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Discourses of the Haunted: An Intersubjective Approach to Archaeology at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores "haunting" as a way to conceptualize and engage with the traumatic events of the United States Federal Indian Boarding School era. The goal is to create an intersectional and intersubjective approach that does not seek singular explanations, but leaves room for diversity of memory—a core principle in feminist indigenous theory. Bringing together archaeological, archival, and oral data, we tell three stories of perseverance that have come to light from community-based heritage work. In this manner, archaeology has the power to facilitate community healing and decolonize women's experiences at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School. [historical archaeology, Native American history, Native American boarding schools, haunted landscapes]

Introduction

This chapter discusses a grassroots effort by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian community to decolonize the historic narrative of the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School. This community-based research incorporates feminist and indigenous theoretical frameworks (Atalay 2008, 2012; Colwell et al. 2010; Conkey 2010; Harris 2010; Sloan, this volume; Spencer-Wood 2016; Wylie 2007) because investigating the complex history of Federal Indian Boarding Schools requires the perspective created by feminist intersubjectivity and intersectionality (Battle-Baptiste 2011; also see Fryer and Raczek, this volume). While previously and thoroughly defined by others in this volume (see Fryer and Raczek, this volume; Sloan, this volume), we apply feminist and indigenous ontologies to achieve three primary goals: 1) decolonizing archaeological practice to empower our collaborative community; 2) encouraging multivocal interpretation of the past to elicit untold and hidden narratives; and 3) forefronting the intersections of race and gender in researching the colonial history of Federal Indian Boarding Schools.

We place community interests and interpretations at the forefront and decenter archaeological authority in order to decolonize our practice (Atalay 2010; Colwell et al. 2010; Conkey 2007, 2010; Hodder 2008; Wobst 2010). In other words, we invite our stakeholders to not only shape the direction of research, but also to engage with the artifacts and spaces uncovered at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School in order to facilitate memory work and expose narratives that were previously hidden or subverted (Starzmann and Roby 2016). We promote this collaboration in order to bring marginalized voices to the forefront and decolonize archaeological interpretation. The goal here

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PAPERS OF THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, Vol. 31, pp. 110–121, ISSN 1551-823X, online ISSN 1551-8248. DOI: 10.1111/apaa.12131.

is to challenge the settler colonial narrative surrounding Federal Indian Boarding Schools and create discourses that capture the many experiences of students and descendants. This leads to another fundamental aspect of this approach: a multivocal and intersubjective interpretation of the past (Colwell et al. 2010; Hodder 2008).

A multivocal perspective is the starting point of being able to share the past as a complex and intersubjective body of memory (Starzmann and Roby 2016; Wiley 2008). Multivocality stresses the telling of multiple perspectives and contexts. Intersubjectivity goes further by building empathetic and deeply contextualized knowledge (Danziger 2017; Duranti 2010). We seek to create an alternative practice that foregrounds Native American community knowledge and experience (see, by way of comparison, Atalay 2008; Hodder 2008). We use the perspective of "haunting" as a way to conceptualize traumatic histories of structural oppression and activate community healing through engagement (Bell 1997; Gordon 1997; McClintock 2014). Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of community-based archaeology is its potential for drawing out ghosts, aknowledging their presence, and giving them a voice. When past events hold trauma, an intersubjective approach that allows room for empathic understanding is essential. The Federal Indian Boarding School experience was not monolithic or universal (Adams 1995, 2006; Child 2000; Dixon and Trafzer 2006; Ellis 2006; Landis 2006; Paxton 2006); therefore, we mindfully built a reflective approach that acknowledges this complex history (Hodder 2008, 196).

Members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, and faculty and students from Central Michigan University, work collaboratively to research various aspects of the school's history. Our work incorporates archival research, oral histories, and archaeological data. By community direction, much of this work focuses on the intersectional relationships between race and gender within the institution. In particular, at these co-ed schools, diverse indigenous gender traditions and gender roles were attempted to be eliminated through systemic institutional violence to enforce Western ideologies of gender binaries and separate-spheres ideology. The program of patriarchal colonialism (Spencer-Wood 2013, 2016) at Federal Indian Boarding Schools sought to transform such fundamental aspects of identity as gender (Lomawaima 1993; Surface-Evans 2016). Domestic colonialism (Spencer-Wood 2013, 2016) imposed middle-class White standards of domestic housekeeping and childrearing on female students (Adams 1995; Paxton 2006; Surface-Evans 2016).

