama agent" (1881), University of Washington Libraries, accessed October 2019, 3.

¹⁸ Trowbridge, "Statistics Accompanying Annual Report of 1880," 2.

¹⁹ James H. Wilbur, "Report of Yakama agent" (1880), University of Washington Libraries, accessed October 2019, 2.

schools should be measured by how Simcoe alumni lived their lives after they graduated, rather than how many students are enrolled into the school. For this reason, Wilbur was not concerned with low enrollment, and instead focused on cultivating individual relationships with students. The new, more encompassing model of bureaucratic colonialism that emerged in the 1880s, by contrast, emphasized high enrollments and standardized curriculums that gave little attention to individual relationships.

Regardless of how Wilbur felt about enrollment, he would have likely opposed the OIA's decision to abolish the cattle herd that Wilbur had established in order to finance the school. In 1887, Superintendent Thomas Priestly was informed that there was no longer a need for such a large cattle herd at Simcoe, and that he should reduce the herd "to the smallest number necessary to keep the school in beef in milk."²⁰ Wilbur had originally proposed the herd as a way to make the reservation self-sustaining. OIA bureaucrats, however, determined that its upkeep was too expensive.²¹ Priestly proposed that the agency keep at least one hundred and fifty cows, but the OIA felt that one hundred and twenty-five was enough to provide substance for the school. The rest of the cattle was to be distributed to "the most deserving and progressive Indians, especially those who have children in the school, or who agree to send theirs," and to have any remaining cattle be sold off.²² By 1889, the remaining cattle was distributed to the Yakamas.²³ Wilbur had started the cattle herd with the paternalist attitude that he could use it to teach the Yakamas to be industrious, then throughout his career used it as a way

²⁰ Atkins to Priestly, September 24, 1887, Records Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 19, folder 1887, NARA, Seattle, 1.

²¹ Atkins to Priestly, 2.

²² Atkins to Priestly, 1.

²³ Ficken, "After the Treaties: Administering Pacific Northwest Indian Reservations," 450.

to keep the boarding school afloat. Ultimately more cattle were given to parents of enrolled boarding school students, so the herd was used to induce more higher enrollment at an institution that was becoming more oppressive and assimilationist than ever before.

In 1890, Superintendent of the Yakama Agency Webster Stabler received notice from Commissioner Morgan that the new priority of the department, was bringing reservation children to the large government boarding schools. The first step was to fill the off-reservation schools “by promotions from the reservation day and boarding schools.”²⁴ Next, agents were expected to fill the on-reservation schools to complete capacity. Students enrolled there, however, were not supposed to remain until their education was complete. Instead, they were expected to simply attend the on-reservation school until there was an opening at an off-reservation school. Finally, if all other schools were filled, agents were instructed to enroll children in nearby mission schools run by the churches, in order to start the civilizing process as soon as possible.²⁵

The Office of Indian Affairs noticed features of Fort Simcoe that did not align with the larger federal goal of assimilation, such as the late school year. The boarding school regularly began each year in October, so that Yakama students could assist their parents with hops picking. In the late nineteenth century, the Yakima Valley was famous for the vast acres of hops fields, and Yakamas routinely travelled to the farms to make extra money. Soon, hops-picking became an annual tradition, with parents taking their

²⁴ Morgan to Stabler, September 4th, 1890, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 3, folder 1890, NARA, Seattle, 1.

²⁵ Morgan to Stabler, 2.

children along to assist (Figure 8). Families earned \$1 for every six foot by two and half foot-deep box filled, so having the extra help of their children increased their profit.²⁶



Figure 8. Group of Indigenous women picking hops. Note that the children are assisting. Accessed June 2020, courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection.

This yearly financial opportunity was not sponsored by the reservation or the government. Private hops farmers hired anyone willing to work, usually immigrants or Natives. Wilbur no reason to stop the Yakamas from picking up an extra short-term occupation, since it only proved how industrious his wards were becoming, and therefore making him a success. Wilbur's successors, however, struggled to balance the needs of the Yakamas with the new demands of the OIA. When education of Native children became compulsory, Superintendent Priestly wrote to the OIA requesting that the Yakama be allowed to continue this annual tradition.²⁷ The next year, his successor, Superintendent Stabler, requested that the school vacation be extended until October 1st,

²⁶ "Newspaper clippings-Hops-transcript" (1877), in Yakima Valley Libraries, accessed April 2020, 4.

