

**IN BETWEEN CULTURES: AMERICAN INDIANS IN MULTICULTURAL  
AMERICAN SOCIETY**

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Írta: Szathmári Judit okleveles angol nyelv és irodalom szakos tanár

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Témavezető: Dr. Glant Tibor

A doktori szigorlati bizottság:

elnök: Dr. ....

tagok: Dr. ....

Dr. ....

A doktori szigorlat időpontja: 200... ..

Az értekezés bírálói:

Dr. ....

Dr. ....

Dr. ....

A bírálóbizottság:

elnök: Dr. ....

tagok: Dr. ....

Dr. ....

Dr. ....

Dr. ....

A nyilvános vita időpontja: 200... ..

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Én, Szathmári Judit teljes felelősségem tudatában kijelentem, hogy a benyújtott értekezés a szerzői jog normáinak tiszteletbentartásával készült.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims at exploring the status of present-day urban American Indian population in multicultural American society. The two main goals to be pursued in the course of upcoming analysis are to explore the multicultural context of American society and to establish the particular standing of the urban Indian population. To avoid generalizations, through the case study of the State of Wisconsin, and the formation of the Indian Community School in Milwaukee, I intend to demonstrate how the Indian community of the city exemplifies American Indians' participation in mainstream America and how the establishment of a separate educational institution serves the purpose of being members of both the Indian and American cultures. While separation would imply the wish to distance oneself from mainstream ideals, the Indian Community School's operation has a double function.

My basic assumption is that by the establishment of an intertribal school, American Indians participate in American culture through a metaphorical revolving door. The school's operation and curriculum verifies the need to preserve a cultural sense of Indianness, at the same time it provides the preparation for entering mainstream culture. I chose the revolving door metaphor as a cultural tool to enable participation in both Indian and mainstream cultures, as the concept expresses the possibility to freely commute between two cultures, but fully be present in one at a time. The revolving door also implies constant mobility and the free choice of directions. With its continuous operation, it expresses the utilization of the door by communities and not only individuals and the heterogeneity of those who wish to take advantage of the door. This last factor is essential in exploring American Indian presence in multicultural America as:

Indian people themselves are the “alphabet soup” of proliferating agencies and programs. “Lotsa noodles but still no meat,” says the old boy who has lived through “wardship,” enfranchisement in 1924, the furor of the Brookings Survey, Collier, the war, the 1950s, the Task Force, Nash, Bennett, and now just about everyone in addition to the BIA “discovering” the Indian problem. (Lurie “How” 6).

If the alphabet soup is interpreted as multicultural American society, Indian people do have their share in it. What the 1967 informant implies by “lotsa noodles but still no meat” is counteracted by the operation of the Milwaukee self-help organization and the Indian Community School set up by Indian people on their own and in their own terms. While “Indian problem” is still a catch phrase with regard to the American Indian minority, achievements, such as the Milwaukee Indian presence are less widely publicized.

At various points of either the organizations’ or the school’s existence, non-Indian antagonism and misunderstanding of Indian interests hindered cooperation outside the Indian community. Yet, eventually, the time has come when cooperation within and without the Indian community became a reality. The particularity of the situation and the questionable nature of full-fledged multiculturalism lies in the fact that while the Milwaukee scene has been relatively peaceful except for some phases of the school’s history, treaty rights controversies still permeate white-Indian relations, and not only in the State of Wisconsin.

The roots of antagonism and still existing anti-Indian feelings are in the clashing value systems of American and Indian cultures. Contrary to the mainstream ideal of individualism, Indian people tend to think in terms of group objectives which have formed the core of the Indian problem from the federal point of view. Throughout white-Indian relations, the government intended to solve the Indian problem by dealing with individuals rather than tribal entities, while Indian people still defy denouncing their tribal ties.

“What Indian people are doing is holding in line. If they can’t go in the direction they want, at least they are not going to go any further than they have to in someone else’s direction” (Lurie “How” 6). The creation of the Indian Community School exemplifies this attitude. If postethnic America is to materialize, there would be no need for rejecting moving in one direction, since in that ideal state no imposed cultural forces would pull any minority towards an identity they do not wish to affiliate with. At this point in time, the operation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School is the base where young, urban dwelling Indian generations are learning to identify with their own cultures, while at the same time, being educated in how to move on the path of mainstream America. Students are also offered the choice to select either or both of these routes.

#### *Position and Significance within the Scholarship*

There is a shortage of American Indian studies within the field of multiculturalism. While Indian people are often mentioned in passing, their place in the supposedly multicultural American society is somewhat neglected. Explanations to this lie in the low numerical presence and concept of the invisible minority imposed by mainstream society. The fact is thought provoking, as no other minority has acquired the permanent position of being a declared “problem.” From the Indian point of view, the kind of integration that many other minorities attempted to achieve is not desirable, although Indian activism has employed some of the Civil Rights techniques to voice their discontent regarding the Indian presence and importance in mainstream society.

Publications on Wisconsin, with its relatively large Indian population, have been of some interest in American Indian Studies. Yet, Milwaukee, with its diversity and exceptional Indian activism has not been the target of any scholarly studies. The nation’s first urban self-help organization, the Consolidated Tribes did not attract national attention of anthropologists

and neither did the relatively peaceful relationship between the Indian community and the city. The present dissertation aims at filling the gap by studying the circumstances and history of the nation's first urban intertribal school. Although occupants of Alcatraz Island in California did establish an educational institution during the 1969 takeover, that school ceased to function when the occupants left Alcatraz Island. The establishment of a separate institution to educate Indians, both literally and figuratively, proves that participation in mainstream culture should be voluntary and occasional.. The revolving door created by the Indian Community School serves just this purpose.

*Definition of basic terms and their specific usage in the dissertation*

David Hollinger's "ethno-racial pentagon" is a five-part demographic structure dividing the "population [of the United States] into African American, Asian American, Euro-American, Indigenous and Latino segments" (8). Hollinger claims these segments to be "presumably involuntary communities of descent" (8). His preference of voluntary affiliations over communities of descent discards the American Indian ideal, while his theory of postethnicity should allow for both.

Territorial minority is a term coined by Imre Sutton. It was employed by Nancy Lurie to refer to ethnic and racial minorities who became a minority in the numeric sense in their own homeland (Lurie "Forked").

I will use the term "Indianness" to mean not only membership in the Indigenous bloc of the ethno-racial pentagon, but also to include cultural awareness in addition to racial identity. Indianness implies one's acceptance and willingness to affiliate with the Indian community of descent as well as a reciprocal acceptance of that community to acknowledge one as a member.



Strongly related to the notion of Indianness is “Indian space” which I intend to use to incorporate two notions. The first is the wish to belong to the figurative Indian country, whereas the second expresses a cultural aspect in one’s identity which exists through the voluntary nature of affiliation with one’s Indian community of descent. Indian space thus is a psychological ground in which one’s cultural identity is rooted.

The figurative Indian space requires the definition of a physical Indian space which is provided by the term “trust status.” The term implies “tribal lands under federal jurisdiction [which] have special potentialities for community and economic development” (Lurie *Presence* 4). Interpreting trust status within the context of reservations has led to a number of misunderstandings in regard to the Indian Community School. While the land is held in trust by the federal government in the name of a tribe, the implied independence of trust status within city limits is negotiable, as the Milwaukee case proves.

### *Summary*

In Chapter 2 I will utilize various definitions and explications of multiculturalism to arrive at the conclusion that the most applicable structure to host the American Indian population is that of postethnicity, as defined by Hollinger. I will utilize Hollinger’s theory to open the debate on how urban Indian populations struggle for their maintaining of cultural awareness. Diversity, invisibility and the difficulties in constructing a racial identity will be explored in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 discusses federal Indian policy with regard to the most significant acts that affected the American Indian population at large, and that still have their impact on current Indian affairs. Acts were selected on the basis of their relevance to the Wisconsin and Milwaukee situation. The chapter follows a chronological ordering, and, at the same time, makes distinctions between assimilationist policies and those that supported tribal

sovereignty. Chapter 3 also analyses the historical roots of the figurative notion of Indian country.

Chapter 4 focuses on the notion of Indian country, its definition and operation within mainstream American culture. The legacy of Indian country's residents, political system and its significance will be analyzed here. Indian country will introduce urban Indian communities and their particular status in American society.

In chapter 5 I explain why the State of Wisconsin is a special area of research and an exemplary case for demonstrating federal Indian policy. The state has long been active with Indian presence and, as it hosts a relatively large Indian population, the effects of federal Indian policy can explicitly be analyzed here. Milwaukee, the state's largest city, offers special research material as it was the cradle of the first urban intertribal school in the United States. Active Indian presence is demonstrated through the number of American Indian self-help organizations which have been defying stereotypical images of American Indians and attempting to establish communication with the non-Indian community of the city.

Chapter 6 explores Indian radicalism and activism in the city of Milwaukee. With its national analogue of the Alcatraz occupation, the American Indian Movement's takeover of the vacant Coast Guard building will be analyzed. The roots of the takeover will explain urban Indian problems with regard to multiculturalism, while reactions to AIM's occupation maneuver demonstrate mainstream attitude to American Indians. As the Coast Guard building was the first permanent home of the Indian Community School, the relationship between the radical Indian organization and the educational institution is also discussed in Chapter 6.

The analysis of this relationship expands to Chapter 7, which is a detailed explication of the birth and operation of the Indian Community School. In addition to its curriculum, staff and student body, the need for establishing an independent educational institution is discussed here.

Chapter 8 focuses on legal and financial issues relevant to the operation of the school. The Forest County Potawatomi and their extension of reservation status to two parcels of land in Milwaukee provide insight into the difficulties and antagonism the Indian Community School had to face in the 1980s due to its connection with gambling. Community opposition targeted American Indians in the city and was said to have concerns over gambling, yet, what mainstream antagonism to trust status failed to acknowledge was that without gambling the operation of the Indian Community School would have been impossible. Chapter 8 also presents examples of how non-Indian Milwaukeeans came to the aid of the school, thus proving the possibility of a multicultural society.

### *Research*

Research was carried out in 1999-2000 in Milwaukee. The nine-month Fulbright Grant provided access to the University Manuscript Collections, hosted by the Golda Meir Library of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In addition, the Milwaukee Public Museum's Native American Resource File was of invaluable assistance.

The Native American Resource File is a collection of newspaper articles, community meeting typescripts and minutes, correspondences among Indian people in various organizations, and historical documents on the Indian presence in Milwaukee and Wisconsin. As part of the city's Indian activism, the Native American Resource File also contains information on the Indian Community School, but very little prior to the publicity of the Coast Guard takeover by the American Indian Movement. Professor Nancy Lurie was of invaluable assistance in collecting information. Professor Lurie has not only been an eyewitness to the Milwaukee Indian presence, but she also took active part in every one of the activities to further the Indian cause in both the city and the State. Professor Lurie is an anthropologist of Norwegian descent and is curator emerita of anthropology at the Milwaukee Public Museum,

Her relationship with the Indian community and her personal acquaintance with Indian people assisted me in establishing connections with the Indian community. Weekly attendance at the Congregation of the Great Spirit, the Indian Catholic Church, personal acquaintances with teachers and Board members of the Indian Community School, and visits to the school provided first-hand experience in Milwaukee's Indian community.

### *Referencing*

The dissertation strictly follows the standard MLA style of parenthetical documentation keyed to a list of works cited as stipulated in the fifth edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. However, I have had to diverge from the MLA format where it did not offer guidelines to referencing some of the documents cited. As most of the works cited derive from the Native American Resource File, pagination, author's names, dates of publication might be missing. Minutes and typescripts of various organizations' meetings are distinguished by their dates, as there is no other differentiating feature in them.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE INDIAN PROBLEM AND MULTICULTURALISM**

### **2.1. American Indian Particularity**

### **2.2. Postethnicity**

Difficulties in Establishing a Racial Identity

### **2.3. Visibility**

Cultural Visibility

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### **2.4. Problems in American Indian Studies**

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## 2. THE INDIAN PROBLEM AND MULTICULTURALISM

The first chapter of this dissertation will utilize multicultural theory as an attempt to define the current status of the American Indian in a supposedly multicultural American society. I will rely on various definitions and explications of multiculturalism to arrive at the conclusion that the most applicable structure for the exploration of the American Indian question or, as it is more often worded, problem, is provided by David A. Hollinger's theory of postethnicity. The concept of postethnicity will be employed as a starting-point for the construction of the metaphor of a revolving door which best describes the current status of the American Indian in a multicultural American society. Postethnicity will also be applied to the analysis of the more specific focus of the dissertation, that is the social circumstances which allowed the Milwaukee Indian Community School's establishment. As the School was founded in 1968, and the Indian problem as such has existed ever since the first contact with Europeans, I will expand the time scope of multiculturalism in retrospect, and will attempt to go beyond postethnicity in the future. I will compare and apply the complementary as well as often contrasting theories of David Hollinger, Philip Deloria, Frantz Fanon, David Theo Goldberg, Henry Giroux, Judith Stiehm, Henry Louis Gates, Michael Dyson, Cedric Robinson and Peter Caws to construct a formula which fits best the case study of the Milwaukee Indian Community School. Hollinger's postethnicity is somewhat synonymous with Giroux's insurgent multiculturalism and Caws's definition of multiculturalism. The roots of their ideals are found in Fanon's decolonization theory. Diversity as a concomitant of multiculturalism is explored by Stiehm and it raises the difficulties lying in the definition of multiculturalism, as explained by Goldberg. Deloria and Gates both explicate on the notion of "the Other" as cultural models. Robinson and Dyson both analyze the status of the oppressed, and the latter reinterprets racial identity with regard to oppression.

I find it essential to construct a theoretical base for the metaphor I will utilize to analyze the American Indian situation. With the help of multiculturalism and postethnicity I will conclude that the operation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School is a tool for American Indians to participate in American society through a revolving door which allows them to be part of majority culture without the need to abandon their Indianness. Approaching the specific from the general, the current status of the Indian minority in American society will be explained through various aspects and applications of multiculturalism. As most literature on multiculturalism treats the American Indian minority in its own legacy rather briefly, if at all, I will apply some of the theories invented for studies of other minority groups to the American Indian situation.

### 2.1. American Indian Particularity

As an illustration to the shortage of American Indian and multicultural studies, other, equally significant minority cultures have gained attention throughout American history. To take the African American example: slavery, the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights movement, and Black Power are all notions familiar and soundly based in the chronology of American, and African American history. Even though a student of Indian affairs may find corresponding movements in Indian and American relations, it would be very difficult to establish a similar framework of history compatible with our western way of thinking.

Yet another problematic notion is the lack of well-defined place. The American South, Harlem, Montgomery are all widely-known locations of the African American struggle for an equal standing in American society. Corresponding places in American Indian history, with some mythic quality attached, bear different significance. The West, the Frontier, reservations, Little Big Horn do not only signify, and, in certain cases rather vaguely at best, geographical locations, but also carry the burden of stereotypes, myths evolving around them.

Other comparisons with immigrant minority groups are also difficult as for most immigrant communities there is a mother country and mother tongue to maintain connections with, while American Indians became a territorial minority in their own mother country with many mother tongues.