These modes of colonization continue to haunt the community today, which is why artifacts from the site have so much power to evoke stories and create *discourses of the haunted*.[1] As Sloan (this volume) points out, to avoid essentialism of gender definitions it is important to situate our understanding within local Native American knowledge and perspectives. It is our hope that these stories, created from community-based knowledge, will reassert the agency and the intersectional nature of Native American women's experiences within the institution.

Haunted History

A handful of imposing red brick structures still remain from the original Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School campus. The school officially closed in 1934, after 41 years of operation. It was then transferred to the State of Michigan and repurposed as a State Home for children with developmental delays and remained in operation until 2006. While these institutions differed, they both served to warehouse, seclude, and manage populations that were outliers in modern Western society (Casella 2007). Ironically, the former campus remains visible on the edge of town but its purpose and history are murky and complicated in the minds of Mount Pleasant residents. It is the source of many stories and much speculation which is perhaps an excellent indicator of its status as haunted. We use haunting, not in a literal sense, but as a social framework for understanding the impact of the past on the present. Perspectives of haunting provide a way of conceptualizing the murkiness that is inherent to complex and intersubjective histories. In other words, by invoking the concept of haunting we are attempting to develop a sensitive and nuanced practice for engaging with complicated heritage marked by settler colonialism, racism, and oppression.

Avery Gordon's perspective on haunting acknowledges the ghostliness conjured by traumatic events in history. Gordon proposes that "entire societies become haunted by terrible deeds that are systematically occurring and simultaneously denied" (Gordon 1997, 64). "Paying attention to ghosts can, among other things, radically change how we know and what we know" (Gordon 1997, 27), because ghosts are often an indication of aspects of the past that are missing or invisible. This is similar to Anne McClintock's notion of imperial ghosting—"the calculated and often brutal amnesia by which the state contrives to erase its own atrocities" (2014, 820). Both of these perspectives apply to the Federal Indian Boarding School era of United States history. The after-effects of the Federal Indian Boarding School policies are disproportionately felt by Native American communities, while at the same time ignored, denied, and forgotten by national historic narratives.

Gordon's perspective of haunting is also useful here because it focuses on the power of negative events to create specters that cling to places and people. Similarly, Bell invokes the concept of haunting as a way of understanding how space is socialized into place: the historicity of place as it is "personed" (1997, 813). In other words, while ghosts are disembodied, they are not necessarily intangible. Haunting is attached to material traces of places and items that have been touched by trauma. Gordon notes that past trauma produces haunting specters whose origin and source may not be readily identified or acknowledged, yet still have the power to do harm (Gordon 1997). Furthermore, haunting transcends temporality. Maria Tumarkin (2005, 52) notes a similar "atmosphere of timelessness" to sites of traumatic events that have the potential to leave an imprint of suffering on a landscape. This phenomenon speaks to the capacity for traumatic haunting to affect multiple generations, much like the multi-generational trauma created by Federal Indian Boarding Schools.

Ghosts should be thought of as a social phenomenon—connections that bind communities and individuals to places and events, often through shared trauma. In this perspective, specters of the past are highly contextual, situated in the landscape, and experiential. We argue that this perspective of haunting is a useful way for Western archaeologists working with Native American descendant communities to better conceptualize the "past" from the perspective of high-context and holistic societies in which the past, present, and future are necessarily intertwined (Harris 2010; Nissley and King 2014). High context societies have deeply situational and embedded knowledge that is difficult to access as an "outsider." This is because complex, interrelated, and often historical concepts are communicated without explicit reference. For example, many Native Americans do not dichotomize the dead and the living. They "have very different views about the dead, very different attitudes about their relationships and responsibilities to them, and very different feelings about them from those held by most Westerners" (Harris 2010, 64). The spirit world of the dead is not viewed as separate and detached from the world of the living, but as interconnected with daily life, material artifacts, landscape, and experience. In this manner, the concept of haunting is a useful framework to understand the complex phenomenological relationship of people, events, place, and time that is fundamental to Indigenous archaeology (Atalay 2010; Harris 2010; Wobst 2010). Such an intersubjective perspective is essential for decolonizing archaeological theory and practice (Atalay 2008, 2010, 85; Hodder 2008).