²⁷ Acting Commissioner to Priestly, June 25, 1889, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 3, folder 1889, NARA, Seattle.

to allow for the students to assist with hops picking throughout the month of September.²⁸ To be sure, the agents did not make such exceptions solely on behalf of their wards. No doubt white hops farms in the Yakima Valley—whose profits depended on cheap labor—lobbied agents to ensure that they were available to work.

As John Gram points out in *Education at the Edge of Empire*, superintendents often made compromises when it came to the Albuquerque and Santa Fe Indian Schools, such as allowing summer vacations, in order to gain support from the nearby Pueblo parents.²⁹ Although the two schools in Gram's study were considered off-reservation, their proximity to the Pueblo communities allowed for frequent visits of parents. In similar fashion, Wilbur's successors struggled to balance the needs of the Yakamas, with the new standardization of the boarding school system. Part of what had made the boarding school at Simcoe a relative success—insofar as Yakamas willingly attended with the consent of parents--was that Wilbur and his colleagues had to accommodate Yakama parents, to some degree. Yakama parents were more willing to send their children to the boarding school at Simcoe, where they could frequently visit and were familiar with the staff, than a off-reservation boarding school in another state. Priestly gained approval to change the school schedule to accommodate hops picking, but a decade later, Superintendent Jay Lynch was having the same battle with the OIA. In 1898, Lynch was reprimanded for only housing six pupils at the boarding school, during the month of September.³⁰ September is when the majority of hops picking was done, so

²⁸ Morgan to Stabler, August 20, 1890, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 3, folder 1890, NARA, Seattle.

²⁹ Gram, 29.

³⁰ Jones to Lynch, November 10, 1898, Bureau of Indian Affairs Yakima Indian Agency, box 197, Letters Received from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NARA, Seattle.

it is likely that the rest of the boarding school population was in the valley with their families.

More and more Simcoe children were transferred to off-reservation schools, as the century came to a close. The Superintendents at nearby schools such as Chemewa, in Oregon, began scouting Simcoe for transfers. As it became law that students could not be enrolled without parent permission, Lynch was told to do his best to “dispel any false impressions that may exist among [the Yakamas] against this excellent school.”³¹ The OIA frequently wrote to the superintendents of Simcoe to remind them of their duty to fill the off-reservation schools, especially if the students had already completed the curriculum at the on-reservation school.³² The Department also informed the superintendents that they must not make promises to the reservation parents that their children will come home during the vacation time, and to make it clear that students would be absent for two to five years.³³

If the off-reservation schools took Yakama youths away from their families and cultures, they also put them into institutions that were far larger and less intimate than the Simcoe school. Many scholars have discussed the physical and emotional abuses rampant in schools, as well as their overbearing assimilationist agenda. Melissa D. Parkhurt, for example, discusses how music was used to emotionally indoctrinate Native American children into Euro-American society in *To Win the Indian Heart: Music at Chemawa*

³¹Superintendent of Indian Schools to Lynch, December 6, 1899, Bureau of Indian Affairs Yakima Indian Agency, box 197, Letters Received from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NARA, Seattle.

³² Jones to Lynch, January 19, 1899, Bureau of Indian Affairs Yakima Indian Agency, box 197, Letters Received from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NARA, Seattle.

³³ Jones to Lynch, September 18, 1899, Bureau of Indian Affairs Yakima Indian Agency, box 197, Letters Received from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NARA, Seattle.