I intend to begin my analysis with a literary example of American Indian presence in multicultural America. American Indian literature and its treatment in mainstream literary studies publications may stand here as an analogue to the still persisting “vanishing race” and “silent minority” view of American Indian culture in American society. *Columbia Literary History of the United States* illustrates the invisibility of American Indians in the larger American scene. The book begins with a foreword by N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer-prize winner Kiowa author. However, as if to symbolize American Indian history, besides the introductory “Native Voice” by the established Indian author, there is no separate chapter on American Indian literature. Henry Louis Gates’s borrowing of the term “official marginality” by J.G. Melquior explains this lack of presentation. Momaday seems to embody the body of “minority critics [who] are accepted by the academy but, in return, they must accept a role already scripted for them: once scorned, now exalted” (Gates 211). In passing, characters typical in American Indian publications are mentioned, where emphasis falls on the lack of outstanding heroic figures defying authority and triumphantly rebelling against the mainstream. One aspect greatly disputed in present-day literary criticism is the frequent motif of the adolescent/adult crisis, the often used symbol of social illness transformed into body problems (Molesworth 1023-44). Outdated as it is, it can be applied to recent American Indian literature, as well. American Indian literary products of the 20th century also show the symptoms of some age crisis, and these are very well applicable to American Indian culture and literature: one adolescent in culture and adult in body experiences a so to say “midlife crisis” where mid stands for amid, between, in the Indian case, between cultures. Yet, the



mainstream process is reversed in the American Indian situation: Indian culture reached its maturity, but numerical presentation only allows an adolescent existence.

This duality can also be detected in the terminology used to designate Indians. The two most frequently applied terms, Native American and American Indian, bear contradictory standpoints. While Mexican American, Asian American, African American seem to have Americanness at the center from where one can move towards the available and chosen ethnic or racial affiliation, American Indian points toward the opposite direction. It expresses the wish and the will to close the gap between one's Indianness by accepting one's Americanness. I will use the term American Indian, although Native American is still widely used in referring to Indians. I believe that in this age of political correctness, the Indian argument against the pejorative connotations of native as primitive is understandable. The question of self-designation leads us to the peculiar status of American Indians in American society.

## 2.2. Postethnicity

As the American Indian community holds special and specific relations with mainstream America, it is necessary to establish a system whereby its power relations may be defined. While multiculturalism is a catch phrase of twentieth century culture studies, I will adopt Hollinger's theory expressed in the subtitle of his *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. Hollinger explores the currently existing trend to classify racial and ethnic minorities within the structure of an ethno-racial pentagon. His thesis statement claims that within the ever entangled multiracial and multiethnic relations that characterizes present day America, it is becoming impossible for anyone to identify with one of the five racial categories. In his analysis, he explains the complexities of today's American society, and the obstacles one must face when intending to identify with exclusively one racial group.

Although Hollinger's argument proves useful when placing American Indians in the larger context of American multicultural society, his work is rather a springboard for future discussion.

*Postethnic America* explores the possibility of an American society which, in the future, will move beyond multiculturalism. In his introduction to *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* David Theo Goldberg expresses the difficulties arising with the need to define multiculturalism. Rather than being able to create an explicit definition, he declares that multiculturalism "can be described phenomenologically, its conditions of possibility and transformation specified, its modes of expression characterized, its history periodized by delineating its forms of occurrence" (1). He continues by quoting Peter Caws that "the -ism" reduces to a formal singularity, fixing it into a cemented condition, the "ideology of political correctness" (1) thus losing its heterogeneous nature.

Hollinger introduces the term postethnic to explain the power lines of American society without the organizing principles of multiculturalism. The author's argument is based on the assumption that multiculturalism, however useful it used to be to describe racial and ethnic diversity, fails to incorporate all entities of the American nation. Just as in the case of other culture theories, such as pluralism, cosmopolitanism and universalism, the boundaries differentiating one segment from the other are also sources of conflicts. These are rooted in the fact that the borders do not only separate races, but they also imply cultural separatism. When Hollinger questions Gary B. Nash's defense of multiculturalism, he quotes his definition of multiculturalism to be "an emphasis on diversity, an elimination of ethnocentrism" (82). The equality of histories of all in a multicultural scene is wishful thinking to Hollinger who claims that there should be space beyond that. In her essay on the ethnic composition in American higher education Judith Stiehm says: "Diversity can easily splinter into competition between groups seeking their own advantage. Further, when the

rejected feel displaced, their discontent inevitably focuses on the visible displacers” (149).

The fear from such a competitive atmosphere explains the need for a unifying force, a common ground.

Gary B. Nash takes his stand by “the common ground” (qtd. in Hollinger 82) by stating: “If multiculturalism is to get beyond a promiscuous pluralism that gives everything equal weight and adopts complete moral relativism, it must reach some agreement on what is at the core of American culture” (qtd. in Hollinger 82-3). The core, as Nash sees it, lies in the democratic values “clearly stated in the nation’s founding documents” (qtd. in Hollinger 83). The question then arises: to what extent cultures recently awakening to their self-determination and earning their own voice shape those core values they are asked to subscribe to. How may equality be interpreted in a context whose bases and boundaries are well and strictly defined by the majority? Nash’s argument rests on the significance of the individual and, undoubtedly, his view to appreciate outstanding individuals of all race and ethnicity should prove ideal. Yet, as Hollinger points out, blocs of the ethno-racial pentagon are not divided and populated equally. Harriet Tubman may stand exemplary for a larger bloc, but hardly fits the culture and practices of another bloc, namely that of the American Indian. Another example is Cedric Robinson’s “Ota Benga’s Flight Through Geronimo’s Eyes.” The anecdote of the pygmy and the Chiricahua prisoner sharing their plight at the St. Louis World Fair as exhibitory objects, curious articles of barbaric cultures contradicts Hollinger’s unifying belief. The two men had one determinant in common: being forced in a humiliating status by the majority. When Ota Benga claims to have seen an unknown world in Geronimo’s eyes, it was the shared fate of the oppressed under extreme circumstances (Robinson 396).

In addition, as a territorial minority, the original inhabitants of the continent, it is contestable that the figure of Crazy Horse, Geronimo, or Leonard Peltier would ever find

admission in spheres of American culture where so far they inhabited the place of the Other. Hollinger's choice of postethnicity implies the belief in a society where, with the disappearance of walls dividing the blocs of the pentagon, no conflict would arise. His system is particularly suitable to apply to the American Indian community or rather, communities, as Hollinger's cornerstone is voluntary affiliation with one's heritage. While he does not deny the importance of communities of descent, he also provides for the broadening of perspective with voluntary choices of belonging. In fact, this strength of Hollinger's thesis also bears the weakness of his theory. I would argue for the equal determinacy of one's descent and choice. Hollinger explains his preference for affiliation over identity, as the latter he declares "psychological, fixed, given, and epistemic" (6). As opposed to this, the "social, flexible and performative" (Hollinger 6) nature of affiliation allows one a broader pool of choice. Yet, the final goal is to acquire an identity, the process of which is only possible through various affiliations. The metaphor of revolving doors separating cultures from each other, although applicable to Hollinger's theory, provides a wider understanding of the American Indian status in multicultural America. While Hollinger's boundaries may be substituted with the revolving door in-between American and American Indian societies, the former are less flexible and do not sufficiently describe the static nature of one's standing in one place at a time. Affiliation may express the wish to be in another room, and possibly the action taken to move towards the desired direction. Yet, one has to perform such deeds with an explicit idea, plan, or scheme of an identity to be able to inhabit two places at the same time. What Hollinger terms postethnic, may be explained as "an individual with an identity unconstrained by cultural particularity or prejudice" (Caws 386).

### Difficulties in Establishing a Racial Identity

Conflicts may arise from Hollinger's statement claiming, and we should add, rightfully, that no history or biology can clearly define affiliations. While they may form the basis of one's wishes of membership in a given community, they are less likely to grant access to that desired membership. "Although it is undeniably rooted in pigment and physiology, racial identity transcends their boundaries. It is created and remade in a network of conflicting and converging social relations, political options, civil limits, gender politics, economic crises, religious narratives, and moral choices" (224) explains Michael E. Dyson. He draws the conclusion in reference to black culture that due to such a variety of determining factors there is no essential racial identity. Yet, evident in American Indian history, hardly can we state that biology does not equip one with a strong identity, and hinder affiliation with any other cultures. In my view, we cannot discard the importance of history and biology in determining one's future affiliations, and thus postethnic America without its communities of descent is more of an ideal status than a possible future social structure. When Peter Caws claims that "nobody is going to be at home everywhere" (386) if we do not follow the multicultural practice, he is only right in a certain aspect. Although always at one home at a time, the revolving door does allow belonging to multiple homes.

In chapter I of *Postethnic America* Hollinger reacts to the self-evident need arising from the nature of multicultural America. Titled "Haley's Choice," the chapter begins with the personal history of author Alex Haley, whose African American descent determined his affiliation with that culture and did not allow him to attach himself to his Irish roots. Underlying Hollinger's argument, and supported by the chapter's title, is the assumption that it was Haley's decision resulting from community and social pressure to choose one affiliation over the other. However, presenting the question this way implies that a choice actually could have materialized for Haley. In Hollinger's 5-part demographic structure,

Haley should have had a free way to move in-between the Irish/white and the African American blocs. Though the author never claims such mobility is without obstacles, his ideal postethnic American society would ease the difficulties of crossing from one bloc to another, would allow membership in two blocs at the same time. Hollinger himself acknowledges that “the five specified blocs are not equally populated or empowered but the five-part structure itself is supposed to embrace us all” (24). Following the opening thesis, regardless of biological and historical heritage, Alex Haley has as much right in the Euro as in the African American bloc. The main problem with such a standpoint lies in the fact that it is not only the individual who should require consent from any given group to identify himself as a member, but a similar consent of not belonging should be obtained from other possible communities.

Whereas in Hollinger’s system it is the blocs in question which give or refuse consent, the existing other blocs building up society also determine the final desired identity. With regard to American Indians, the matter is further complicated by the visible/invisible nature of one bloc, and the diversity of that same one. While the white/non-white arrangement bears no cultural content (Hollinger 24), where white is culturally vacant, Hollinger is right when he states that ethno-racial designations are also culturally burdened. The time when visible differences in features no longer override invisible, inherent similarities would mean the birth of a postethnic America. But what to do with the invisible minority group of American Indians? Referring to higher education student presentation, Stiehm states: “Latinos and African-Americans bear the brunt of resentment and envy. Native Americans are so few in number that they are not usually perceived as displacing others [. . .] The problem, again is rooted in the combination of the visibility of some but not all ‘diverse’ students” (147).

And the problem is not exclusively that of universities and colleges. However invisible or inaudible the Indian minority is declared or believed, I agree with Caws when stating that “some articulate minorities (whose aspirations might theretofore have been in the direction of

assimilation) began to emphasize their own genetic links [. . .], finding in them a source of identity with something other than the dominant culture by which they were surrounded” (373). Milwaukee Indians exemplify such aspirations when first establishing their intertribal organizations, and the Community School. Assimilation has always been a factor in the Indian question, but as a community they struggled to fight against it, rather than succumbing to it. American Indians have held special relations to the issues of race and visibility.

### 2.3. Visibility

Dyson claims that “the goal should not be to transcend race, but to transcend the biased meanings associated with race. Ironically, the very attempt to transcend race by denying its presence reinforces its power to influence perceptions because it gains strength in secrecy” (227). Invisibility both in its literal and figurative meanings thus has to be overcome by American Indians. Dyson concludes that “for race to have a less detrimental effect, it must be brought into the light and openly engaged as a feature of the events and discussions it influences, even if in subtle ways” (228). The following chapters will provide examples where the issue of race was a crucial element in determining the fate of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, and how the more the issue was muted by opponents to the establishment, the louder it was voiced by the Indian community.

As long as visibility is a determining factor in one’s cultural affiliations, choice is a non-existing notion within the pentagon, however desirable it is. Even though the pentagon’s separating borders are to correct wrongs rather than reinforce discriminative practices (Hollinger 35-6), when self-identification and self-determination are at stake, some blocs may decide to remain as separated as they can from other groups. Again, although the borders are drawn along the color line, they “isolate” cultures. It is at this point where Hollinger contradicts his own belief in the importance of communities of descent. While the negative

means to positive ends practice is applicable to other minority groups, American Indians hardly suit this scheme. In many cases it is the Indian community that scorns those members who wish to leave their biologically assigned bloc. It is also the Indian community who rejects voluntary affiliation without biological, historical bases. Double standards determining tribal affiliation, which in this case equals the entire bloc, further complicate the issue.

### Cultural Visibility

As with many other scholarly studies, the peculiarity of the American Indian race is somewhat neglected by Hollinger. In many cases the explanation to such neglect lies in the still existing cultural and racial concepts of the “silent minority,” or that of “the vanishing race.” Furthermore, Indian visibility is hindered by the relatively low numerical presence in American society. The answer to the problem is imbedded in itself. As long as the existing system does not offer explicit definitions to one’s self-identification, the ethno-racial pentagon remains questionable. Latest census data indicates that the total population of 281,421,906 Americans includes 4,119,301 citizens under the category of American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination. Those who claim themselves American Indian or Alaska Native alone count 2, 475,956, the same number in combination with another race is 1,643,345 (“Census”). In this format, census data may not suggest much, however, filling the blocs of the ethno-racial pentagon with these numbers we see that the percentage of citizens of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestry does not reach 3 per cent of the total number of the population. In a following chapter on Wisconsin, I will highlight the significance of numerical presentation in the state, as well.

It is at this point where Hollinger’s theory offers novelty in studying the Indian problem. His “postethnic perspective favors voluntary over involuntary affiliations, balances an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new



communities” (Hollinger 3). The author himself is careful about employing “society” instead of “perspective” and the choice of terminology already foreshadows the difficulties Hollinger envisions, although not in their entirety, in future community formation mechanisms. As the following chapters will show, such modification of the currently existing system is desirable, nevertheless the particular needs and status of the American Indian minority still do not fit this modification, however flexible the new system may seem. Somewhat contradictory to Hollinger’s argument, Caws states that among “advocates of multiculturalism [. . .] a culture of one’s own (that is, one not imposed from without) is one of the conditions or the achievement of an authentic identity” (371). Caws claims that one’s native culture, language and history is “not something one has freely chosen or worked to acquire, which would make it “one’s own” in the strong sense” but it is a weak imposition by “upbringing, family, country” (371). Following this train of thought Caws concludes that whatever forces shape it, the identity eventually achieved may not be associated with any recognizable culture. However ambiguously Caws uses the terminology of “one’s own”, I strongly believe that the culture one is born into cannot be considered an outright imposition of unnatural norms and rules. A postethnic society should be able to allow one to free himself of these bonds and choose any one of the options his affiliations offer. Yet, it should also work reciprocally: the right to affiliate with the ties of one’s personal history and the culture it entails should be freely provided at the individual and also the community level. The Milwaukee Indian Community School is a means to enable American Indians access to their personal history and roots, thus offering them the revolving door which can allow for affiliation with multiple ties.

Caws theory on transcultural and multicultural identities requires a definition of what identity signifies for the American Indian in American society. For Caws “identity, psychologically as well as logically, is a reflexive relation, a relation of myself to myself, but it can be a mediated relation: I relate myself through my interaction with others *and with the*

*world*” (378). While the definition is applicable to any individual, Caws continues as “it is this last component that tends to be overlooked in the dialogical view of identity and whose importance, it seems to me, is seriously and even damagingly underrated when disadvantaged individuals are encouraged to find their identities in cultural identification alone” (378). For the American Indian, cultural identification forums were lacking for a long time, and it is only recently that they found and have founded their own institutions within the multicultural system.