Ghostly Women and Children

Haunting is also a component of exposing intersectional aspects of racial violence and colonial trauma experienced by women and children (see, by way of comparison, Child 2012; Klenk 2004; Miles 2015; Roby 2016; Tumarkin 2005). Historian Tiya Miles (2015) examines the role of ghost stories and growth of "dark tourism" in the telling and exploitation of the stories of slavery in the Civil War era South. Miles explains, "we live in a haunted country, a land of injured spirits" (Miles 2015, 16). She posits that female ghostly figures, in particular, are used to expose past racialized and gender-based violence from "a safe emotional distance" (Miles 2015, 17). The problematic aspect of the ghost stories identified by Miles is that these narratives were appropriated from African American cultural traditions and the stories were often embellished and falsified to suit white, capitalist agendas. Rather than removing ghost stories from historic sites, however, she calls for a social justice perspective that reinserts the integrity of haunted narratives. We call for a similar perspective here, utilizing stories of haunting to facilitate narratives of identity and empowerment.

Carlisle Indian School biographer, Barbara Landis (2006), exposes a similar narrative of haunting in the telling of the story of Lakota child Take the Tail, also known to non-Indians as Lucy Pretty Eagle. Take the Tail was one of the first victims of Richard Henry Pratt's experiment at Carlisle, dying mere months after arriving to the harsh and unfamiliar institution. Nearly a hundred years after her death, Take the Tail was reincarnated as a ghost who haunted the former school grounds, her life and death later reimagined by the family of the Army Officers living at Carlisle. In particular, her death was embellished as an "Indian girl being buried alive … a gruesome metaphor for colonization and the spiritual, cultural and psychic suffocation and trauma Indian children suffered at Carlisle and other boarding schools" (Landis 2006, 129). The appropriation of Take the Tail's story and subversion of her actual suffering into the realm of ghostly haunting warns us of the importance of decolonizing our practice through community-centered research.

Anthropologist Rebecca Klenk (2004) recounts her experiences with ghostly possession while in the field in Kumoan, India. Her work explores the intersections of gender, race, class, and mental illness. She argues that the possession and expulsion of spirits from a young, vulnerable female was a way for the rural community to negotiate the perceived pressures and attacks from outside political forces. In this example, we can see that ghosts (and human

interaction with ghostly entities) are performing a role in coping with trauma caused by intersecting layers of race, gender, and colonial oppression. In the case of the Mount Pleasant school, haunting seems to be an integral part of the Saginaw Chippewa's coping with colonial trauma that similarly exists at the intersections of race, class, and gender identity.

Historian Maria Tumarkin (2005) examines the complex relationship between trauma, place, and haunting in her book *Traumascapes*. While traumascapes are complex entities and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain all their features, some components are worth noting in respect to this project. A traumascape is the locale of a disaster (natural or manmade) that often includes violent, indiscriminate death (often of women and children). These locations are transformed into places of spiritual and communal meaning, as a result of the traumatic event. Traumascapes can become the focus of a search for meaning and understanding for survivors who are confronted by the memories of past events. Traumascapes are "haunting and haunted places" that transcend generations and time (Tumarkin 2005, 233). Based on this definition, Federal Indian Boarding Schools (and other historic sites of violent colonialism and structural oppression) are clearly traumascapes.