Indian School (2014).³⁴ That is not to say, however, that the music program accomplished what its creators intended. She argues that, although culturally oppressive, Chemawa allowed for Indigenous children to use the music curriculum as a way to teach each other about their cultures, creating cross-tribal ties. On the opposite end of the spectrum in regards to how harmful the boarding schools were, Ward Churchill wrote *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (2004), to analyze the psychological impact of the assimilation policies. According to Churchill, the boarding schools were “a comprehensive and carefully-calibrated assault on their cultural identity.”³⁵ Regardless, the Yakama children who were transferred away from Simcoe were much more cut off from their family and culture than previous generations. Bear in mind, Wilbur was an assimilationist who wanted to see Native Americans transformed into ideal Christians, but the boarding school system was much more systematic and purposeful about assimilation, than Simcoe was.

The clearest times in which we can see that Yakama children objected to the abuses and assimilationist agenda of off-reservation boarding schools are the instances in which they left. In 1887, two Yakama fathers requested that their children be permitted to come home for the summer, promising to bring them back, showing that the Yakamas still wished to continue the yearly tradition of spending summers together.³⁶ Off-reservation schools, however, rarely allowed home visits, even in emergency situations. When Hiram Crow’s father died in the Spring of 1889, he promised to return

³⁴ Melissa D. Parkhurst, *To Win the Indian Heart: Music at Chemawa Indian School* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2014), 33.

³⁵ Churchill, 19.

³⁶ Priestly to Lee, June 20, 1887, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 20, NARA, Seattle.

after visiting his mother, if permitted. The administrators at Chemewa wrote to Simcoe to ask if this return home was necessary, and whether Crow's mother needed aid immediately, or if it could wait until the summer.³⁷ Though records of whether young Hiram was allowed to visit his mother seem to be lost, the fact that administrators questioned the necessity of a visit after a death in the family, shows how strictly Chemewa enforced its policy of separating children from their families.

Another Yakama youth named Henry Evans was labelled a "chronic runaway," and "a very undesirable pupil," and was therefore not welcome back to Salem Indian School.³⁸ Similarly, sixteen year old Earl Winnier left the Salem campus for a few days, and the administrators wrote to Simcoe staff requesting they locate and return him. They used the same letter to remind the employees that they had plenty of dormitory space for more students, if Simcoe had any more students to send.³⁹ Jack Labonte ran away from Chemewa so often that he was expelled from all boarding schools, entirely.⁴⁰ Yakama children that could not fit into the mold that administrators created, were not welcome.

Historians Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc's collection of essays in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Education Experiences* (2006), refers to students running away as "the best-known act of resistance," of the boarding schools.⁴¹ Based on the number of Yakama students who ran away from off-

³⁷ Chemewa to Yakima Agency, W.T, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 3, folder 1889, NARA, Seattle.

³⁸ Salem Indian School to Supt. S.A.M. Young, December 16, 1911, Indian MSS Collection, Indian Schools, Correspondence: Fort Simcoe Indian School, Yakima Reservation, Washington State Historical Society.

³⁹ Superintendent to J.W Phillips, January 14, 1911, Indian MSS Collection, Indian Schools, Correspondence: Fort Simcoe Indian School, Yakima Reservation, Washington State Historical Society.

⁴⁰ Superintendent to Fort Simcoe, August 6, 1904, Letters Received from Commissioner of Indian Affairs, box 5, July 1, 1904-April 28, 1906.

⁴¹ Ed. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 23.

reservation boarding schools, their judgement seems to be correct. *Boarding School Blues*, however, also highlights moments in which boarding school students took their experiences at off-reservation schools and turned it into empowerment. Similarly, former Fort Simcoe students were able to take their experiences with Wilbur and turn the power for the Yakama Nation.

Turning the Power

Simcoe boarding school graduates faced the same problem that graduates of today face: the struggle to find employment. Brenda J. Child points this out in *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (1998). She states that “with the exception of positions that came from within the Indian Service before 1900, neither the boarding schools nor the Indian Office was equipped to find jobs for students after graduation.”⁴² While the boarding schools frequently focused on vocational skills, a combination of prejudice and the rapid development of technology made it nearly impossible for Indigenous graduates to find skilled employment away from the reservations.⁴³ This pattern can be traced at Simcoe, as former students often found work on the Yakama Reservation, usually in service of the white OIA agents. However, this first generation of Simcoe graduates-- many of whom worked personally with James Wilbur--would later go on to be advocates for the Yakama Nation. *Boarding School Blues* look for moments when Indigenous student “turn the power,” by using knowledge and skills gained at the boarding schools to benefit their people. Many of Wilbur’s pupils

⁴² Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 98.