### Cultural Identities

Caws distinguishes between transcultural and multicultural identities, where the former is “the testing and strengthening of the self against constant features of the natural world—the body, the environment (and the culture-independent forms of knowledge that derive from them)” (372). His definition of “multicultural” echoes Hollinger’s postethnicity and Giroux’s insurgent multiculturalism: “the enrichment of the self through acquaintance with and cultivation of what is found to be the most rewarding in all the human products and practices with which one comes into contact” (Caws 372). While Hollinger and Giroux treat the issue of multiculturalism more as a communal notion, Caws concentrates on the individual. It is significant to mention that American Indian identity, especially in the case of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, is inseparable from group identity, even if the formerly important tribal designations have lost some of their weight.

This dissertation analyses the formation and function of the foundation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, and treats the institution as a case study for Indian people’s role and status on the multicultural scene. While it is a representation of local action, it highlights the problems of American Indians on the national scale. Both in the history of the foundation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School and as regards federal Indian policy,

emphasis falls on the term “voluntary.” Postethnicity is to “promote solidarities of wide scope that incorporate people with different ethnic and racial backgrounds” (Hollinger 3). Such an appreciation for the varieties of ethnic connections appears to be the only device to counteract the forces that shape and cement the blocs of the pentagon. Hollinger continues his thesis by stating that “a postethnic perspective resists the grounding of knowledge and moral values in blood and history” (3) and it is this aspect of postethnicity where it becomes a tool to utilize in the case study of the Milwaukee Indian Community School.

As we will see, very often Indian people have been in a difficult situation to define their own cultural boundaries separating from and integrating them into one or more blocs of the ethno-racial pentagon. This particularity was imposed from the outside in the forms of various federal Indian policies and partly as a result of these, it accounts for the conflicts within the Indian communities themselves. Hollinger himself admits that the postethnic formula is not a remedy to all problems, but offers a stage for the distinctiveness of cultures “within which issues in education and politics can be discussed” (3). I find Giroux’s term “insurgent multiculturalism” somewhat synonymous with Hollinger’s postethnicity. Insurgent implying the need for a revolutionary change, although still worded as multiculturalism Giroux calls for a new society in which:

[M]ulticulturalism becomes more than a critical referent for interrogating the racist representations and practices of the dominant culture, it also provides a space in which the criticism of cultural practices is inextricably linked to the production of cultural spaces marked by the formation of new identities and pedagogical practices that offers a challenge to the racist, patriarchal, and sexist principles embedded in American society and schooling. (337)

Hollinger focuses on the ethno-racial inequities when he enumerates the division of the United States population under the categories of “African American, Asian American,

Euro-American, Indigenous, and Latino segments” (Hollinger 8). In many cases even the labels themselves vary as the United States Census 2000 form shows. The following analysis will target the problematic nature of studying American Indian culture in the currently existing structure of multicultural America, beginning with the obstacles one might face from a Western point of view.

#### 2.4. Problems in American Indian Studies

The first and most complicated aspect of an analysis to explore present-day Indian country in the United States is the undefined nature of the phenomenon. The figurative notion of Indian country within the United States is problematic when the United States itself lacks explanation. The heterogeneous nature of the United States cannot be explained through multicultural terms any longer, as it is “inhibited from meeting new challenges by the generality of the commitments to which they owe their own existence” (Hollinger 2). While Hollinger speaks of the 1980s and 1990s, earlier attempts to define the American character have failed, as well. Declaring the American identity “unfinished” and “incomplete,” D.H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature* provides the two explanations lying behind the impossibility of defining the American identity. Published in 1924, the British writer identified two characteristics of the American consciousness. The first reason, Lawrence says, lies in the “awkward tendency [of Americans] to define themselves by what they were not,” secondly, the tendency to “savor both civilized order and savage freedom at the same time” (qtd. in Deloria *Playing* 3). Significantly, beginning with the Boston Tea Party playing Indian has been a “persistent tradition” in the course of American culture. Although paradoxically hindered by the real presence of the imitated, the American consciousness owes its birth to December 16, 1773. The event perfectly catches the ambivalent

association/dissociation of white America with American Indians in the very masquerade they perform:

The American Revolution was both the beginning of the nation's struggle to assume an essential identity and the culmination of century-old traditions of popular rebellion. [. . .] At the Tea Party one can witness one process [which] came to fruition in the new consciousness that was America. With the other, white Americans began a still-unfinished, always-contested effort to find an ideal sense of national Self and to figure out what its new mode of consciousness might be all about. (Deloria *Playing* 9)

In *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria explores the particular status of native inhabitants from the very beginning of white-Indian or Indian-white relationships in the New World. *Playing Indian* is deeply rooted in historical, social and cultural relations, yet, it never allows for the Indian perspective. The interaction of the two cultures is presented unilaterally, the cultural borrowing is always carried out by the colonizers, beginning with the Boston Tea Party and ending with New Age Counterculture Indians. For Deloria, all the notions, all the resulting controversies derive from the white standpoint. *Playing Indian* suggests that the one "mimicked" and "imitated" will have an equal share in the evaluation of such a masquerade. The postethnic perspective would imply an equal appreciation of values and a status more than that of the passive observer, or distorted model. However, an Indian publication under the title *Playing White* would bear a different significance: the familiar concepts of "apples" and "Uncle Tomahawks" or "plastic medicine men" and "the wannabe" would be degrading with none of the exotic and sometimes philanthropic tone that the chapters of *Playing Indian* carry. Added to this is the issue of racial unity. The above mentioned terms exemplify how "the rhetorics of race loyalty and racial authenticity are almost naturally clustered around the rhetoric of racial unity" (Dyson 222). While at the time of the first contact with Europeans the

question was less significant, today Dyson's terminology originally used to describe "blackness" may just as well be applied to Indianness.

In the opening stages of settling the new world, destruction and extirpation seemed inevitable. While a nation was being constructed, a need for a national history, other than that of fugitive Englishmen, surfaced with search for a new history, that of their own, within the place the settlers occupied and meant to inhabit. What role should and could that entail for the American Indian? Ever since then, the pendulum has been swinging between the extremes of destruction and assimilation. From the Indian point of view, there is very little difference between the two. Yet, assimilation offers loopholes, whereby a given minority may find its own voice. Jean-Paul Sartre in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, narrates the history of how the colonial elite, trained by the colonizers, educated by its own oppressors, gained its own voice, and began to question the existing order by saying "You are making us into monstrosities, your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart" (Fanon 8). The original problem of wanting to have the cake and eat it too remains unsolved, and, as Philip Deloria claims in the spirit of Sartre's argument, such "racial imaginings and relations" (5) made an equal impact on the American Indian minority.

## 2.5. Decolonization

While the association may seem a bit far-fetched, Fanon's view on the history of colonized people and their awakening to their self-consciousness may be utilized in the analysis of the relationship between American Indians and American society as a whole. In the preface, Sartre highlights one of the cornerstones of Fanon's argument: "in order to fight against us the former colony must fight against itself [. . .] all internal barriers must break down (Fanon 11). The United States underwent a similar process in the 1950s and 1960s, and as we will see in

the following chapters on the formation and operation of intertribal organizations or the foundation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School the internal barriers had been, if only to some degree, shattered by 1968.

As the United States successfully enforced some policies of divide and rule, the need for communal action against oppressive forces of the majority is not evident to come into being and operate. Although Fanon relies on examples of countries colonized by world powers, we may utilize his theory about the oppressed against the oppressor on the American Indian-American scene too.

In the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon states: “National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (35). Decolonization in the American Indian case is a different notion from what Fanon witnesses in Algeria or South Africa. However, it is impossible to discard the similarities taking place on the multicultural American scene with regard to the native born population of American Indians, and their efforts to speak with their own voice. The stakes are as high as in the French colony of Algeria, although methods superficially differ due to the historical differences of colonization. The opening stages in all similar situations show violent scenes, and students of American Indian history need not trace such examples further back than the arrival of the first handful of settlers at Plymouth Rock. The myths reflecting the colonizers’ need to come to terms with the original inhabitants of the New World reflect their desire to work towards a state where these original inhabitants would find their place assigned by the newcomers. Added to this is the missionary impulse strongly present in all cases of Western powers thrusting their world views on colonized people. This is not to say that the recent establishment of the Milwaukee Indian Community School is a direct descendent of such forces. Yet, its birth, its coming to being, originate in that first

contact, and not only by the physical nature of the encounter. Fanon continues his argument by claiming that “decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (35). We should add that it is not only the replacement of species but, in many cases, it is the creation, the birth of that new species of men. The veracity of this statement is supported by the existence of MICS amidst a supposedly multicultural community, and also by the generations of American Indians who obtained an education to enable them to cope with their racial minority status and prepare them to function within the larger scope of American society. A postethnic society should be ready and willing to give space to these new species of men without desiring them to be part of both or any of the cultures at hand. Interpreted in the context of the revolving door metaphor, neither as a group nor as an individual with certain affiliations, should anybody be denied access to any or either platform.

Fanon establishes the chronology of decolonization where, at each stage, the opposing forces of the colonizer and the colonized operate. His theory becomes veritable to this present analysis when he claims that the first stage, that of violence, is also the time of identity formation. “It is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates that existence” (Fanon 36). Fanon is less explicit about how the image of the native is perpetuated, as opposed to Philip Deloria who says that the relationship between native inhabitants and colonizers were established at the point of arrival and at the time when the latter had to struggle with the “spirit of the place” to build the country, so did he had to nullify the spirit itself. Two concomitant solutions arose with regard to the native population: destroy or assimilate (Deloria 4). The perpetuation of the native image is analyzed by Deloria when he states the noble savage image is a necessary notion for the newcomers in order to strengthen their own historical positions at the time of settling the new land.



However, it is impossible for the settler to foresee the time which allows the native to revolt against his assigned status. As a more concrete vision of decolonization, Fanon's theory rests solely on the act of revolution, where an entire social structure is altered from the bottom upwards. In their territorial minority status, American Indians had a different historical experience and different methods to change the existing system. Yet, instances of the radical activism of the American Indian Movement, and more peaceful attempts to alter the existing order are all proof of founding separate establishments, thus harmonious with Fanon's ideal.

Again, Fanon's theory can be used when defining the American Indian's place in multicultural America. Analogous to Hollinger's system of the ethno-racial pentagon, Fanon speaks of the compartmentalized nature of the colonized world. Not only is this strengthened by the "existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans" (Fanon 36) but also by the creation of reservations, by the notion of Indian country with its invisible nature in the United States. Compartments are constructed to secure "reciprocal exclusivity, [. . .] the reservation is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute" (Fanon 37). This imposed evil reputation will result in what Fanon believes the only remedy for the colonized. Violence is to bring about a revolution with the aim to decolonize. It is to break down the walls of those compartments and create entrance and exit doors which would operate on mutual consent. Although the walls may well be shattered "reciprocal exclusivity" implies the need of those inhabiting the previously massive construction to maintain some of the barriers. Fanon's native, here the American Indian minority, the group enclosed in the native compartment, may strive for the maintenance of some of the already existing categories, although for very explicitly defined reasons.

"The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, "the others" (Fanon 40). When discussing Indian history the migration factor cannot be left out. When turning to recent Indian history, and the

postethnic nature of American cities, it will become impossible to identify those “others” as reference points due to their transient nature. Not only does this apply to the American Indian communities. As Henry Louis Gates points out: “the ritualized invocation of the Otherness is losing its capacity to engender new forms of knowledge [. . .] the margin may have exhausted its strategic value as a position from which to theorize the very antinomies that produced it as an object of study” (214). With regard to American Indian migration to cities, the matter is further complicated by the “multicultural” nature of the Indian community itself. As Gates believes, if Hollinger’s postethnic America materializes, the need to find “the other” will diminish in significance. However, even in such an ideal state, the bonds cannot be freed. Added to this is the complexity of urban Indian communities. Postethnicity is tangible, however idealistic it is, but it is impossible to require American Indian communities to step beyond their multicultural existence. When constructing communities not of descent but of voluntary affiliations, being Indian will still be obligatory as a point of reference. The chapter on the formation of Milwaukee’s intertribal self-help organizations will provide evidence to this fact.

Fanon’s violent colonization continues with the settlers’ attempts to destroy their own creation of the colonized in the form of annihilating “native social forms, [. . .] [breaking] up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life” (40). Explicit forms of such actions can be observed throughout white-Indian relations. How it affects contemporary issues is a more complex question. The upheaval surrounding the creation of MICS included antagonism towards Indian bingo, urban casino site plantations, and urban reservation creations. These exemplify Fanon’s theory of “the war on national economy” (40). Attempting to involve an exclusive group of Indian leaders in policy making is interpreted as the destruction of social structure. Yet, the process is reversed with self-awareness and self-determination. Struggling for, and establishing alternative institutions,

Indian people took an active part in decolonization. The creation of the Indian Community School, although a minor example on the national scale, is evidence of the effort to recreate some of the social structure lost in the waves of colonization.

“Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. [. . .] The native is declared insensible to ethics, he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values” (41) continues Fanon. If the statement is verified, we may call in Philip Deloria’s analysis of the numerous examples where American society borrowed from native values. These cultural borrowings did not require mutual consent and by the time they had reached maturity their Indian origin was hardly recognizable. Fanon declares the colonizers’ views to be unilateral. However, many instances of Indian culture and history contradict this statement. A well-known phenomenon is Sequoia’s syllabary, but, to return to current issues, the establishment of the Indian Community School is also an expression of how imposed structures should and could be utilized by the oppressed if they prove necessary and applicable in the native world. Christianity, as a device of colonization, the imposing of God on native beliefs was also changed in the kind of revolution, although bloodless in this case, Fanon supports. The Congregation of the Great Spirit, the Indian Catholic Church in Milwaukee stands as an exemplary case in this matter.

The above mentioned attempts and deeds of the colonizer to alter the native to an image which most fits the colonizing process can be detected in the American Indian minority’s relationship to their “colonizers,” mainstream American society. Even though Fanon’s argument on the notion of colonization runs parallel to Indian-white relations, some of his theory may be questioned due to the particularities of the American Indian situation. Deloria’s counterargument on the “valueless” nature of native communities stems from his Indian point of view, even though he concludes that the white/majority culture has profited from cohabiting with Indians. Hollinger and Fanon represent the two ends of the same

process. Hollinger is the messenger of the ideal future conceived in Fanon's revolutionary decolonization.

### Points of Reference

One explanation behind the difficulties of understanding American Indian culture, or the lack of such explicit explanation, and the relatively little amount of cultural and literary studies targeting it, may lie in the notions forming the core of culture studies, and missing in American Indian cultures. Mother countries with their clearly defined geographical and emotional boundaries separate "us" from "them" and "them" from "us." While the entire continental United States may be perceived as the mother country of the present-day 2.5 million Indians, distances other minorities have had to overcome to be in contact with their own do not exist in the case of American Indians. As opposed to this lack of physical space and distance there is a figurative Indian country: any place where Indians interact as Indians. Although such vastness of Indian country may seem to make the Indian situation easier to comprehend, this fact also contributes to the problems of the Indian minority. There are very few tribes who inhabit the land they once knew as their own. Scattered all over the continent, invisible and sometimes inaudible to each other, American Indian political power has been difficult to concentrate into one effective whole. If Chicano, African American, Irish American mother countries exist, in what direction should Indians proceed to arrive at their cultural roots. And whose destination would that be? Should such an arrival be a merely physical acceptance of, let's say, reservation borders? Is such a destination able to entail emotional and cultural attributes? Conquered to the utmost extent may this home land stand as an encouraging symbol of Indian self-determination?