Unsurprisingly, when Sarah Surface-Evans began collaborating with the Saginaw Chippewa on the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School project in 2011, some of the first stories shared by community members were of haunting. In particular, community members recounted the spirits of ancestors connected to pre-contact mounds and cemeteries desecrated by the building of the school (Gould, personal communication August 10, 2011). These stories of haunting speak directly to the trauma of colonialism—ghosts created by the violent displacement of communities from their land and ancestral connections. Other community stories were of the specters of lost children that haunt the former school grounds (Ruby Meshawboose, personal communication October 12, 2011). Even while the school operated, stories of haunting were passed between students (Balabuch 2010; Child 2012; Dobson 1978). Historian Brenda Child (2012) describes experiences of students feeling haunted by "*jiibayag*, or ghosts, that roamed their school" (Child 2012, 122). These spirits were said to inhabit the dormitory attics and woodlot and are attached to violent and traumatic events of the boarding school itself (Dobson 1978). According to oral history, the woodlot is haunted by the ghosts of students who died at the school and whose bodies were buried secretly in the woods at night (Johnson 1991; Ruby Meshawboose, personal communication, October 12, 2011). With these ghostly stories and the history of colonial trauma in mind, we argue that recognizing haunting can help to expose past injustices. When paired with multivocal practice (Hodder 2008), intersectional feminism (Battle-Baptiste 2011) and community-based participatory archaeology (Atalay 2012), such recognition can be an important method for arriving at healing and restorative justice.

Confronting Specters of the Past

For members of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan, whose reservation is located near the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, the campus is a painful reminder of lost lives and lost potential. The presence of the ruins forces the acknowledgment of the boarding school era events and the lasting repercussions of those events on their lives, their families, and their culture. It is these wounds of past violence that leave ghosts haunting the present (Gordon 1997, 207). It is common to hear Saginaw Chippewa community members refer to the persistence of multi-generational trauma and its distinct imprint on the boarding school ruins. As one tribal elder stated after touring the boarding school buildings, "you can feel our pain in these walls" (Wiliamson and Benz 2005).

When presented with the opportunity to reclaim a portion of the school in 2011, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council voted to accept conveyance of approximately 12 acres of the former 320-acre campus. This included roughly 10 acres surrounding six of the original campus buildings and a 2-acre cemetery on the school grounds. Prior to this decision, the community took part in a feasibility study that included questionnaires. The majority of the community recognized that taking ownership of the school gave them the opportunity to learn more about the past and, more importantly, to teach others about what happened there. Consequently, the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Committee was formed with the goal of transforming the school into a place of healing, education, and empowerment.

The Committee consists of representatives from Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council and departments, elders and community members, and Central Michigan University faculty and students.[2] The direction of our research is shaped by the feasibility study and the members of the Committee, who make decisions through consensus. Interestingly, the majority of the committee members identify as women, which may explain the focus of our work—the committee is keen to find material and documentary evidence that could shed light on specific personal and community experiences, particularly for girls who attended the school. A major focus of our investigations is reconstructing the daily

lives of children who attended the boarding school through archaeological survey and targeted excavation of several demolished building foundations.

As we explored the landscape and uncovered small artifacts through archaeology, these material remains became facilitators of story sharing. Upon viewing buttons, combs, toothbrushes, chalkboard pencils, marbles, keys, medicine bottles, and beads, community members were able to relate these items to the stories and experiences of themselves or their families. They served as mnemonic devices that activated memory and exorcised negative ghosts; similar to the way in which Anishinabe communities use medicines like sage, tobacco, and cedar to remove bad energy and encourage good energy. Michael Bell's concept of haunting recognizes that both negative and positive presences can be felt within the social memory of place and objects (1997). Often, the focus of ghostly narratives among the Saginaw Chippewa community is on transforming the negative into positive. Sarah Jones explains that negative talk of the deceased detracts them from their journey in the afterlife. Therefore, there is a strong desire to promote positive energy over the negative, when dealing with specters of the past. The objects recovered are facilitators of intersubjective discourses, as Saginaw Chippewa community members confront deeply personal trauma and find empowerment in the stories of the past.

Our goal in sharing discourses of the haunted is to decolonize the practice of archaeological interpretation and develop a mechanism for capturing intersubjective experiences and realities (see Atalay 2008; Hodder 2008). This is particularly important due to the way that multigenerational trauma associated with Federal Indian Boarding Schools has caused shame and silenced survivor's stories (Adams 1995; Child 2000). We conceptualize discourses of the haunted as a critical approach to storytelling from the perspective of haunting. The goal here is to move beyond stories of suffering so that community members find and reclaim their own stories of empowerment. To demonstrate this approach, we share here three stories of haunting as told through three objects: a bead, bricks, and a toothbrush. Each object is linked to institutional patterns of control and oppression, while simultaneously revealing individual stories of subversion, resistance, and rebellion. In each story, the narrative that unfolds was brought to light because of the ways in which Saginaw Chippewa community members were haunted by these objects.