⁴³ Child, 98.

would spend the rest of their lives “turning the power,” by helping their people maintain sovereignty and protect land rights.

After Inspector Pollock’s visit, the Yakama began to better understand the bureaucracy of the OIA, and how to work within it. No longer did they see Wilbur as a trustworthy authority. Rather, they seem to have viewed him as a man whose job was to communicate Yakama needs to his OIA superiors. They came to see Wilbur, in short, as a mere functionary, rather than a powerful and well-meaning patriarch. In this way, bureaucratic colonialism undermined Wilbur’s intimate colonialism. As evidence of this, one need only examine Yakama attempts to communicate directly to the OIA. After 1880, literate Yakamas, when they themselves at odds with Wilbur and his successors, often appealed directly to the federal government to support them. In 1889, the Yakama wrote to the OIA to complain of “unjust treatment by the Whites,” after being arrested for fishing. In response, the OIA wrote to Superintendent Stabler, one of Wilbur’s successors, reminding him that his job was to “protect the Indians in the undisturbed use of their rightful privileges.”⁴⁴ While the OIA was still a colonial force, the Yakama often found support from them when it came to hold the Superintendent accountable.

Frank Olney was another Simcoe resident who found outside support, after finding himself in tension with the agency superintendent. Although Wilbur had tried and failed to get support from the OIA in removing Frank from the reservation, Frank succeeded in holding Wilbur accountable to the federal government. Frank used the rhetoric of the colonizers to legitimize himself, referring to himself as an “educated

⁴⁴Acting Commissioner to W.L. Stobles, October 2, 1889, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 3, folder 1889, NARA, Seattle. *Note: The Superintendent at the Yakama Agency was named “Stabler,” but this source seemed to have misspelled his name.*

Yakama Indian,” while writing to complain about the lack of qualifications of a recently appointed judge.⁴⁵ In a push for independence, he wrote to the OIA to complain that Wilbur had appointed a tribal chief without consulting the Yakamas. “The Indians should be permitted to choose their own chief,” he argued. The OIA agreed with Frank and wrote to Wilbur that he should no longer appoint leadership.⁴⁶ As the previous chapter has mentioned, Wilbur dismissed Frank as unable to make something of himself, yet Frank became a sheriff for the Yakama Tribal Police after Wilbur’s death.⁴⁷

George Olney also found ways to “turn the power,” by speaking out publicly against the government’s unfair dealings with the Yakama people. In 1909, George spoke in court over the matter of water rights in the Wapato canal, pointing out that the government needed to settle an issue with land rights, first. According to an issue of the *Yakima Herald*, George stated that the Yakama were prepared to turn down any offer over water rights, until the land issue was resolved:

’The Indians merely want a square deal,” said Mr. Olney. ‘We believe the timber land belongs to us, that it was sold by the government to white men without first making a settlement with us, and until the government treats us fairly in that matter, we will not feel sure that they will treat us fairly in the matter of water rights.’⁴⁸

Both Olney brothers were essentially raised by Wilbur—and were among the first generation educated at the Simcoe school—but never abandoned their tribal identity.

Despite not being born into the Yakama Nation, they had come to culturally identify as

⁴⁵ Morgan to Priestly, March 5, 1890, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur 1875-1921, box 3, folder 1889, NARA, Seattle.

⁴⁶ H. Price, “...The Indians should be permitted to choose their own chief...” (1882), in the Yakima Valley Libraries, Relander Collection, accessed April 2020.

⁴⁷ “Some Facts Gleaned From the Slayer of the Indian Adulterer,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 4, Number 7, March 10, 1892. Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁴⁸ “Indians Want Square Deal, That’s All,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 19, Number 46, November 24, 1909, accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

Yakama, just as many others who were forced onto the reservation had. Frank and George continued to hold warm feelings for Wilbur after his retirement. They had an even stronger loyalty to the Yakama Nation as evidenced by their political careers.