Additional difficulties arise from the complexity of American Indian culture itself. Minority groups reject being viewed and treated as a single, homogeneous “them” as opposed to “us.” Wording their grievances in the majority culture’s language, they face even greater obstacles. The question whether to create a separate sphere of existence or continue inhabiting the existing ones through attempts to reshape them to their own needs often arises in minority issues. The obligation to define the means of bettering their own situation in terms of majority culture institutions already leads to a sense of inability. Such inability springs from the lack of cultural security, resulting from the old one being destroyed, lost or distorted, and the new being the exclusive product of majority culture. The revolving door metaphor would ease the tension between these two extremes of cultural perspective. While the ethno-racial blocs, except for the Euro bloc, may be a creation of the response to the forces of oppression, such an understanding of the system would undermine its cultural content.

A counterexample to this is the creation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, where the first students were dropouts, if not push-outs, of the state public school system. As an answer to this problem of growing intensity Milwaukee Indians organized themselves to establish a separate system within the system. Thus, Milwaukee is an exemplary success story of how to defeat misunderstanding and miscommunication. Complicated by the use of numerous languages, tribal customs, hierarchies, culture groups, disagreeing on crucial issues affecting the Indian community of the United States, unity within one ethno-racial bloc is very difficult to achieve. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, this fact hinders cooperation within and outside Indian communities.

## 2.6. Education and Postethnicity

As this dissertation is concerned with the creation of a separate educational institution, Giroux’s insurgent multiculturalism in the context of curricula, education and pedagogy

becomes serviceable in the history of the Indian Community School. Since it grew out of the problems experienced by a large number of Indian students in the public school system, Giroux's insurgency stands as an applicable term. His insurgent multiculturalism is fought on two fronts: "who gets to create public culture" and "the needs of a massively shifting student population and students and their families for whom schools increasingly are perceived as merely one more instrument of repression" (325). With the issues of multiculturalism and/or postethnicity gaining more importance and population changes requiring responses to altering situations, pedagogy is becoming a sphere more and more political. With regard to minority groups politics could never have been omitted from educational issues. What Giroux envisions, though, is contrary to Hollinger's ideal. As opposed to postethnicity, Giroux intends to "shift the discussion of multiculturalism to a pedagogical terrain in which relations of power and racialized identities become paramount as part of a language of critique and possibility" (326). The question pertaining to such a discussion is whether racialized identities in a separate institution could and would be participants of the debate. Quoting James Baldwin, Giroux draws the conclusion that issues surrounding multiculturalism are fundamentally "race and identity" (327). For various reasons, it is very difficult for a student of American Indian cultures to find sources on the relationship between the Indian community and multiculturalism. However, as mentioned above certain parallels may be drawn with other minority communities. As for Baldwin, multiculturalism's most burning issue is that of whiteness. The power and privileges that whiteness entails, determine the relationship of other groups to American society. It is this interpretation of multiculturalism that invokes Giroux's question: "Whether people are speaking within or outside a privileged space, and whether such spaces provide the conditions for different groups to listen to each other differently to address how the racial economies of privilege and power work in American society" (327). Without naming the notion multiculturalism, Henry Louis Gates Jr asks the American public

to “try to think of American culture as a conversation among different voices” (204). In this sense, the Indian Community School is an institution where American Indian students may learn to speak the different language required to be understood by the majority. It is also a safe haven where difference may not be muted and silenced. In addition, it is the cradle for generations of Indian youth to “unlearn” the privileges of those they have seen considered the majority. I borrowed the term “unlearn” from Giroux who, quoting Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins, expands its scope to “group particularism” whereby the need arises to challenge the “belief that blackness, femaleness, or Africanness [and we might add, Indianness] are essential, unchanging qualities” (327). For the parents who started ICS, the establishment of a separate institution to meet the needs of their children seemed the only solution to reassert their Indianness. In view of the above quotation, it may seem to counteract such an interpretation of multiculturalism. Yet, the alterable, unessential nature of Indianness can best be interpreted under circumstances not threatening its legacy. Giroux is echoing Hollinger when he states that critical multiculturalism “means understanding, engaging, and transforming the diverse histories, cultural narratives, representations, and institutions that produce racism and other forms of discrimination” (328). Just as in Hollinger’s ethno-racial pentagon the Other cannot be viewed as “a disruptive outsider” (Giroux 329) so does the voluntary nature of affiliation appear in how it “challenges the boundaries of cultural and racial difference as sites of exclusion and discrimination while simultaneously rewriting the script of cultural difference as part of a broader attempt to expand and deepen the imperatives of multicultural and multiracial democracy” (Giroux 329). Giroux sees schools and educational institutions, as well as educators, as borders which allow students to become “border crossers” and educate students in the mechanism of the culture or cultures they inhabit (330). In his view, conservatives “privatize” self-determinism (332) but he adds that no understanding of community, citizenship or public culture is possible without a shared

conception of social justice which is precisely what is missing in mainstream discussions. “Increasingly, conservatives also have used the language of individual rights, that is, the right of individuals to think and act as they please, to attack any discourse or program that questions the existence of social inequalities” (Giroux 333). Examples to such focus on individual protest constantly arise around the creation of ICS. May it be the Coast Guard takeover, the urban reservation request, or the protests against Indian bingo, though they all were voiced beneficially for the non-Indian community, these acts support the conservative misinterpretation of multiculturalism.

### The Common Ground

Arthur Schlesinger’s *Disuniting America* is often cited as an opponent to pluralistic or multicultural thinking. His fear of the “ethnic upsurge” that threatens to become a full-fledged counterrevolution against the alleged common culture and the “American Ideal of assimilation” (Giroux 334) yet again raises the issue of common culture. However, as contradictory as it may seem, though, Schlesinger’s argument does not question the legacy of the existence of institutions like ICS. If assimilation is interpreted as a notion that allows one to act accordingly to majority rules without giving up one’s affiliations with other, voluntary formulations, ICS serves just this purpose. Strengthening the Indian identity, or, even establishing one, enables students to be prepared to enter the postethnic sphere in the ethno-racial pentagon. An exact definition of one’s own identity assists the individual in participating in the multicultural discussions mentioned above. What Schlesinger called “ethnic upsurge” is counteracted by Giroux’s belief in the constant reexamination and “rejuvenation of the strengths and limits of its traditions” (335). Voluntary affiliations, where possible, may be one mode of materializing this process. Interaction between cultures so far isolated by the walls of the ethno-racial pentagon ideally benefits all participants. Yet, if



reevaluation and opening do not take place, the result is a dangerous fundamentalism.

Quoting Bhikhu Parekh

The traditionalists' refusal of cultural hybridity and differences and the fixity of identity and culture promotes a dangerous type of fundamentalism. [. . .] When a group feels besieged and afraid of losing its past in exchange for a nebulous future, it lacks the courage to critically reinterpret its fundamental principles [. . .] it declares them inviolate and reduces them to a neat and easily enforceable package of beliefs and rituals. (qtd. in Giroux 335)

In "Essentialism and Complexities" Dyson expresses the same dangers of "viewing [black] culture as static or one-dimensional" and adds that a culture is not "drawn forward by a single historical end" (221). The history of the establishment of the Milwaukee Indian Community School is an exemplary case in showing how to face a future different from the one assigned by the majority society. Fundamental principles in such a case may be difficult to interpret but the school's curriculum, its financial operation, and cooperation with the city establishment are measures to prove the legacy of the above statement. To return to education and how the Indian Community School may serve American society at large, I quote Stiehm who claims that

diversity almost guarantees complexity which, in turn, almost insures misunderstanding and error. But diversity also stimulates, challenges, and increases the range of possibilities and responses. [. . .] Diversity may diminish in importance. If it does, I hope it will be because it has become natural and not because it has succumbed to backlash and its critiques. (154)

## **CHAPTER 3: FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY: AN OVERVIEW**

- 3.1.** The General Allotment Act (1887)
- 3.2.** The Indian Citizenship Act (1924)
- 3.3.** The Indian Reorganization Act (1934)
- 3.4.** Termination (1954) and Relocation (1955)
- 3.5.** The Indian Child Welfare Act (1978)
- 3.6.** Concluding Notes

### **3. FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY: AN OVERVIEW**

This chapter is constructed to provide an overview of the United States' Indian policy through representative federal acts directed at solving the Indian problem. Both "solve" and "problem" express the standpoint of the United States Government and the attitude with which American Indians were viewed by mainstream society. The steadily growing visibility of the "Indian problem" pressured the government into action and, thus, the twentieth century has come to see numerous major orders. The ones discussed here were selected out of the many due to the issues they address. Government policies pertaining to the definition of Indian country will be discussed separately in Chapter 4 and others in Chapter 5 on Wisconsin to highlight the mechanics the state used to handle its own Indian problem.

Questions of voting, self-government, land possession are all key determiners of the quality of one's minority status within the dominant society. The peculiar standing of the American Indian minority adds to the complex interpretations of the federal acts applied to resolve these issues directed at solving the Indian problem. Ever since the first contact with the Native inhabitants of the land Europeans offered the American Indian two choices only: assimilate or face extermination.

By the end of the nineteenth century extermination became a less realistic concept for the federal government due to the costs of fighting and the increasing number of philanthropic attempts to save the man, if not the Indian. The directives I have chosen to discuss, directly or indirectly, have had an effect on the present issue of American Indians in multicultural America. Individual treaties will appear in following chapters, but the ones explicated here bear more significance on the national scale.

Although the concept of the ethno-racial pentagon did not exist at the time of the first acts, the blocs' populations already experienced the presence of walls separating minority cultures. When Hollinger lists the five-structure distinction of the United States population, it

is the product of the changing climate of opinion in the twentieth century. Even though postethnicity did not exist until World War II, its roots are embedded in federal policies shaping the later blocs of the pentagon. The metaphor of the revolving door cannot be applied at this point in time. Yet, its place is designated by the policies of the federal government carried out to solve the Indian problem.

Most of the acts were attempts to make the Indian space disappear so that there would not be a need nor chance to return to one's Indianness, thus freeing the government of its responsibility to provide federal assistance to Indian tribes. In this context, the revolving door is rather a one-way exit from Indian culture, towards which individuals, but not tribal entities, are encouraged, if not forced, to be absorbed into mainstream America. Some allowance is provided to remain in the Indian space only with the belief that it will entirely disappear and would not form a larger base from which American Indian culture could flourish. The possibility of staying within the American Indian bloc was rather an expression of disbelief in ever "solving" the entire Indian problem.

Independence as sought by the American Indian nations of the United States and the extent to which the United States allowed or hindered such attempts is an underlying issue of various government policies directed at the assimilation of Indian people. Self-determination is defined as the power a given tribal entity possesses in controlling affairs within its territorial boundaries (O'Brien 45). Although the pendulum swung many times between the two extremes of assimilation and self-determination, the most harmful effects Indians saw in losing control over their own affairs lay with the opposing understanding and interests of self-determination. The federal government discarded the tribal element, and would acknowledge Indian self-determination exclusively at the individual level contrary to the Indian perception of the tribal nature of self-government. In terms of interests, the United States intended to deal

with individuals, while Indians sought a special relationship with the federal government as independent nations.

Historians Charles Olson and Raymond Wilson regard some of the acts as expressions of “the need to slow down” (161) the speed with which the United States intended to assimilate her Indian nations. The statement is valid and verified by the rather ambiguous intentions of government decisions. The discussion of such policies is inevitable to establish a historical context and root the efforts of urban Indian groups in a political framework. Such a historical overview provides a much better understanding of the case study represented by the establishment of the Indian Community School to be discussed further in following chapters. Forces that shaped the Milwaukee Indian community within the urban environment will be more explicit in view of federal Indian policy. As urban Indian communities obtained the right to be treated as independent entities only since the 1960s, they will not be analyzed separately here unless it is relevant to the nature of the given policy. The historical overview also provides a basis for the successive chapters, exploring the State of Wisconsin, the notion of Indian country and the nature of urban Indian communities.

During the nineteenth century the United States government implemented numerous policies to assimilate the American Indian. Most historians regard the 1889 massacre at Wounded Knee to be the closing point of armed Indian resistance. Yet, the end of the treaty making period in 1871 and the obstruction of collective Indian land ownership had already paved the way for the last Indian war. Possession of tribal lands is a key issue in determining the status of the American Indian in mainstream American society and it is also a significant factor in the Indian communities’ self-perception. Thus, the analysis of federal Indian policy must appropriately begin with a measure targeted at the destruction of tribal land bases: the General Allotment Act of 1887.

### 3.1. The General Allotment Act (1887)

The General Allotment Act was to destroy first all that was left of the Indian spirit by terminating tribal land bases. Although the year 1871 was meant to be the end of the treaty making period, the United States government found new means to retain some of the lands assigned to Indians in treaties. Formerly granted reservations included in the numerous treaties between the United States and any given tribe were broken up into parcels of land and ownership of 180-acre or smaller tracts was assigned to individuals and family units. The rest of the land was offered to anyone for purchase with the idea that the proceeds would be reinvested in the government's integration process of the American Indian. The federal government designed a scheme by which the sums thus gained were to be used in the education of Indian people to acquire small-farmer skills and convert to an independent, agricultural way of life.

The notion of independence in this context is defined by the United States and its political bodies, and not by the Indian communities affected by the act. Ideally, the thus trained Indian population was to become self-sufficient and independent of all government agencies for annuities and other aids for their survival. Yet, this notion also implied the loss of tribal cultures. By losing tribal land bases, Indian cultures would be void of a literal and figurative home ground. Many foresaw the problems buried under the integrationist slogan of the allotment policy. The scheme of utilizing surplus lands resulted in the fact that two-thirds of the formerly established reservations' territory was sold out of Indian ownership by the mid-1930s (O'Brien 43). Thus lands, formerly secured by the treaties, fell out of collective Indian control. Although the guidelines designed to govern the purchase of allotted and surplus reservation lands were to implement federal plans to convert American Indians into small-farmers, they did not achieve this desired aim. Experts predicted Indian assimilation into white culture would take approximately twenty-five years, and federal tax exemption

during these years was supposed to assist Indian people in making a rather tolerable agricultural living. Another rule secured that allotments were not to be alienated for the same period of time.

Small-scale farming did not prove to be a success. Firstly, the policy was introduced at a time when such agricultural methods were giving way to large-scale farming. The policy of allotment disregarded natural phenomena and some of the lands distributed among families were by no means suitable for farming. Also, many of the tribes lacked the tradition of family farming, and very little assistance was provided in terms of practical advice. Furthermore, the proximity of relatively well to do white neighbors who, at any time, could buy out Indian property created a rather insecure situation with regard to the rapidly shrinking tribal land base. Although tax exemption eased the burden of individual farmers, it did not compensate for the capital necessary for economic investment. Thus, white farmers in the proximity of reservations had the opportunity to rent Indian allotments for a nominal fee. More problems arose when allotted land became an issue of inheritance. The small acreage was divided into even smaller units, disabling heirs to make a living on farming. Since every single transaction was under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was entitled to determine the fate of allotted parcels, much depended on the bureaucracy the Bureau represented. Corruption, which posed a threat from the beginning of the BIA's existence, seriously hindered a beneficial and effective handling of matters from the Indian point of view.