Revealing subversive specters

The institution limited women students to traditional Western gender roles and in turn controlled and devalued

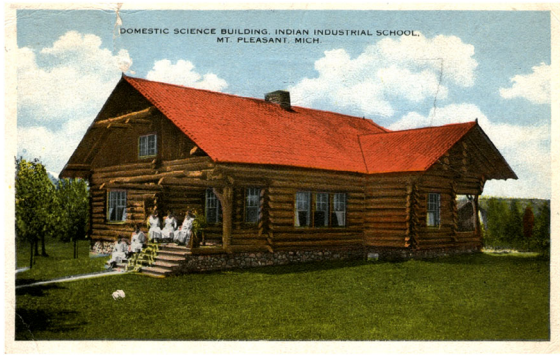

Figure 1. Photographic postcard of the Domestic Science building with girls dressed in white posing on steps. From the personal collection of S. Surface-Evans. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

most aspects of that labor; sewing, laundry, cooking, and nursing were all services provided to the Mount Pleasant community without compensation (Littlefield 1996). Take, for instance, the "domestic science" training girls had within the extremely gendered education program at the school. Domestic training was focused on the daily "work" of maintaining a home as either domestic help or as mothers and housewives (Lomawaima 1993). An article from a 1910 newspaper describes the ultimate goal of this education: "well trained girls … return to do real missionary work among the tribes from which they came, later going into homes of their own and training their children to become useful citizens" (*Isabella County Enterprise* 1910). The ideology expressed here, indicates the assumed civilizing nature of the female-bodied person that was at the heart of the separate-spheres philosophy (Spencer-Wood 2013). A further symbolic expression of this ideology is apparent in the practice of girls wearing "pretty white gowns made by themselves" at their graduation ceremony (Figure 1) (*Mount Pleasant Times* 1911). White, as a symbol of purity, represented a girl's responsibility and duty to bring civilization to her community. This heavy burden was placed squarely on the shoulders of female students who were being trained to become model housewives and mothers (Littlefield 1996). The cult of domesticity was also closely linked to the patriarchal desire to "train Indian girls in subservience and submission to authority" (Lomawaima 1993, 229).

Given its strong role in colonial indoctrination, it is not surprising that the Domestic Science building was also the point of subtle resistance and opposition to the institution. Activities conducted at the Domestic Science building included cooking, baking, hosting parties, sewing, and beadwork (*Isabella County Enterprise* 1906). Traditional beadwork, while controlled by the school, became a way for girls to subtly oppose the institution.

At a community event hosted at the Mount Pleasant school in 2012, one of the many artifacts displayed was a glass seed bead found near the Domestic Science building during archaeological survey. Visitor, Laura L. Kellogg, shared a personal story and brought a newspaper article about her mother, Florence D. (Red Sky) Watkins. Florence was an award-winning artist and seamstress, who learned beadwork from older girls who "lost" beads intentionally—thus allowing the younger girls access to them (*The Daily Tribune* 1987). While she faced opposition to continuing the craft once she left school, Florence continued to make and teach beadwork to others throughout her life. Laura felt immense pride in the fact that her mother's beading ability was an act of rebellion and played a part in her perseverance of spirit to retain her identity and culture. Beadwork and sewing became an important source of income for Florence, a theme echoed by other students, and demonstrates how women used the knowledge and skills they acquired to eventually serve their own needs (Hegyi 2016; Johnson 1991; Littlefield 1996). In this story, the small bead found at the Domestic Science building is a symbol of perseverance, resistance, and female empowerment in the face of the institution's goals of forced subservience.

Reconnecting to lost lives

Sometimes ghosts can be found in what is missing: the untold stories of unnamed children. The next story comes from an attempt to recover such lost lives. In particular, we have an example of a female student who outright rejected the gender norms imposed by the school. Due to the separate-spheres ideology, female students were not allowed to participate in male students' industrial training, including farming, blacksmithing, and carpentry (*Annual Calendar* 1917). However, oral history confirms that at least one girl, whose name is unknown, petitioned the head carpenter, Duane Morey, to be included in the carpentry class (Moses, personal communication June 26, 2012). Her cause was helped by the assistant carpenter at that time, Samuel Gruett, a Native American teacher who started work at the school as a farmer (*Annual Calendar* 1917). The unnamed student was approved by the school superintendent to join a class of four boys in carpentry and reportedly graduated after a year of training (Moses, personal communication 2012).