They Olneys were not the only Simcoe graduates who developed a voice for Indigenous rights. When unhappy about recent appointments, Yakama men approached a Simcoe agent who wrote in a letter to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs on their behalf. “They wish me to write to you that the Indians wish Stick Joe to be reappointed Judge and John Lumley reappointed as Justice of the Peace,” he stated in support.⁴⁹ After 1880 Yakamas knew that the best way to achieve their goals, was to work within the oppressive bureaucracy rather than simply defer to the wishes of the government authorities.

Weary of more land encroachment, Yakamas knew that it was important to use US laws to protect themselves against settlement. In 1888 Yakamas in the newly formed General Council wrote to the OIA to request that “all white settlers be removed from the Reservation whether legally married to an Indian woman or not.”⁵⁰ Superintendent Thomas Priestly told the council that in his opinion, a person whose parents were members of a tribe should have the right to live on the reservation and be an enrolled member. The Council rejected that argument, out of that more and more white people would marry into the tribe, in order to take land.⁵¹

⁴⁹ S. Gascoigne, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur, box 9, Gen. Corre. August 1886-May 1889, NARA, Seattle.

⁵⁰ Atkins to Priestly, January 25, 1888, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur 1875-1921, box 3 folder 1888, NARA Seattle.

⁵¹ Atkins to Priestly.

In 1887, cattle that had been sold by the Yakamas to white ranchers Snipes and Allen frequently returned to the reservation to graze. Snipes and Allen offered to pay \$1000 to keep their cattle on the reservation, since the animals kept “returning home.” Leaders within the tribe were “opposed to having white men pasture stock on Reserve unless the money to be paid for such pasturage is paid directly to them.”⁵² Unfortunately, Congress had just passed the General Deficiency Act, which stated that proceeds from pasturage should go directly into the tribal treasury. Simcoe was informed that even if individual Natives allowed white men to keep cattle on the reservation, none of those individuals could be paid directly.⁵³ Although the US government had been pushing individualism and personal property as American traits that Indigenous people must adopt, this act made it virtually impossible for individual Yakamas to profit off of their cattle. Instead, it put their funds into a treasury controlled by OIA agents. Here, again, bureaucratic colonialism trumped intimate colonialism, at least insofar as the agent had no wiggle room to allow individual Yakamas to lease their allotted land to whites.

The Yakama Nation continued to advocate for themselves when it came to their reservation, complaining that “unauthorized cattle are grazing upon the borders of the reservation...that the grass there is not more than sufficient for the Indians cattle.”⁵⁴ After the Yakamas informed the OIA of the situation, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs himself instructed the Yakama agent to use the Indian Police to remove the cattle.⁵⁵ By the end of the nineteenth-century, the Yakamas knew that the best way to have matters

⁵²Atkins to Priestly, May 28, 1887, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur 1875-1921, box 3, folder 1887, NARA Seattle.

⁵³Atkins to Priestly, May 28, 1887.

⁵⁴Acting Commissioner to Priestly, June 6, 1889, Records of Supt. James H. Wilbur 1875-1921, box 3, folder 1889, NARA Seattle.

⁵⁵Acting Commissioner to Priestly, June 6, 1889.

resolved was to write directly to the OIA to gain support, rather than approach their defer to their agent.

Yakamas also found ways to claim ownership over holidays and celebrations at Simcoe, by turning them into displays of empowerment. This argument does not deny that the OIA imposed certain holidays and celebrations on Indigenous peoples in order to assimilate them. Adams argues in *Education for Extinction*, for example, that the introduction of calendar rituals helped facilitate the new identity that the boarding schools were trying to forge.⁵⁶ Specifically, the celebration of Anglo-American holidays reinforced the belief that Native American culture obsolete and not to be celebrated, whereas “modern” identities were to be honored. Adams points to on-reservation Fourth of July celebrations at the Klamath Agency in Oregon, where the agents allowed their wards to perform “the long departed war dance,” in traditional tribal clothing as a way to teach the school children that Native culture was part of the past.⁵⁷ Simcoe had a similar annual Independence Day celebration put on by Wilbur, who opened up the event to non-Native outsiders, as well. Both non-reservation Natives and local white settlers would travel to attend the yearly celebration, receiving free food and fuel as a gift from Wilbur.⁵⁸ Adams argued that the agents at Klamath allowed Indigenous performances in order to make a mockery of their culture. This argument, however, ignores the contradictions prominent in assimilation. Even if Wilbur intended the Fourth of July celebration to be an assimilationist event, it would later become a place for the Yakamas to celebrate their culture.