The first and rather practical step of diminishing the land base of any tribal entity directly led to the second, more political aim. Just like all other government decisions concerning the Indian peoples of the United States of America, this act also had two dimensions: on the one hand, the government could carry out and fulfill its role as guardian of its wards. In the long run, however, assimilation was the ultimate goal: by forcing Indian nations, or rather, individuals and family units to conform to mainstream ideals and way of

life, the government was to solve the Indian problem by making the Indian disappear. The General Allotment Act may also be interpreted as the revision of the formerly favored treaty-making policy. However successful and pragmatic the concept of reservations was, it failed to work in every case. As the Wounded Knee massacre suggests, the radical and quite war-like Plains tribes did not want to integrate, much less assimilate into Euro-American society and culture.

There were other reasons why reservations could not be considered an ultimate bliss to solve the Indian problem. Some regarded them as possible breeding grounds for allied Indian resistance against government actions. The General Allotment Act answered all these doubts by shifting the Indian problem to the individual or family level and instead of negotiating with tribes, the federal government had an easier access to control people's everyday lives. With the loss of tribal land base, tribal governments also lost their say in tribal matters, since allotments were owned by family units. In the long run, tribal governments were expected to cease functioning as political bodies with power, however little that was, over Indian matters and this would have completed the assimilationist procedure.

Vine Deloria argues that the most significant implication of the General Allotment Act is not included in the act itself, but rather in the amendments which modified the original intentions of the government. It is explicit that the act, by assigning power to the president of the United States to decide single-handedly over allotting and purchasing lands, is a key factor in assimilationist attempts. More problematic is, however, the role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which, under the amendments, was to gain more control and act on behalf of designated American Indians (Deloria "Evolution"247). Moreover, the "educational" implications to train Indians as farmers lost their original impetus in view of how the Bureau, under the control of the Department of the Interior, gained more administrative authority over Indian matters.



Like all the actions to “solve” the Indian problem, the General Allotment Act also had philanthropic implications. Many, who wanted to save the American Indian, joined the assimilationist circle with the belief that the only way for native peoples of the country to survive is to assimilate into the dominant society. This implied the inevitable loss of Indian cultures, but, in their view, it was a rather small price in exchange for American citizenship. Collective land ownership, the Indian agricultural methods and the cultural differences were obstacles towards total integration. The fact that Indian people did not intend to be integrated, much less to abandon their cultures for a granted acreage of land, was not an issue taken into consideration by friends of the Indian. The door was opened wide by the government to drag American Indians into a space where, superficially at least, they could “upgrade” their status to that of mainstream Americans.

### 3.2. The Indian Citizenship Act (1924)

In between the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the mid 1920s, the fate of Indian nations faced serious threats. Although the period of armed conflicts and Indian wars was terminated at Wounded Knee, survivors of the wars had other challenges to overcome. The General Allotment Act was to assimilate the Indian into white culture, by altering tribal ways of life and overwriting them by mainstream ideals. One concomitant of allotment was the promise of citizenship to those who underwent its process. It is at this point that American Indians were allowed to form and enter their own ethno-racial bloc, but yet again, it was not intended to provide free commuting between Indian and mainstream cultures.

The same year Congress passed the second Quota Act restricting immigration saw the extension of franchise to the indigenous peoples of the United States. By the time the Indian Citizenship Act was passed in 1924, many, but not all, people of Indian origin had become citizens of the United States through various means. Those who were not covered by the

allotment procedures or other measures became citizens of the United States in 1924. The issue of citizenship became relevant during World War I, when many American Indians sought a way out of reservation poverty through conscription in the US Army. Economic factors of the rather impossible reservation existence are only one explanation for the large number of soldiers of Indian origin. Indians volunteered in America's defense as "loyal allies as pledged in treaties rather than patriotic citizens" (Lurie "Historical" 74). The distinction is significant from the Indian point of view, and was one of the cornerstones of the argument over the dubious perception of the benefits of American citizenship.

A key element, if not the most significant factor of this argument, is that of franchise, since the value of minority status is measured by the representative power the group possesses in the power system. American Indians, as a minority, obtained the right to vote quite late in the history of the United States. The extension of franchise to American Indians may well be considered as a manifestation of cooptation. The notion signifies "specific expansions of participation" (Lacy 86) in the American power system. In this given case, "expansion of participation" is less problematic to interpret than the notion expressed by "specific." The relatively small number of citizens of American Indian blood could hardly have had an effective enough representation in government matters. Thus, the Act was more of an attempt to pacify the "stirring of "the national conscience" (Schushky qtd. in Lacy 92). The issue is further complicated by the fact that the 1924 passing of the Citizenship Act did not bring full-fledged franchise to all American Indian nations and individuals. States, such as Arizona and New Mexico, did not provide the right to vote until the end of the 1940s. In view of the fact that these two states hosted relatively large numbers of Indian populations, the will to expand political participation becomes very questionable.

The fact that many Indians consider themselves members of their own nations first and American citizens only second, is a notion that strengthens the idea that Indians perceived the

Citizenship Act as more symbolic than a well-intended sharing of power. As it was revealed by the numerous voluntary conscriptions during World War I, Indians still preferred to be viewed as citizens of independent nations, who, in their own right, participate in the matters of their allies. Through voting rights, the wards, as established by Chief Justice John Marshall, did receive a nominal power to interfere with their guardians' handling of their own affairs. Still, this was quite a small price offered by the American government to compensate for all the inequalities American Indians were still to face.

Olson and Wilson list three viewpoints in regard to extending a blanket-citizenship to all American Indians who had not obtained it through the General Allotment Act or applied for it as veterans of World War I. Friends of American Indians called for citizenship "on moral grounds, arguing that common sense and decency dictated citizenship" (Olson and Wilson 84). This aspect is analogous with the attempt to calm the national consciousness. The second argument for incorporating Indians in voting was to be "the final step toward integrating native Americans into the general society" (Olson and Wilson 84). This was also a well-intentioned attempt, yet, the third aspect counteracted it. For most American Indians the most threatening issue of citizenship was the interest "in ending the special trust status on native American land [and to] break BIA control over the reservation" (Olson and Wilson 84). This last argument of the federal government provoked much criticism from full-blood reservation residents, fearing the loss of their special relationship with the United States, and thus losing federal assistance vital for reservation living.

If "the need to slow down" the assimilationist intentions is an appropriate expression, the Indian Citizenship Act should be considered a complete halt. From the federal point of view, the benevolent nature of this Indian policy is unquestionable. Even the most ardent opponents of assimilation should agree that the Voting Rights Act did prevent the future disappearance of Indian cultures. However, the interpretation of the act's consequences raises

some questions. In view of the fact that gaining American citizenship did not require the loss of tribal citizenship, Indian nations should have been satisfied with what they achieved by 1924. Yet, multiple affiliations, that is still holding tribal citizenship while being an American citizen, do not only complicate political issues, but question the whole sense of belonging as well. As citizenship was not seen by Indians as completely positive, and it bore the possibility of severing federal ties with reservation residents subsequently affecting tribal matters, multiple affiliation in this case is rather ambiguous. While Indians favored tribal membership over American citizenship, the wish to hold multiple affiliations did not manifest. The 1924 act further confused the standing of Indian populations by the fact that states within whose boundaries a given Indian reservation was located had the power to withhold the Indians' right to vote. By arguing that their Indian populace was under federal jurisdiction, and due to the unclarified status of the American Indian, states could refrain from Indian voting registration. Since it was the individual "state [which] possessed the power to determine voting eligibility, Congress had little power to protect the right to vote" (Olson and Wilson 84). Just as in the case of black voters, literacy tests and proofs of ancestry were obstacles American Indians experienced even after obtaining franchise.

The 1920s saw snail-paced changes in solving the Indian problem and first-class citizenship was not satisfactorily ensured by the Act of 1924. Being protected by the United States Constitution would imply a strengthening of the Indian spirit and growing awareness of Indian communities. Yet, the right to vote was abridged along with the right of the free practice of religion. The right to education, though not a Constitutional right, was also seriously violated by the boarding school system still in full operation at the time.

With their low numerical presence, American Indians, although now citizens of the United States, were unable to counteract decisions violating their constitutional rights. Moreover, the most plaguing problem of the Citizenship Act is its complete blindness to the

strong Indian need for tribal recognition. Yet again, the door between Indianness and Americanness was flung open by the federal act with the intention that the former is going to be neglected by individual Indians, thus the Indian problem may come to a close. As it has been a constant hindrance in Indian and American relations, the former's cultural practices were neglected in federal decision making. While mainstream America experienced the struggles of women and African American voting rights, it had difficulties understanding American Indian reluctance to the Citizenship Act arising from the experiences of the harmful effects of the General Allotment Act. The fear of losing cultural distinctness by acquiring full-fledged citizenship did appall even the mainstream benefactors of Indians. Both sides failed to recognize the different views of being American. For the federal government it was a gesture of integration, while Indians experienced it as assimilation.

### 3.3. The Indian Reorganization Act (1934)

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 seemingly follows the spirit of slowing down the assimilationist policy of the United States. This act, primarily to revoke the harms caused by the General Allotment Act, and partly to compensate for its wrongs, enabled tribal communities to organize their own governments and practice the long-sought self-determination. Self-determination in this context has two implications. Under the IRA, tribal governments were reorganized as “political communities that could govern their citizens and deal with the federal government” (Lacy 92). By extension of this rule, the Indian Reorganization Act is also a promotion of the formerly disregarded tribal identity (Holm 140). As the urban Indian population is not viewed as a separate entity at this point in time, the power thus assigned to tribal governments only applies to matters within reservation boundaries.

The Indian Reorganization Act targeted four areas of American Indian reservation life. The first one was to allow Indians “residing on reservations to establish local self-governments and tribal corporations to improve tribal resources” (Olson and Wilson 116). Disregarding urban Indian populations, this title of the act was to be the forerunner of self-determination based exclusively on reservations. Title II of the act aimed at assisting Indians by offering training “in forest management, public health, law enforcement and record keeping and provided scholarship money for gifted students” (Olson and Wilson 116) . Title III of the IRA was to end the General Allotment Act and to provide “consolidation of allotted and heirship lands into productive community use” (Olson and Wilson 116). Title IV established the Court of Indian Affairs to have “jurisdiction over reservation crimes and cases where at least one of the parties was Native American” (Olson and Wilson 116).

The greatest achievement of the IRA is the result of its termination of the General Allotment Act. The Department of the Interior provided funds and returned some of the lands lost to allotment, but it was far less than the land which fell prey to former government policy. Actual compensation for the loss of tribal land bases did not equal the fact that the policy of Allotment was outlawed. Although Olson and Wilson claim it a success, I do not believe that the fact that “the federal government had given at least lip service to the principle of self-determination” can be declared an overall success. Parts of the act targeting education, self-determination and jurisdiction in certain matters on Indian land are signs of the “revolutionary” changes in Indian policy after the General Allotment Act. Attempts had been made and many American Indians became aware of their power under the IRA, but the Act could not answer all the problems American Indians experienced.

As the tragic effects of allotment became obvious by the 1920s, and John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs represented a more liberal view, a new policy was required to strengthen the Indian spirit. From the Indian perspective, the first moves of the act were

unanimously viewed as positive. Repealing the allotment laws, reestablishing surplus reservation land and removing restrictions on exchanging allotment lands were vital deeds towards self-determination. In addition, the referendum required of tribal communities to accept or reject the act was also a democratic notion never experienced by Indian communities before. Even the charting of tribal constitutions was assigned to Indian communities themselves. Such grand gestures of independence had never been displayed by the United States in its Indian policy.

The most well-intentioned of the acts discussed so far, this one is also the first to allow existence within the Indian space. Though the revolving door still did not function both ways, the IRA allowed tribal entities to experience their own cultural existence. This existence, and the borders surrounding it were still drawn by the United States federal government, but it allowed the ethno-racial bloc to construct itself from within, at least to a certain extent. This act may also be interpreted as a possible manifestation of future postethnicity, although its main function was to target the wrongs of former policies which the concept of postethnicity declares to transcend.

The benefits and novelties brought about by the IRA should point towards a brighter American Indian future in mainstream society. Yet, eventually, self-determination could not manifest at large. Even though the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was devoted to the principle of self-determination and tribal constitutions were to demonstrate such a principle, the Secretary of the Interior was delegated “significant veto powers over tribal affairs” (Olson and Wilson 161). This issue is further explored by Vine Deloria, who relies on the wording of the Indian Reorganization Act when he questions its benevolent nature:

The legislation governing Indians has always been tied to the phrase “the Secretary of Interior may authorize, in his discretion.” The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, generally thought of as the epitome liberalizing law toward the tribes, was replete with

“the Secretary of Interior may authorize...” “the Secretary of Interior is hereby authorize to proclaim ...” “the Secretary of Interior is directed to make rules and regulations.” Even the tribal elections have had to be governed by “the Secretary of Interior under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe.” (qtd. in Steiner 264)

The above excerpt highlights how Indian reorganization was allowed to materialize. Tribes were secured the right to counteract the previous destructive federal Indian policy by reorganizing themselves, as long as such reorganization did not clash with federal interests. After any given tribe’s referendum to accept the IRA, tribes were to chart their own constitutions which, again although “had to be approved by the majority vote of the tribe” (Olson and Wilson 118) also required a consent from the Secretary of the Interior (Olson and Wilson 118). Opponents to the IRA gained so much strength within a year after the act was passed, that “congressional appropriations to the Indian reorganization Act programs were cut beginning in 1935” (Olson and Wilson 120). An example from the State of Oklahoma illustrates the power the Secretary of the Interior held over Indian self-determination. Since reservations did not exist in the state, Oklahoma Indians held a special relationship with the federal government different from that of reservation Indians. Under the Thomas-Rogers Bill American Indians in Oklahoma were placed under federal guardianship, but “in order to satisfy non-Native American assimilationists, mixed-bloods and assimilated Native Americans, the bill allowed Native Americans of less than half-blood Native American ancestry to be ‘relieved of all restrictions’ on their property” (Olson and Wilson 121). Indians who did not subscribe to federal guardianship had to apply to a special committee to determine whether they were competent enough to handle their own property. And it was “the Secretary of the Interior [who] would make the final decision in lifting such restrictions, based on recommendations from a special competency commission” (Olson and Wilson 121).



The explicit aims of the Indian Reorganization Act may be regarded beneficial, but the political operations underlying it raise doubts of its outcomes. Just like the Indian Citizenship Act, the Indian Reorganization Act has ambiguous impacts and interpretations.

Self-determination seems to bear paradoxical connotations for many American Indian advocates of the IRA. While it implies a great deal of independence possessed by the tribes, it also relies heavily upon the concept of federal trust status. Following in the footsteps of the treaty-making period, advocates of trust status wished to maintain the strongest ties possible with the federal government. Experiences with abridging voting rights merely a decade prior to the IRA may explain the preference for federal and the distrust for state and local agencies. Local and state governments have always been more likely to give priority to economic interests of non-Indian nature. Assigning the power to deal with Indian communities to local and state agencies was viewed as “a guarantee of discrimination and exploitation” (Olson and Wilson 162). To illustrate this point, Title III of the IRA evoked serious criticism from politicians who claimed that tribal governments with their own constitutions would “threaten the process of assimilation” (Olson and Wilson 117) and thus would pose an obstacle to the solving of the Indian problem. These Congressmen also feared that the land base freed by allotment would fall out of the reach of non-reservation interests. Their argument claimed that under the IRA American Indians would be “segregated [. . .] from European society” (Olson and Wilson 120), but the underlying meaning implied the “[prevention of] ‘efficient’ development of reservation resources” (Olson and Wilson 120). With reservations broken up into checkers of land, efficient utilization of resources could only come from non-Indian investors, who would contribute to state tax revenues unlike the federally held trust lands. Added to this is the claim voiced by opponents that tribal land ownership “supported anti-Christian and communistic principles” (Olson and Wilson 120).