This story of an unknown girl helps reveal a possible larger pattern of subversion, particularly in educational training sought by female students. Considering that one former student described the labor of working in the "mending room" as "just like a prison" (Dobson 1978, 55), we might guess at her motivations for choosing carpentry instead. Most of the work and training performed by the female students was utter drudgery. The drive to make the institution self-sufficient placed a significant burden of daily work on female students, who laundered and sewed clothes for the institution and the community (Adams 1995; Littlefield 1996). Therefore it is unsurprising that some female students looked for alternatives.

Figure 2. Photograph of a section of the South wall of the Carpentry Shop showing carvings. Photo taken by Sarah Surface-Evans. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

While we have no physical records of this unnamed girl, the carpentry shop building itself may be a record of her will and determination to make the institution work for her. The exterior bricks of the shop building are carved with hundreds of initials, dates, names, words, and symbols, which systematically cover the lower 6 feet of all four walls of the building (Figure 2). These carvings were documented by Central Michigan University students in 2012 (Hegyi 2016). The majority of the carvings were most likely etched onto the bricks by Native American boarding school students, as opposed to graffiti from a later period of time, because numerous initials and names are accompanied by dates, such as 1909, 1911, 1929, and 1931. The inclusion of initials and names (with which school administrators could possibly identify students) also seems to preclude the idea that these carvings were an act of outright rebellion or vandalism; rather, they appear to be sanctioned by the school. It might be logical to assume that these initials were carved by male students, as various historical sources identify the shop building as a locale of male student work in blacksmithing and carpentry (*Annual Calendar* 1917; Fancher 1911); however, in our search to find out who made them and why, we learned that they may not only be made by male students.

In order to link names of individuals with initials carved on the walls, Sarah Jones (formerly Sarah Hegyi) reviewed the 2012 field notes and photographic images, and compared them to the best-known archival source of student names: the School Register of Pupils (Hamp 2012). She

examined the Student Register for any instances of names that correlated with the initials carved on to the building and then recorded other essential information available from the Register, such as gender and date of admittance or release from the school. Sarah Jones' research determined that there were 816 names on the register that correlated with the initials observed. The majority of the carvings correlate with names of male students (55 percent), but this gender ratio is roughly the same as the general student body gender ratio. The lack of a clearly gendered identity of shop building carvings raises a question of why they were made in the first place? Is it possible that gender roles were not strictly imposed at the institution when it came to education?

Sarah Jones conducted interviews of several Saginaw Chippewa elders in the hopes of learning more about why the carvings were made (Hegyi 2016).[3] Unfortunately, none of the elders interviewed had any prior knowledge of the carvings. This might be because none of them had been students at the Mount Pleasant school themselves; rather, they were the children or grandchildren of boarding school students. One possible explanation for the existence of the carvings comes from a common practice at a nearby one-room schoolhouse. At the Bohannon School, located in nearby Jasper Township, Michigan, a boy was permitted to carve his initials into the wood exterior walls of the school on his 13th birthday, when they were customarily given a jackknife (Martin, personal communication, December 10, 2012). This practice may be an example of a local tradition that was in practice at both public schools and at the Mount Pleasant Industrial Indian Boarding School.

It is possible that at a certain age or upon completion of his carpentry training, boys were allowed to add their initials to the building walls. But this still does not explain the possible presence of female student initials carved on the walls (potentially in large numbers). The story of the unnamed girl who completed carpentry training may be one explanation. Perhaps students exercised their agency and rejected gendered training more often than is suspected or known. Alternatively, female students may have sought to add their initials to the walls in order to be included in this coming of age ritual. In either explanation, female students were asserting their individual will and marking their presence on the landscape alongside their male peers. Today these carvings are powerful reminders to those who visit the site—they activate memories that echo student individuality and subversion.