⁵⁶ Adams, 191.

⁵⁷ Adams, 205.

⁵⁸ Olney, 2.



Figure 9. Annual 4th of July celebration at Fort Simcoe. Accessed June 2020, courtesy of Yakima Valley Libraries, Early Yakima Valley Collection.

The Yakamas themselves began planning the event, after Wilbur’s retirement, and it became an annual tradition. Rather than a demonstration of a past they were trying to move away from, they made Independence Day into a yearly celebration of their culture (Figure 9). In 1887, the Yakama “dressed in their native costumes and there were processions, music, dances, games and races,” listened to a speech by White Swan, and invited nearby settlers to join in on the festivities.⁵⁹ In effect, one might argue, Yakamas were teaching settler colonials to honor their culture. Horsemanship shows and performances were also frequent events at the celebration. Newspapers began to describe the event as something that the Yakama put on and invited white to attend and participate, rather than an event put on by an Agent.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Washington Standard*, Volume XXVII, Number 33, July 15, 1887. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶⁰ *Washington Standard*, Volume XXVIII, Number 34, July 19, 1889. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

By the 1890s, the annual celebration was planned by a committee of Yakama leaders. Among them was Reverend George Waters, who served as committee head for multiple years. This committee planned the entire event, and even made the decision to temporarily allow gambling on the reservation, for the duration of the event.⁶¹ The event was out of the Simcoe agents' hands and was completely planned by the Yakamas. Agent Lewis Erwin tried to discourage the 1897 celebration from being held at Toppenish, a small town within the reservation because he worried that holding the event outside of Simcoe would give the Yakama too much access to alcohol, but was ultimately unable to control the event.⁶² Slowly, over the years, the Yakama began to use planned celebrations as a way to “turn the power,” in their favor. In effect, they made Independence Day into a celebration of their own cultural and political sovereignty.

The Yakama began to plan other major events for themselves, as a way to celebrate their culture. In 1894, the Yakama hosted The Indians' Gala Day at a local fair ground, to celebrate the end of the hop picking season. The Yakama invited people from the Umatilla, Nez Perce, and Colville tribes, thus attracting a crowd of about three thousand people, most of whom were Indigenous.⁶³ A *Yakima Herald* article on the event noted that not much money was made on tickets, as the hops growers' association gave about two thousand tickets to the pickers.⁶⁴ Although some white neighbors were in

⁶¹ “The Fourth at Fort Simcoe,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 3, Number 20, June 11, 1891. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶² *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 9, Number 22, June 17, 1897. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶³ “The Indians' Gala Day,” *The Yakima Herald*, Volume 6, Number 37, October 4, 1894. Accessed April 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

⁶⁴ “The Indians' Gala Day.”

attendance, the fact that the majority of hop pickers during this time were Indigenous, is evidence that the event was planned with Indigenous people in mind.

This was not a display of the tribal culture that had been successfully left in the past, but a celebration of living Natives. A highlight of the event was the Pom Pom dance, directed by Reverend George Waters.⁶⁵ Ironically, this was the same Washani practice that Waters had demanded tribal police break up, when he had discovered it being practiced on the reservation during his church service. Waters had spent his entire life teaching other Indigenous people about Christianity, which he had learned largely from Wilbur. Although Wilbur had a reputation for suppressing Indigenous religion, his protégé found a way to incorporate traditional practices in his community involvement.⁶⁶ It seems that over the course of his life, Reverend Waters had found a way to balance his religious beliefs, with his tribal culture.