The setting up of tribal governments was regarded as a great opportunity for self-improvement. Yet, the Bureau of Indian Affairs strove to shape the newly formed tribal governing bodies in the image of the United States government. Tribal constitutions were to be charted to be duplicates of the United States Constitution regardless of any cultural and historical difference. Partly due to the limited success in assimilating the American Indian, the Bureau of Indian Affairs managed to take strong control over tribal matters. Ironically enough, despite its undoubtedly beneficial aspects, the IRA also marked the end of the decade of mild or slow assimilation. It only took a decade and a half for the pendulum to swing back towards the policy of aggressive assimilation.

The discouragement of tribal practices is another example of how the cultural content of the American Indian bloc was held under supervision. When the tribes accepted to subscribe to the IRA they were offered assistance by the federal government in drawing up their constitutions. It is significant to mention here that the legal assistance came from members of the Interior Department who “prepared a model constitution to follow” (Olson and Wilson 119). Although some tribes found this helpful, many considered “its abundance of ‘legalese’ [. . .] difficult to comprehend, and it was too general to take into account the particular needs and expectations of individual tribes” (Olson and Wilson 119). John Collier gave priority to Indian interest as much as he could in the bureaucratic decision making processes, yet, he was often criticized by Indian people themselves for underestimating American Indian cultural diversity and the frequent barriers of factionalism (Olson and Wilson 122). The IRA required majority vote on many levels which “posed problems for a people who had a long tradition of reaching decisions by consensus or persuasion” (Olson and Wilson 122). The IRA also failed to acknowledge cultures where centralized tribal government had not been part of the decision making process.

The Indian Reorganization Act, in conclusion, had complex effects on the American Indian minority. The restoration of tribal land bases was the first and foremost advantage Indian people could gain from the Act. Even though the amount of land could not compensate for the loss, it was a beneficial step on behalf of the federal government. Tribal constitutions and self-determination cannot be viewed in such a positive light, since the bureaucracy of the BIA and the singular power of the Secretary of the Interior hindered much of the development the two titles offered. However, contrasted with the following acts the IRA was a step toward creating the revolving door with the cooperation of the American Indian bloc.

### 3.4. Termination (1954) and Relocation (1955)

Shirley Witt sees the essence of termination policy as “[t]he unilateral withdrawal of federal services to Indians [. . .] related policies and legislation, such as resolutions, bills, acts and public laws which lead to this same end” (96). The most assimilationist of all twentieth-century Indian policies, at its core, termination is the removal of tribal lands from tax exemption and placing them under state tax rolls. This entails that tribes are no longer subject to federal powers but to those of state and local governments. As it has been demonstrated, most Indian tribes regarded their special relationship with the federal government inevitable for their survival, thus termination meant a threat to tribal integrity. Similarly to the Indian Reorganization Act, the issue of self-determination is also an essential question here as “terminated tribes and non-federally recognized tribes, which make up almost one third of all indigenous peoples in the United States, have no federally recognized rights of self-determination” (O’Brien 44). Drawing upon the previously given definition of self-determination, termination implies that tribes would cease to exist as political units represented by their own governments. By extension, it also means the loss of tribal integrity, and eventually, the loss of tribal cultures. Besides the economic and strongly related cultural

issues, without the tribal land base, tribal governments which were set up under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act were done away with and former tribal membership was replaced by a status similar to all other citizens of the United States.

Within a decade, “Congress had terminated its relationship with 109 bands and tribes” (O’Brien 44). Such figures explain why it is hard to agree with Deloria’s standpoint that “too much is made [. . .] of the importance of termination [. . .] more important in terms of identifying the status of American Indians in American society was the propensity of Congress to continue the wartime subsidy into the cold war years” (“Evolution” 250).

During the two decades between the Indian Reorganization Act and the policy of termination, many Indians moved to the cities in search of a better future. This, however, did not mean the rejection of one’s Indianness. The federal government disregarded the possibility that the Indian space was carried internally and by the individual American Indian to any place they moved. From a mistaken federal perspective, Indians were flocking away from reservations in their attempt to integrate, at least economically, into mainstream American society, and thus, the time seemed right to end the rather frustrating relationship with Indian tribes.

Introduced in 1954, but already existing as a plan since the late 1940s, termination was accompanied by the notion of relocation. From the federal perspective, the two policies rely on and generate each other. Mass migration off the reservations into the cities was to bring about the disintegration of existing Indian communities. By promoting relocation in urban areas, termination of tribal entities seemed a logical step. The reverse process is also verified. Withdrawing federal services from reservations would result in American Indians seeking the same services under seemingly better circumstances, more accessible in cities than in rural areas. While more and more Indian people were encouraged to leave the reservations behind and try an “independent” life in one of America’s larger cities, there was the distinct

possibility that the a slowly disintegrating political body of tribal governments would soon cease to function.

Just as in the case of the General Allotment Act, the underlying intention was to solve the Indian problem by discarding the Indian features and viewing the problem, such as poverty, lack of education, housing matters by the same standards as all other similarly disadvantaged people would share. However, in this view, the major principle is not the issue of equality, but the disregarding of tribal features, and special cultural traits. Termination illustrates the cultural conflict which has existed ever since the first contact between Europeans and American Indians. The policy fails to acknowledge Indian people's rejection of individualism. Although it is considered outdated in the twentieth century, Indian communities have believed in cultural and not individual survival. This will be further demonstrated in Chapter 4 and 5. The problems of housing, lack of education and poverty were notions that Indian people attempted to solve communally. Their belief in being "sovereign, dependent" nations protected by the United States Government still persists. Unlike other disadvantaged minorities, the partially restored tribal land bases under the IRA merely two decades prior to termination, provided a possibility to negotiate with the federal government. This is not to say that reservations were the sole locale of the Indian problem, and as the federal government came to see it, it had to be relocated in order to be solved more easily.

Moving to urban areas accelerated after World War II and was strongly encouraged by the Bureau of Indian Affairs Voluntary Relocation Policy of 1955 whereby the BIA subsidized transportation to and adjustment in an urban environment. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was to assist both total integration in mainstream American society and the preservation of a separate Indian character in cities. Neither of these declared goals were accomplished in their entirety. Relocation was a means to promote integration, but this

attempt failed. The promise that city life would bring about improved social and economic conditions compared to reservations proved to lack any foundation. Unemployment, poverty, housing problems, and the lack of education were as pressing problems in the cities as they were on the reservation. In addition, off-reservation Indians experienced a total neglect of their existence. Louis Bruce, Nixon's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, experienced very harsh criticism from urban Indian groups as soon as he took office. They attacked the Bureau's passivity, in response to which the Commissioner said, "the Bureau of Indian Affairs is concerned primarily with Indians living on tribal lands. It is neither set up nor financed to assume responsibility for off reservation Indians" ("Militant"). This response justifies the interconnected nature of termination and relocation. No matter what the original intentions were, neither relocation, nor termination could solve the Indian problem. On the contrary, not only did it remain a significant issue, but it soon acquired new characteristics.

Relocation policy was to assist American Indians' blending in not only urban, but by the same token, mainstream American society. Ideally, those who undertook relocation to urban areas were soon expected to adjust to city life and become "lost" in the cities as Indians. At its best, this disappearance was literal and figurative at the same time. On the surface, the program did not conflict with Indian aims, as the largest attraction of leaving home communities was economic improvement. However, frequent returns to the reservations, at least once a year according to a 1960s count (Mudgett and Wilson 1), helped maintain the ties with one's American Indian roots. A seasonal fluctuation can also be detected in city Indian populations. In addition, a "reverse relocation" process affected not only those who were unable to adjust and adapt to urban living but it "varies from those who could not be successful in an urban, mostly white environment to professionals who adjusted easily to non-Indian society" (Mullen). Reservations were still considered the sole homeland American Indians possessed even if living in cities.

With their failure, both termination and relocation proved that the decades after World War II already bore the ideals of a multicultural society. The unsuccessful attempt to make the Indian disappear either in urban areas or with the destruction of reservations may also be identified as the time when one of the ethno-racial blocs voluntarily strengthened and maintained its borders around its culture.

The policies of relocation and termination cannot be discussed separately. Both of the acts are examples of policies which, however close in time to multicultural thinking, disable the existence of cultures within the American Indian bloc. As their primary goals suggest, they not only close the door behind individual Indians drawn into mainstream American society, but also demolish the former space of Indianness. The concept of postethnicity acquires a new significance as regards the acts, since they intend to abolish ethnicity as such with regard to American Indians. These policies' underlying hope is that the American Indian bloc will slowly dissolve, physically and figuratively, into mainstream American culture and eventually disappear entirely.

### 3.5. The Indian Child Welfare Act (1978)

I selected The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 to be the last federal policy of this chapter. My aim is to prove that the decades between this given act and the previous ones changed the United States Indian policy significantly. I will discuss these changes in later chapters as they pertain to the events surrounding the creation of the Indian Community School. The Indian Child Welfare Act is in a way, a counterexample of Hollinger's ideals as described in his theory of postethnicity, but it is also evidence to the climate of opinion which paved the way for an era to go beyond multiculturalism.

The Indian Child Welfare Act was to remedy many of the wrongs resulting from state agencies' placement of Indian children into foster homes and institutions off reservations. It

was also applied to counteract the effects of termination and relocation by “protecting the best interest of Indian children and promoting the stability and security of Indian tribes and families” (Pevar 296). Above all, the Indian Child Welfare Act was designed to secure the rights of Indian children, and, by extension, it is a protective measure for Indian tribes, communities and cultures. By ensuring tribal courts’ jurisdiction over the placement of Indian children, state authorities cannot practice their formerly popular method of “integration,” that is placing Indian children with white families, mostly following the principle of “the farther the better” from the home community. The act also enables the family, the extended family and the community to take priority in the adoption process of an Indian child. The changing climate of opinion is demonstrated by the act’s application in voluntary placements. In cases, when both parents voluntarily resign from their guardian status and consent to their child’s placement in a non-Indian foster home, tribes have the right to overrule such a decision. In such a case, whereby the right of the community and tribe enjoys priority over the individual’s freedom of choice, a protective measure is practiced to favor Indian interests.

Since an Indian child is defined as “any unmarried person under eighteen years of age who is enrolled in a tribe or who is eligible for enrollment” (Pevar 300), the act is also revolutionary in the sense that it does not exclude off-reservation subjects. Compared to the previous acts, the Indian Child Welfare Act seems to have evoked the smallest amount of criticism, although there are opponents to it within the Indian community itself. Tracing back the methods of tribal elections to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, those advocating a more radical political standpoint consider tribal jurisdiction over placement of children detrimental. The reason for this will be demonstrated in a separate chapter on the American Indian Movement, where it will become explicit how young city-born American Indians view tribal politics as a manifestation of federal control via the Bureau of Indian Affairs.



In conclusion, the Indian Child Welfare Act is one of the first attempts at creating the revolving door by securing the Indian space. As the act primarily targets underage individuals, it should be interpreted as a measure to ensure the maintenance of the population of the American Indian bloc. It also enables children to experience their Indianness in a safe environment, where they are free to choose whether to utilize the revolving door leading into mainstream society or not. By extension, the act protects the cultural content of the American Indian bloc and allows access to the revolving door through which one may return to their culture.

### 3.6. Concluding Note

The discussion of the 1887 General Allotment Act was followed by two seemingly liberal steps on behalf of the United States government: the Indian Voting Rights Act of 1924 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Historically, the policies of allotment, voting rights, and self-government dominate the time period between the 1871 ending of the treaty-making period and, roughly, the end of World War II. Subsequently, the issues of franchise and self-government dominated the United States Indian policy during the 1920s and 1930s. Both acts demonstrate the United States' inclination to loosen the assimilationist grip expressed by the allotment policy. However, counteracting voting rights and self-government issues, the relocation and termination following World War II demonstrate the revival of aggressive assimilationist policies. The policies of termination and relocation are strongly linked, while the Indian Child Welfare Act was selected to clearly demonstrate the sharp contrast with previous policies and standpoints of the United States federal government. To varying degrees, all five acts preceding the Indian Child Welfare Act can be declared assimilationist attempts directed at the American Indian minority

The acts discussed here demonstrate the underlying assimilationist intentions of the federal government. Allotment, relocation and termination all tend to be viewed as manifestations of the United States' unambiguous attempt to assimilate the American Indian. The Indian Voting Rights Act, the Indian Reorganization Act, and the Indian Child Welfare Act can be seen as means of self-determination. Within the span of seven decades, the policy of total assimilation as promoted by the General Allotment Act was revoked as a failure and mildly compensated by the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, but termination and relocation followed the guidelines and intentions of the former. The Indian Child Welfare Act is the only firm evidence of the changing climate of opinion paving the way for the future postethnic perspective.

## **CHAPTER 4: INDIAN COUNTRY**

### **4.1. Definition**

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## 4. INDIAN COUNTRY

### 4.1. Definition

The previous chapter focused on nineteenth and twentieth century federal acts to provide a general view on the United States' Indian policy and to designate the political situation of the American Indian minority. The present chapter attempts at broadening that perspective towards urban Indian communities by exploring first the figurative notion of Indian country, then focusing on those directives which contributed to the creation of today's Indian country. I will not follow a chronological order as the explication of the term Indian country requires otherwise. Relevant political decisions will be cited to strengthen the notion of Indian country and its formation during the course of the United States' history.

A number of possibilities arise to designate Indian space within mainstream American culture. One of these would be Indian State, but the word would imply more political independence and more strictly defined borders than country. It also evokes the image of a geographically separate space, which does not exist in present-day Indian affairs. Another term to express the notion of Indian space would be Indian Territory. With the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and President Andrew Jackson's ardent insistence on moving Indian tribes west of the Mississippi to the yet unexplored and thus uncivilized land, the term "Indian Territory" acquired a negative connotation. This negative connotation accounts for the usage of country, even though it is more explicit, thus more problematic to interpret. Since country is variously spelled as Indian Country, "Indian Country," and Indian country, I will use the small-case spelling to emphasize its figurative nature and to denote the contradictions the term bears in itself.

The space-based metaphor of Indian country calls forth another metaphor, the concept of "doors separating cultures" (St.Clair 287-91). Just as, literally, the Mississippi River was

to serve as the gate and the border between the lands inhabited by American Indians and mainstream America, the cultural metaphor of Indian country represents the separation of Indianness from the rest of its surroundings. The inevitable cultural exchange that takes place in a multicultural setting has been described as a door dividing space into the relative and interchangeable habitats of inside and outside. While the inhabitants of the various spaces are aware of the presence of this door, whether they utilize it as a means of commuting depends on multiculturalism's going beyond its own limits. In theory, at least, the concept of a revolving door enables participants to move freely between other rooms/cultures but the practice of landing in an already familiar environment bears higher probability. Postethnicity should offer access to any direction and an equal familiarity with all possible affiliations. In the following I will explicate the connotations of Indian country with regard to postethnic American society and its role in constructing and maintaining the revolving door in between cultures. My organizing principle is construed upon the analyses of geographical location, citizens, political system, and the language of Indian country; factors which I see as essential to one's understanding of Indian country's relevance in postethnic America.