Ghosts of rebellion

For many in the Saginaw Chippewa and larger Anishinaabe community, the boarding school buildings and their ruins are harmful, haunting specters that cast long shadows on the horizon. In part, this is because the buildings are the enduring physical reminders of the lasting repercussions of the institution on Anishinaabe lifeways and families. But with community-based research, discourses have evolved from haunting to determination and rebellion. In particular, the most empowering narrative of rebellion told in the Saginaw Chippewa community centers around the drastic and brave measures taken by a 14-year-old Potawatomie girl named Martha Shagonaby who exposed the fragility of the institution.

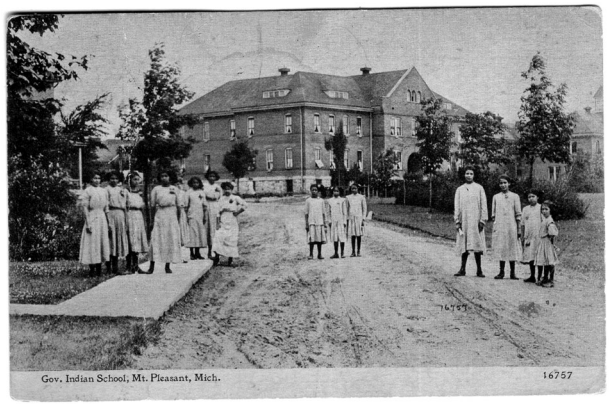

Figure 3. Photographic postcard of girls standing at the entrance of the Mount Pleasant school wearing white dresses, with the newly constructed girls dormitory in the background. Image courtesy of the Richard R. Brandell Michigan Postcard Collection, 1908–1960, Clark Historical Library, Central Michigan University.

In the pre-dawn hours of June 14, 1899 Martha set fire to her dormitory at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School in an attempt to free herself from the institution that had taken her from her family and community. The entire building, which also housed the school's offices and most of the classrooms at the time, was consumed by the blaze. Martha's fire was the most catastrophic act of rebellion in the history of the Mount Pleasant Boarding School. It took two years for a replacement dormitory to be constructed (Figure 3), significantly hampering student enrollments. Martha's remarkable story shows the determination of a young woman who was desperate to escape the institution. But she chose to do it in the most destructive manner possible—rather than simply running away. She also attempted to burn down the laundry (Isabella County Enterprise 1899a), before successfully destroying the main dormitory and classroom building of the campus (Isabella County Enterprise 1899b). Regardless of whether Martha committed arson as an intentional act of rebellion, this is how the Saginaw Chippewa

community choses to view her actions today. Certainly, school administrators viewed arson as the ultimate act against the institution. She paid dearly for her actions, earning three months of detention, before she was finally sent home (Isabella County Enterprise 1899c).

Five years after Martha's fire, another late-night blaze completely destroyed the laundry building, along with a substantial portion of the school's laundry (*Isabella County Enterprise* 1904). Other fires are also documented at the school (*Isabella County Enterprise* 1895a, 1909) and appear to have been a recurrent problem for the school administrators who frequently sought to improve the infrastructure to prevent fires (*Isabella County Enterprise* 1903, 1904). These significant rebellious acts were primarily focused on girls' living and work areas, and presumably were carried out by girls who had access to these areas. Interestingly, documentary sources indicate that boys were much more likely to run away from the school than girls (*Central Michigan Times* 1907, 1908; *Isabella County Enterprise* 1895b, 1900, 1913a, 1913b, 1914; *Mount Pleasant Times* 1925). Perhaps arson was a more accessible form of rebellion for girls because their movement was more closely controlled than boys (Surface-Evans 2016). Unfortunately, because arson was also considered one of the most heinous crimes against the institution, this also meant that female students disproportionately carried the burden of punishment.

When Francis E. Leupp served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the arson problem was taken very seriously (Adams 1995). Two measures were taken to treat what many officials saw as a potential "pandemic." The first change, meant to protect the innocent children in burning buildings, was to fund the previously mentioned infrastructure projects to reduce the severity of fires. The second alteration had a more controversial component: drastic, well-publicized punitive measures against alleged fire-starters. Leupp wrote that "remonstrances, explanations of the perils, as well as the wickedness of such actions, and even the ordinary penalties which lay within the power of the teachers to impose, were alike powerless to break up this wonton fancy for the firebrand" (Adams 1995, 229). For students caught committing arson, this meant stiff penalties and jail sentences for their offenses. For example, two Menominee girls confessed to burning down a reservation school in 1905 (not MIIBS), shortly after the policy changes were made. The principal offender was sentenced to life imprisonment in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The story was purposefully circulated throughout the boarding school newspapers, such as the *Indian Leader* published at Haskell, to deter other potential arsonists.