The Yakamas continued their tradition of hosting large gatherings for other Indigenous people into the twentieth century by putting on the National Indian Convention in Toppenish, Washington. A poster for the event advertised that it was “the largest combination of Indians ever assembled since the days of Tecumseh the Great. A meeting for the benefit of the Indians and the entertainment of the whites.”⁶⁷ The poster features several Native men in traditional Plateau clothing and promises to show off Indigenous dances never seen by whites before. Adams would likely argue that this event was a display of how their culture was part of the past, and some racist rhetoric using

⁶⁵Hines, 418.

⁶⁶Relander, 56.

⁶⁷“National Indian Convention,” Bureau of Indian Affairs Yakima Indian Agency, box 197, General Correspondence of School Superintendent 1907-24, NARA, Seattle.

terms such as “savages,” would support this. Nevertheless, the event was also a way for Yakamas to take pride in themselves and feel connected to other Indigenous people.

Water’s involvement in the community built a rapport that got him elected by a council to Yakama chief in 1910, and he continued to use his leadership to the benefit of the Yakama.⁶⁸ Reverend Waters, along with the Olney brothers, are just a few examples of Yakama leaders using their education to advocate for their people. Strong individuals who turned the power in their favor helped keep Yakama traditions alive.

⁶⁸“Minister is Yakima Chief,” *Yakima Herald*, Volume 20, Number 12, March 30, 1910. Accessed April, 2020, Washington Digital Newspapers.

CONCLUSION

Clifford Trafzer argues in *Boarding School Blues*, that the boarding school system was a “successful failure,” insofar as the government succeeded in providing vocational, academic, and agricultural education to Native American children, but failed to “entirely destroy the essence of their being Native peoples.”¹ In the same sense, Wilbur’s utilization of intimate colonialism failed to fully transform the Yakamas into the industrious Christian farmers he wished them to be. True, the Yakamas adopted the cattle industry, agriculture, and hops picking into their lives, but as Peter Iverson pointed out, it is common for oppressed groups to adapt and alter their culture in order to survive. The Yakamas had been incorporating traditions and ideas from other tribes long before the Yakama War forced them onto the reservation under Wilbur’s stewardship. That the Yakamas held on to the new skills they learned is more indicative of their pragmatism, than their admiration for Wilbur. In fact, they turned his “accomplishment” into celebrations of their culture and sovereignty. The “traditions” (meaning celebrations and enterprises completely new to Yakamas) that Wilbur had initiated, such as the Fourth of July event or the cattle herd, became tools used by Yakamas to claim their Indigenous identity.

Important in this regard, too, is that the Yakamas managed to keep the Simcoe school operating until end of the nineteenth century, even after white assimilationists

¹ Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, ed. *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 1.

sought to send Indigenous youths to off-reservation schools in order to separate them from their families and cultures. According to Wilbur's philosophy, the children who attended his boarding school would influence their parents to adopt Anglo-American ideals such as agriculture and Christianity. Wilbur's influence was over the entire reservation, not just the school. Hence, his paternalistic teachings were directed at more than just the children, they were directed towards their parents, as well. Wilbur sought to model what he saw as the ideal family structure for the Yakamas by creating a fictive family at Simcoe.

Intimate colonialism was a framework created by colonial authorities to use relationships to carry out the agenda of the state. At Simcoe, James Wilbur made himself into a paternalistic figure with almost unchecked authority for two decades. In Yakama culture, leaders gained power and respect from having wisdom and experience. Presenting himself as a knowledgeable person who could teach the Yakamas new skills, Wilbur temporarily hoisted himself into a position of power over the Yakamas. Although much of his philosophy aligned with the federal goals of assimilation, Wilbur cast himself as the ultimate authority over the Yakamas, often interpreting his duties to how he saw fit. The various relationships Wilbur had with the individual residents of Simcoe, such as his mentorship of George Waters, and rejection of Frank Olney, demonstrate the power of intimate colonialism. Waters and Olney represent just a few examples of Yakamas maintaining and even embracing their Indigenous identity, especially after Wilbur's retirement.