### Geographical Location

While many federal acts targeted the assimilation of the American Indian minority in mainstream American society, some of the directives discussed in the previous chapter also entailed unexpected benefits for the American Indian. One of these gains, as Nancy Lurie argues is "that the term *Indian Country* seems to have acquired its present meaning and currency during the relocation period. Originally it meant only federal Indian trust land, but now it means any place where there is an active Indian presence, even the Internet"

(*Wisconsin* 52). "Indian country" is "the fairly recent Indian term for an old phenomenon [which] covers any place--reservations and cities alike--where there are Indians interacting as

Indians” (Lurie “8000” n. pag.). “Interaction” is easier to define than “Indian” since a survey of the National Tribal Chairmen Association based on various criteria of federal agencies, has found that the latter term has acquired at least 47 different definitions. Under the rules of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an individual living on or near reservation land with one quarter of Indian blood qualifies as American Indian. Although the intention may be philanthropic, such definition excludes urban communities in order to render administration feasible and protect cultural and social affiliations within a closely defined geographical setting (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 60).

While the majority of non-Indians still believe that Indians are exclusively residents of reservations--a belief that has an effective and harmful impact on federal Indian policy--reservations denote “land set aside for Indians [. . .] with the tribe holding the powers of government that have not been federally terminated” (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 23 ). Reservation may also refer to allotted land, for which title has not been transferred to individual owners and is held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the name of a tribe and it is controlled by the tribe’s governing body. It may be used for community facilities, for economic development projects, leased to non-Indians for revenue production, or leased to members for their homes (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 23-4). Further details of the definition of reservation will appear in Chapter 8 as it resulted in many controversies in the city of Milwaukee.

Contrary to the BIA’s definition of one’s Indianness, Indian country may be further extended to be analogous with Hollinger’s American Indian bloc in the five-part ethno-racial pentagon. Although he sacrifices some of the larger implications of the term, Hollinger’s idea admits every individual of American Indian ancestry to the native bloc, no matter where they live. His preference for the voluntary nature of affiliations over communities of descent does not obstruct the notion of Indian country. Rather, it helps any individual to associate themselves with both their racially determined place and the majority culture. The word

country implies a well-defined geographical place with borders separating it from other, culturally, linguistically and politically different entities. In this interpretation, country may stand for the American Indian ethno-racial bloc, though bearing different connotations. The geographical nature of the term also implies a spatial expansion which cannot be achieved if country is treated as a synonym to the American Indian bloc. Furthermore, such explication would neglect the disperse nature of the American Indian population. While most non-Indian residents of the United States are familiar with reservations and, it must be added, are influenced by the stereotypes imbedded in the term, they tend to view American Indians of urban life as a completely different race.

Indian country, as a term, bears contradictions in itself. The well-known misnomer of Indian is combined with a geographical designation implying political, social and cultural independence. From the American Indian point of view the entire United States is Indian country due to their long held belief that no man is entitled to the individual possession of land. Although this concept had been seriously challenged by the treaty making period and the reservation system, the original inhabitants of the land rightly claim their legacy over the entire Northern American Continent. In the age of the Internet, it may even be extended further, beyond American boundaries, thus, without literally possessing the land, Indianness may gain a larger ground in mainstream American culture. Yet, in the twentieth century this right cannot be interpreted as a source of territorial wars, even if some radical Indian groups attempted at defining it as such. The controversial occupation of Alcatraz Island and the takeover of the Coast Guard station in Milwaukee by the American Indian Movement will be further analyzed in Chapter 6.

Contrary to popular belief, urban Indian communities are also a constituent of Indian country. The irony of the term is most evident with regard to the urban Indian population. The rules governing this country with no currency, no passport issuing, or standing army, derive

from federal supervision and protection. In order to gain a better insight into the concept and the misconceptions of Indian country, a definition of relevant terms is required.

### Citizens

Indian country is not populated only by tribes as most mainstream interpretations would believe. “Tribe is used as Indian people and white bureaucrats use it today, that is to designate an administrative unit” (Lurie “Money” 47). As it has been mentioned earlier, the term Indian has many definitions. For the sake of Indian country, in view of the numerous definitions available, I will use Lurie’s when referring to Indian country populace because she insists that it is their “shared attitudes and attributes which transcend tribal and regional differences from language and custom that distinguish Indian people in general from other Americans” (“Money” 47).

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 redefined and lifted the geographical constraints of populace in terms of location. The blood quantum rule remained the same but no longer were individuals expected to be confined to reservation areas. If Supreme Court Justice John Marshall’s designation of sovereign nations still persists, tribal membership should be acknowledged by the given tribe in question. If it is a formal recognition of being Indian, tribal sovereignty is manifested in such a right. Annual sight counts conducted in schools, such as the one causing a great turmoil in Milwaukee, fail to provide exact data. In addition, they discourage identification with one’s culture in a society not prepared for full-fledged multiculturalism. The method followed on the United States census forms is equally inadequate since it deprives communities of their right to formally recognize their members. A consensus and reconciliation of the two methods--definition from the outside and self-definition--is the one practiced in urban and reservation communities:



American Indians are those individuals who wish to belong to, and are recognized as such by a given Indian community (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 39-40).

Under the US Constitution, Indian tribes, as interpreted by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall in the 1830s, are “domestic dependent” but still sovereign nations that possess the right to self-determination. Marshall “drew an analogy to the responsibility of a guardian to protect the property of a ward” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 35) and declared federal responsibility over the government’s Indian “children” “to protect the Indian’s tribally held lands from appropriation by states or individuals” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 35). Although the Chief Justice’s interpretation of the Indians’ legal standing was a decision in one particular case, that of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (Tindall 264), the term soon gained a universal meaning with regard to the Indian population.

However well-intentioned the definition is, defining American Indians as “ward” implies the incapacity of these individuals to govern themselves, and thus the need to “put [themselves] under the protection of ‘a stronger nation’ by treaty” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 35). The ward-definition was created in 1831, but it influenced Indian policy in the following decades too. Such a terminology is difficult to erase from people’s mind when they see it in practice, and it prevails to the majority’s advantage. When the “vanishing race” refuses to disappear and thus solve the Indian problem on its own, incapability of handling their own affairs seems a rightful justification of federal Indian policy.

The concept is further buttressed by the legal usage of the term Indian country (Felix Cohen qtd. in Ebbott and Rosenblatt 58-59). The still prevalent opinion that American Indians are remnants of an antique culture is deeply rooted in the treaty period of the government’s Indian policy. Cohen contends that treaties are of not merely “antiquarian interest [. . .] the reciprocal obligations assumed by the federal government and by Indian tribes during a period of almost one hundred years constitute a chief source of present-day Indian law” (Ebbott and

Rosenblatt 59). Thus, citizens of today's Indian country are still subject to the United States, but they hold a special relationship with it due to consequences of the treaty making period. While this fact accounts for the perception of American Indians as objects of "antiquarian interest," Indian country is not solely constructed upon treaties and contracts between any tribe and the United States. A reciprocal acceptance of the wish to belong to an Indian community of descent and the sense of cultural belonging in Indian country both contribute to holding citizenship in it.

### Political system

The inhabitants of Indian country thus defined, we must turn to the political organization of this figurative space. The United States defines itself as a democracy. Yet, The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 discussed in the previous chapter "failed to recognize that democracy as we know it generates political parties and requires them for the system to work" (Lurie "Money" 47). Throughout American and Indian contact, the western way of thinking could not cope with the traditional Indian practice of consensus. Conflict resolution, so different from its European equivalent, posed many problems during treaty negotiations, land cessions and business contracts with Indians. Thus, when Indian country is declared a democratic entity, a different interpretation of democracy must be taken into consideration. Interpreted within the ethno-racial pentagon, freedom of variety and not obstructing federal laws should be allowed to exist. Very often, the paternalistic view still surfaces when the parties necessary to operate democracy appear at the tribal level. Misunderstanding the existence of parties within the Indian bloc, diversity is interpreted as factionalism (Lurie "Money" 47-8), unlike in other democratic states. Viewing American Indians as one entity in multicultural American society, mainstream thinking fails to accept the variety existing in a minority culture. The reason for ignoring variety within the American Indian bloc, or in

Indian politics may derive from the mainstream wish to neglect the complexities of the Indian problem.

Since the tribal government is the sole channel toward federal interests, its personnel is of key importance. Due to their inherently different understanding of what constitutes democracy, American Indian leaders argue that the bureaucracy dominating federal Indian affairs, the federal supervision over internal Indian matters, as well as the leadership accepted by mainstream America do not necessarily represent the Indians' best interests. The more Indianness leaders display, the less tolerated they are by the federal government and this fact is "threatening to community integrity" (Lurie "Money" 51).

The notions of leadership and democracy are strongly connected. From the Indian point of view, no matter how many parties arise in regard to a certain issue, Indian democracy eventually has to reach a consensus. As Lurie explains "in tribal communities there can be only one shop which offers the option of total take-over to express dissatisfaction with the people who are running it if differences cannot be resolved or compromised" (Lurie "Money" 47-8). That one shop, however, has to represent the Indian interest best and should not bend towards mainstream expectations.

### Sovereignty

The word implying complete power in governing a country, Indian sovereignty requires a deeper analysis since in the context of Indian affairs all three key words of the definition—"country," "power," and "complete"—are problematic. "The very fact that the United States made treaties with Indian tribes at all acknowledges their sovereignty" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 82). Roughly parallel to the Civil Rights movement, the Indian slogan of "Broken Treaties" was voiced all over the United States. The notion later resurfaced as "Tribal Sovereignty" which

“is related to the shift from reactive seeking redress of old grievances to proactive and innovative tribal endeavors” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 82). The two keywords, reactive and proactive, also indicate the change during the 1960s within Indian country which brought about a growing awareness of their strength along the lines of Hollinger’s voluntary nature of affiliations. By introducing tribal sovereignty, the American Indian bloc has come to inhabit a safe place that has allowed them more mobility in both their own as well as mainstream cultural practices. As Hollinger stated, postethnicity should go beyond past grievances. Also the attempt to define citizenship in Indian country through the creation of indigenous political bodies designed to govern life within the bloc and negotiate with mainstream politics is a sign of how American Indians contribute to the creation of the revolving door. As Lurie argues: “A cardinal premise of evolution, biological or cultural, is that variation necessary to survival; so that when the environment becomes threatening there are variant forms fortuitously adapted to meet new challenges to perpetuate life” and she concludes “[t]ribal sovereignty is a variant form” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 90).

Tribal communities face difficulties when practicing their democracy, since “the federally recognized tribal government is the only body authorized to handle community sources of support” (Lurie “Money” 48) whether these sources are federal, state or tribal. Fundamental principles of tribal sovereignty include “the tribes possessing all the powers of any sovereign state.” Some of these powers such as entering treaties with foreign nations are terminated due to conquest but such powers should all be of external nature. Conquest should not by itself “affect the internal sovereignty of the tribe, that is, its powers of local government.” The powers preserved should be “qualified in treaties and by express legislation of Congress but [ . . . ] unless expressively qualified full powers of sovereignty are vested in the Indian tribes and in their duly constituted organs of government.” The Bureau of Indian

Affairs is “authorized to review and approve all tribal contracts and ordinances to preserve inherent rights of self-government and fulfill trust obligation” (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 59-60).

The contradiction is apparent: a federal agency is authorized by statute to exercise control over tribal governments on behalf of the same tribal governments in opposition to the United States. If self-determination and sovereignty are to become full-fledged, the practice “that the government allocates money to assist tribes” (Lurie “Money” 56) should be modified by “[enabling tribes] to program funding in their own way to fit their needs as they see them rather than having to fit a changing array of pre-packaged programs” (Lurie “Money” 56).

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Act came into force when there was a relative prosperity to share with American Indian communities, as well. The ends being good, however, does not excuse the means to be wrong. The act’s intent “of helping tribes pull themselves out of poverty” paralleled with the government’s general practice “to solve problems by just throwing money at them” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 77). It seemed beneficial, but did not include any instruction or suggestion on long-term programs which would have made self-determination truly possible. Again, the superiority of the guardian toward its wards surfaced, with an act which, if thoroughly examined, looks to be more a superficial gesture than real help. In view of the fact that “the government maintained its abiding suspicion of Indian competency” (Lurie “Money” 49) the act can hardly be termed as one passed in good faith.

#### Communication

“Indian English differs in subtle ways in regard to certain key terms which obscures understating of Indian politics and economics for most speakers of standard English” (Lurie “Money” 56). In Chapter 8 on Indian bingo, the key words of greed, jealousy, and the concept

of money will be explicated further. As with many international conflicts, communication is a cornerstone of disputes arising over various matters. Indian country and the United States share the experience that although the language may be common, communication is frustratingly flawed due to the lack of a common ground for interpretation. One explicit example is the unclear wording of treaties. These resulted in controversies within and outside Indian communities. Yet, as we will see in Chapter 6 on the Coast Guard takeover, inaccurate treaty drafting was advantageous for American Indians as well.

The matter arose when the legal understanding of Indian country arrived at a point where it threatened the majority with losing the upper hand. Namely, tensions reached a boiling point over the hunting and fishing rights issues after World War II. Although the treaty making period ended in 1871, there was no indication that parties should not abide by them “until the grass shall grow, and the waters shall run.” With an increasing awareness of their disadvantageous position, Indian people continued their culture-related practices, very often in order to secure economic survival. Gathering, hunting and fishing were activities not abrogated in the treaties, yet, concerned whites feared that Indians would be using and abusing “their,” that is, American resources. The problems were less evident on reservation land, but Indian people were often “caught” fishing and hunting in areas adjacent to their reservations. As soon as the United States Supreme Court faced the difficulty of treaty-related cases, it became evident that the wording of treaties prior to 1871 posed “questions of meaning and intent [ . . . ] requiring interpretation” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 67). Indian country being a multilingual one, with some of the languages lost in history, but many still spoken, a universal system needed to be set up with rules which courts could accord in their ruling. The result was a construction of

four canons, or principles, [to resolve] equivocal meanings. [ . . . ] treaties must be construed liberally as a whole in the Indians’ favor as must any ambiguous

expressions in or relating to treaties, and as far as it can be determined, treaties must be construed as the Indians would have understood them at the time they were negotiated. Finally, if the United States extinguished a treaty right, it could not have done so for merely implied reasons but rather explicit action and the use of “clear and plain” language. (Lurie *Wisconsin* 67)

As it is highlighted by the above quotation, communication between countries, here Indian country and its “protector,” need constant revision. Lurie’s description of the four principles established by the Supreme Court imply that Indian country has gained a new, elevated, status in relation to mainstream American society. Although this again was due to the above mentioned treaty rights conflicts arising between the American Indian bloc and mainstream America, it foreshadowed future shifts in the federal approach to the Indian problem. I will further explicate the matter in Chapter 5, as the above Supreme Court decision grew out of a Chippewa fishing and hunting rights conflict in the northern part of the State of Wisconsin.

To challenge the Indian argument, many anti-Indian groups declared that “Indian treaty rights and tribal sovereignty were discriminatory to white Americans and the treaties were too old to be an issue in the late 1900s” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 69). What these anti-Indian groups tend to neglect is that even at their signing, treaties were never to be taken seriously by the United States government. Countries, here Indian and the United States, can hardly operate on mutual consent if one of them is always treated as inferior to the other. To illustrate the matter, even after the Supreme Court’s decision and the revised interpretation of treaties, a different law seems to apply inside and outside Indian country and the prejudicial treatment of Indians in this matter is apparent. While Indian fishing is severely limited, non-Indian sportsmen do not fall under such serious restrictions (Lurie *Wisconsin* 70). Bilateral agreements are hard to interpret as a step toward postethnicity, if race so obviously ensures privileges or, alternately, prejudicial treatment for certain blocs of the ethno-racial pentagon.