While the only known arsonist at the Mount Pleasant school is Martha, her story of perseverance in the face of institutional violence is an empowering story for women in the Saginaw Chippewa community today. Archaeological evidence of both Martha's fire and the laundry fire produce small residues of these radical actions. Survey in the vicinity of the girl's dormitory recovered primary burnt brick, melted glass, and other construction debris surrounding the foundation of the new dormitory building. It appears that the institution merely covered up the event and moved on. The most compelling artifact recovered during excavations at the site of the former laundry building was the bone handle of a toothbrush amongst the building debris, buttons, and cleaning supplies. Unlike the personal hygiene items found at the Phoenix Indian School track site (Lindauer 1996), this item did not have a name or symbol engraved on it. As a result, the toothbrush was interpreted as a tool for cleaning or scrubbing clothing or floors in the laundry. For Sarah Jones, who discovered the toothbrush, it was emblematic of the work and drudgery girls encountered while working in the laundry. The toothbrush became a potent symbol of why girls were driven to fight back against the institution when displayed with other artifacts at the *Debewin: Truth* exhibit at the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in 2014. Together with oral histories and documentary evidence, small objects like this toothbrush show the resilience of children like Martha and the unknown girls who used fire to fight the institution.

Banishing Ghosts with Truth-Telling

We hope that these stories help to illustrate the potential of a community-based, multivocal, and intersubjective approach to revealing narratives of empowerment and allow communities to manage discourses of the haunted on their own terms. This approach does not seek singular explanations but leaves room for diversity of memory. Here, archaeology and heritage work have the power to facilitate community healing and decolonize the past. In particular, the stories of girls and young women, who are traditionally discussed as passive receptors of the institution's assimilationist goals, are shifted to narratives of perseverance, resilience, and rebellion. Each story was revealed through a complex and collaborative process of investigating oral histories, documentary evidence, and archaeological evidence. Rather than relying on traditional methods of archaeological interpretation, which seek to make sterile, scientific interpretations of evidence, we centered these narratives around personal connections relevant to the community.

Since 2012, the Saginaw Chippewa community is empowered to share their stories and knowledge. The community organizes an annual day of Honoring, Healing, and

Remembering to commemorate the closing of the school on June 6, 1934. This event brings hundreds of people to the campus from all over the United States and Canada, where they can share these narratives, conjure ghosts, and engage in healing together. This process decolonizes the past and empowers Native American communities, such as the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan, to heal from the trauma of the Boarding School era.

Acknowledgments

This research represents the collective effort of many, including Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan community members, the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Committee, and Central Michigan University students. Miigwetch, thank you! We are grateful for the permission to conduct and publish this research from the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council and for research funding from the Central Michigan University College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, and Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. We also want to thank the volume editors Teresa Raczek and Tiffany Fryer for inviting us to contribute and for the helpful feedback from anonymous reviewers.

Notes

1. In choosing this phrase, we were not aware of Marilyn Ivy's 1995 book *Discourses of the Vanishing* until it was brought to our attention by one of the reviewers. While Ivy's book deals with ghostliness, her perspective of ghosts as an embodiment of the loss of tradition in Japan is different from what we propose here. Rather, we propose reflexive method for archaeological research and interpretation that acknowledges the impact of the past on the present in communities affected by colonial violence.

2. At the time of writing this, the authors, Sarah Surface-Evans and Sarah Jones, make up part of the Committee. Sarah Surface-Evans, who identifies as white, agender, and queer, is an Associate Professor of anthropology at Central Michigan University, and serves as an archaeological consultant for the Committee. Sarah (Hegyi) Jones is a Saginaw Chippewa Tribal member and is employed as the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the tribe, and she identifies as a woman of both Native American and white decent.

3. IRB approval at Central Michigan University, principal investigator Dr. Brittany Fremion.

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