Inspector Pollock, during his 1880 visit of Fort Simcoe, made the Yakamas aware of how dishonest a Superintendent could be. After the Yakama War, the Indigenous

people of the region were distrusting of settlers, but Wilbur cultivated personal relationships with the new residents of Fort Simcoe, allowing room for exploitation. Although he was never officially charged with stealing from the Yakamas, the accusations made during Pollock's investigation showed them that exploitation could occur, and that there was governmental power above Wilbur that could hold him accountable.

It stands to reason that some Yakamas were aware that Wilbur was holding their provisions hostage, as they still regularly made money each year during the hops picking season. It may have occurred to them that his refusal to pay them monetary wages was an irregular practice. It is also evident that there were Yakamas who did not get along with Wilbur, as shown by the two very different relationships he had with the Olney brothers, as well as the Indigenous man who physically attacked Wilbur over a hat. The general population, however, accepted Wilbur as the ultimate authority throughout his career. Wilbur's paternalism gave the impression that he only worked in the Yakamas' best interest, so they would have had no reason to question him.

After Pollock's departure, and Wilbur's subsequent retirement in 1882, the Yakamas began to more seriously undermine the colonial authority at Simcoe, as evidenced by testimony from Simcoe employees. The Yakama War and other instances of violence had proven that Indigenous people could no longer fight back against colonialism militarily. Hence, the Yakama Nation worked within the bureaucratic system to hold Wilbur's successors accountable. When they had a dispute with their agents or nearby settlers, they reached out to the federal government. The Yakamas effectively learned to utilize the OIA bureaucracy in order to undermine colonialism. In the end, one

of the biggest legacies left behind by Wilbur was not Christianity, land allotment, or even the cattle industry, but the self-preservation the Yakamas developed in response to his betrayal.

As the OIA increasingly monitored and standardized Simcoe in the late nineteenth century, Wilbur's intimate colonialism gave way to a more bureaucratic colonialism that sought to implement more or less universal rules and regulations throughout the US reservation system. Both types of colonialism were oppressive to those who endured it, but it is important to note the difference, as life under intimate colonialism was very different from life under bureaucratic colonialism. While intimate colonialism occasionally allowed for more freedom, for example, non-compulsory school that allowed for students to remain close with their families, it also allowed room for Wilbur to better exploit their labor. Bureaucratic colonialism, on the other hand, gave the Yakamas better protections against men like Wilbur, but it also separated children from their families and was much more restrictive in other ways, as well.

In his 1962 writings on the Yakama Nation, historian Click Relander often reflects on Wilbur and his successors' inability to fully assimilate his tribe:

The Indian was denied economic rights and was refused social justice. Education of another culture did not take rapid and effective root in the younger generation. Old strains then began to show. They cropped out like in each crisis since the beginning of recorded history. Among the Yakimas these are men and women who believe the Indians are not a vanishing people and have not yet drifted away. They believe the Yakimas are not ready to be bound on library shelves into writings of sentiment and romance by some and ignored documentation by others. These are the leaders. They are not afraid to say: "We are Indians. We are Yakimas."²

²Relander, 14.

The culture that Simcoe assimilationists attempted to destroy is still alive in the twenty-first century. A hundred years after The Indians' Gala Day, Yakama children formed the Wapato Indian Club to learn and perform traditional pom-pom dances and songs, a practice that Yakama scholar Michelle M. Jacob calls "a decolonizing praxis meant to instill core Yakama values in the students."³ When Wilbur gathered a group of Yakama boys to help him build the Simcoe farm, he would have never imagined that twenty-first century Yakama children would be dancing to honor the same beliefs he worked his entire career to dismantle. The Fort Simcoe school, like the reservation itself, was by nature was a colonial institution intended to separate Indigenous people from their land and exploit their labor, but the education that Yakamas received gave them the ability to needed to push back against assimilation, and advocate for themselves and their rights using the tools of their oppressors.

³ Michelle M. Jacob, *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013), 40-45.

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Note: At the time of research, this collection was held at NARA Pacific Region in Seattle. During this time, it was announced that the facility was approved to be closed. As of May 2020, there has not been a date set for the closure, but there are tentative plans to have the entire holdings shipped to Riverside, California and Kansas City, Missouri. Please mind this when viewing citations from NARA. For more information please read <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/nara-seattle-closure.aspx>.

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