As already argued in Chapter 2, minorities have often faced the challenge whether to create a separate sphere for their cultural existence or reside within the already given and defined institutions modifying them to their own needs. Both possibilities induce conflicts with mainstream society. Indian country, however, is the “golden middle” in between these two extremes. While it is a figuratively separate sphere of American Indian existence in the cultural sense, it does not imply physical separation. Yet, interaction, may it be any Indian organization, publication, forum or even the Internet, is of physical nature. The consciousness arising from the protection of even a figurative Indian country enables individuals as well as groups to work towards certain forms of separation. The formation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, for example, verifies the importance of Indian country, both as a means and ends. To counteract the assimilationist forces of mainstream American culture and to secure the future of their children, parents who founded ICS acted under the protection of Indian country and ensured the future of American Indian cultures as well.

#### 4.2. Urban Indian Communities

##### Overview of changes

Quoting Edward Bruner, James Clifton states that “until the 1950s, the paramount storyline about Indians used by anthropologists stressed the Indian past, which was presented as a time of stable cultures strongly contrasted with a maladapted, disorganized present” (3). Even after World War II, the contradiction between “a well-adapted past” and “a culturally disintegrated present” was explained by the “consequences of contact with and domination by Europeans” (Clifton 3). Although not evident in all acts of federal Indian policy, what Clifton calls “those social and cultural processes known by the rubric of forced acculturation” (3) are relevant issues in the present discussion.



With changes in American society at large and Indian country too, such views had to be altered as forced acculturation posed difficulties when interpreted in the context of the romanticized Indian past. The result was that “the new narrative structure” of the 1960s, “rather than stressing cultural loss and disorganization among Indians, [. . .] emphasizes continuity and persistence. No longer was there a need to reconstruct the Golden Age of the Indian’s prehistoric past because a new one was emerging” (Clifton 3). This present chapter aims at introducing the newly emerging Indian country, with special focus on its urban Indian residents.

Both the 1954 Voluntary Relocation Program and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 had been mentioned in previous chapters. They will be recalled here as determinants of urban Indian community formation. They will also be cited to illustrate the changes American Indian city-dwellers experienced in the decades following World War II. I will examine the effects of the U.S. American Indian policy of the 1950s on the formation of urban Indian communities. I will also explore how relocation shaped and reshaped the Indian country of the 1950s and 1960s and how these changes affected its citizens.

The radically changing role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, encouraged by the proximity of the civil rights movement, gave a new meaning to self-determination. The growing awareness of one’s cultural identity became more problematic in a new, transitory status of one’s life. While struggling to cope with the difficulties of urban living, American Indians could hardly, at least from the government’s point of view, channel new energies towards their civil rights cases. On the other hand, urban living provided experiences with other racial and ethnic minorities, and the interaction with other cultures resulted in important changes in how American Indians handled their own affairs.

American Indian migration to the cities has had a two-dimensional impact: it reshaped both reservation and non-reservation Indian communities, and the growing number of

American Indians in various cities also affected urban non-Indian communities. “Citified Indians” were not satisfied with tribal leaders, often under the thumb of the BIA, and sought new means to make their voice heard. Furthermore, federal paternalistic control as well as the factionalism and nepotism of tribal governments were less evident in the cities. However, the heterogeneity of urban Indian populations worked against the sense of collective power that would have been essential for influencing the decision making process.

Also operating as a form of “brain drain,” the younger, better educated tribal members comprised the majority of those who tended to undertake the enterprise of relocation. Thus, the movement to urban areas deepened the generation gap as well. Being Indian in a non-Indian environment gained priority over tribal affiliation, and the most universal and most unambiguously positive effect was an ever-growing pan-Indianism the federal government had not predicted when it proposed Indian relocation to cities.

Relocation policy was to assist American Indians’ blending into not only urban, but by the same token, mainstream American society. Ideally, those who undertook relocation to urban areas were soon to adjust to city life and become “lost” in the cities as Indians. At its best, this disappearance was literal and figurative at the same time. On the surface, the Voluntary Relocation Act did not conflict with Indian aims, as the largest attraction of leaving home communities was economic improvement. Yet, while the city offered more promising economic opportunities, poverty in an urban setting, isolated from one’s sympathetic tribal community, was a serious test of the individual Indian’s endurance.

As mentioned in the previous chapter a two-way movement to and from reservations resulted in constantly varying population numbers in cities and it is hard to imagine how Indian communities could establish strong operative bases in an urban environment. In addition to the numerical, educational and generational changes of the 1950s’ Indian country, urban Indian communities also worked out new goals. With more and more Indians being

born, living, and working in cities, new channels were required to preserve a relative stability in urban environments. Although the BIA was still a primary factor in shaping the relationship between tribes and the federal government, it began losing its omnipotent control over Indian affairs during the 1950s in the face of emerging new agencies and voices. Young American Indians needed to construct their own “country” within an urban environment often without direct ties with home communities.

### 4.3. Urban Indians in Indian Country

Urban Indian communities deserve special attention within the boundaries of Indian country for numerous reasons. While physically they are the ones closest to the revolving door between mainstream and American Indian culture, they also should be seen as farthest from the literal Indian space. In addition, the blocs of Hollinger’s ethno-racial pentagon are more visible in cities than in a supposedly racially uniform reservation environment. Although often struggling with problems of self-definition, urban Indian communities clearly emerge as a most determining factor after WWII.

Describing this new generation of urban Indians, Vine Deloria observes that, despite all their difficulties in the cities, “the urban areas show the most potential for strong, lasting organizations, however, and once urban Indians stabilize themselves they will experience phenomenal growth” (*American* 26). Yet, it took some time for the new generation to stabilize themselves. The very first problem nationwide in describing urban Indian population, and later, the birth of Indian organizations, arises from the fact that there was very little accurate information pertaining to the size of Indian populations. The traditionally icy attitude of American Indians towards government agencies, including census takers, is demonstrated in the following quote: “We, the native peoples of this continent, individually and collectively,

reject the false assertions that we are the citizens of the U.S. of America. [. . .] We are sovereign people” (Bad Wound). Such a standpoint resulted in the undercounts of not only the relatively fixed reservation Indian populations but those of the much less visible urban Indian communities.

The non-Indian community tended to view Indian people relocating in the city as the “foreign immigrant leaving the old county” (Lurie “Milwaukee’s Native” 81) regardless of tribal affiliation. Such a comparison is not completely accurate as it ignores the possibility of maintaining physical and emotional ties with the “old county,” which was much less problematic for, and thus, widely practiced among Indian people. Another point ignored by mainstream America was the fact that “Indian people had already adapted to cities long ago, but on their own terms as migratory foragers, seeing urban areas as part of their total resource base that individuals or families might choose to utilize seasonally or for longer periods” (Lurie “Milwaukee’s Native” 81). This fact is further supported by Robert Weppner, who, analyzing the Indian community of Denver, claims that “the migrant worker who leaves his rural home for the city can only be assimilated if his economic experiences there are not so disappointing that they extinguish his desire to adjust early in his attempt” (245). I disagree with Weppner’s viewpoint. Although one of the primary reasons for relocating to cities was economic advancement, it is not the sole explanation for urban adjustment. As the following quotation explains, other factors, equally important in the course of adjustment, include cultural ties as well. From this viewpoint, the comparison with foreign immigrants may be verified:

Kin and friends already living in the city provide an enclave into which the new migrant can move upon arrival. This enclave aids him to adjust, socializing him to the new environment, teaching him the adaptive behavior necessary in order to meet this

new milieu. The choice of urban center is believed to be related to the closeness of the chosen urban center to the home of the migrant. (Snyder 209)

Snyder's theory reveals that although relocation was a federally promoted program, Indian distrust towards agencies still persisted. Targeting economic opportunities, relocatees did not break their cultural ties. The official government agency was primarily to assist newcomers in the urban environment economically, but very often, the responsibility was taken over by already established city-dwellers.

#### Relocation: A Different Interpretation

During the 1950s, the urban Indian population of the United States underwent crucial changes. American Indians' moving to urban areas accelerated after World War II and was enhanced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs policy whereby the BIA subsidized transportation and adjustment to an urban environment. As it was worded by government administrators: "the recent phenomenal increase in Indian population put great pressure upon limited reservation land" (Gibson 552). The Hoover commission report also predicted relocation to be "the means of encourag[ing] surplus Indian population" (Gibson 552) to move to designated cities, as far from their home communities as possible. These quotes imply that the federal government had no intention to improve reservation conditions, and termination on the agenda made reservation residents "surplus." Disregarding the fact that "limited reservation resources" were outcomes of former federal Indian policy, and the novelty to solve the Indian problem by relocation, all served the common goal of sweeping evidence of a dysfunctional system under the carpet.

Between 1945 and the end of 1957, BIA estimates projected the extent of the increase of urban Indians to be "197 percent as opposed to the 70 percent increase in the number of rural,

non-farm Indians” (Officer “American” 58). Other numerical data also reveals the government’s intention to make reservation population more feasible by counts. “By 1960 more than 35,000 Indians had been relocated, about 30 percent returned to the reservation” (Gibson 552).

The offer of vocational training and assistance with housing in any of the designated cities proved to be a successful federal tactic to lure American Indians into large urban areas and, by the same token, offer a solution to the government’s Indian problem. With termination on the agenda, the bulk of American Indian assistance programs largely excluded urban populations. Thus, by providing the alternative of an economically independent life in the cities, reservation populations were to pose less of a problem with regard to federal aids.

#### Changing Roles of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

The urban-rural Indian distinction also generated changes in the United States’ Indian policy. At the 1968 annual convention of the National Congress of American Indians, James Officer, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, distinguished four roles the Bureau of Indian Affairs fulfilled. According to Officer’s keynote address, some perceived the agency’s sole function as assisting people on the way to total integration into American society. Opponents to this view stressed the BIA’s power to preserve the separate character of Indian culture. Some believed that the Bureau was responsible for helping American Indians improve social and economic conditions, yet another group saw it as an oppressive agency to force its will on Indians (Officer). Total integration and the preservation of a separate character are two opposing notions underlying the relocation policy of the 1950s, although neither succeeded in its entirety. Relocation was a means to promote integration with American society but, as the growth of urban Indian organizations suggests, this attempt failed. Furthermore, in view of the problems most relocatees experienced, the goal to improve social and economic conditions

can hardly be termed an overall success. Viewing the BIA as an oppressive federal agency in American Indian policy making is an opinion widely shared in American Indian communities, even though off-reservation Indians experienced a total neglect of their existence at this point in time. Such perceptions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs bear significance as until the late 1960s, the BIA was the primary agent in American Indian matters.

Louis Bruce, Nixon's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, experienced very harsh criticism from urban Indian groups as soon as he took office. They attacked the Bureau's passivity, in response to which the Commissioner said, "the Bureau of Indian Affairs is concerned primarily with Indians living on tribal lands. It is neither set up nor financed to assume responsibility for off-reservation Indians" ("Militant"). About three weeks after the previous statement however, the BIA agreed to terminate the long-standing opposition to financing off-reservation programs. This step already indicated the realization that separation is an inevitable concomitant of the government's integration attempts. In order to absorb American Indians in mainstream society, they have to be separated from their home communities and merged into urban environments. However, the policy's original aim to solve the "Indian problem" did not succeed. Instead, the Indian problem took on new characteristics. The difficulties that were rooted in and arose from the relocation policy of the federal government were new and had not been experienced by Indians in the city or by city populations in general.

#### 4.4. Problems

In the conclusion of *The American Indian in Urban Society*, Jack Waddell and Michael Watson pose questions pertaining to the existence and functioning of urban Indian communities. The first issue they address is whether "Indian problems in the urban environments [are] related to cultural incompatibilities between the Indian segment and the

dominant urban ideologies, or are the problems presented here “third world” problems that encompass all the socially and economically deprived irrespective of cultural factors” (393). I believe that poverty, lack of education or appropriate housing could all be listed by any minority group living in the United States and populating the blocks of its ethno-racial pentagon. Yet, finding examples among them to parallel Indian relocation is impossible. Without the intent to romanticize Indian existence on the reservation, no such cultural conflict arose among the Hispanic or African American blocs. Since land is a key determinant of Indian identity, losing physical contact with it unavoidably results in serious problems. No other minority has experienced such a “culture shock” in the twentieth century. Yet, the figurative Indian country counteracts the detrimental effects of the culture shock, and provides a sound base to fight “third world” problems.

The second issue the editors of *The American Indian in Urban Society* address is whether “the acculturation model [is] adequate to explain the state of impoverishment, deprivation, and personal alienation that *seems* to characterize so large a number of native Americans, or must we seek our explanations by investing more time and energy to a critical study of American institutions” (395). Published in the early 1970s, the authors hardly could foresee the positive outcomes of Indians moving to cities. Within the fifteen years between the relocation policy and 1970, their studies could not have predicted the ever strengthening Pan-Indianism, or the growing self-awareness of Indianness in cities. They rightfully cite impoverishment, deprivation, and personal alienation; yet, they are also right in questioning the ability of then existing mainstream institutions to comply with American Indian needs in the cities. The remedy is provided by urban Indian groups themselves. Setting up culture centers, organizing self-help groups, establishing schools all show the determination to counteract personal alienation and deprivation by creating alternative institutions.



By leading Indian people out of their homelands and relocating them in urban environments the “conflict between wanting to be part of the full American life, while still retaining a persistent desire to keep most of their own ways” (“Bennett” 2) intensified. “[T]he air of overt discrimination, as far as the Indian people are concerned, is pretty much a thing of the past” (“Bennett” 4) said the BIA Commissioner, but his opinion can be confronted with the numerous problems American Indians did face in the urban environment. However promising the economic advantages might be, relocatees saw little of these.

Similar problems had to be solved in relocation areas with a large urban Indian population. In Chicago, which served as a major official relocation city with a BIA office to assist newcomers, a 1972 appeal for funding lists the most urgent needs American Indians might encounter upon entering the new, urban environment. The center further extends its services to adjusting to city life. Just as in the case of the Milwaukee Indian Center, the Chicago center also offered assistance in housing, education, employment and, to a limited extent, monetary support. The center in Chicago had operated in rented quarters for almost two decades, when, in 1967, they managed to acquire a building for their purposes. The larger Indian population and its more heterogeneous nature with respect to tribal affiliations accounts for the center’s larger scale of operations. “The activities of the center are not simply recreational outlets for Indians but rather are made of many Indian social organizations which bring meaning and purpose to life in the city” (American Indian Center “Fund” 1). The center began to serve the community in 1952, but financial difficulties hit as a result of disappointing fund raising and grant losses from charitable groups” (Salemy). Problems of a similar nature even in the relatively small Indian population of Milwaukee will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

## Outcomes

Following Vine Deloria's theory on urban Indian groups and their role in Indian self-awareness, Gibson contends that "urban Indians were principally responsible for precipitating ethnic consciousness and articulating demands for social and economic improvement. Rather than permitting non-Indians to act on their behalf, urban Indians sought an independent course" (555). Again, federal promoters of relocation had not predicted the intensity with which urban Indians refused to become lost in the cities, and were much less willing to be silenced when issues arose in regard to Indian matters. Radicalism and Indian militancy grew out of the climate of the 1960s urban Indian experience. Yet again, government agencies had no means to cope with the "[Indian] activist efforts [which] inevitably took on an increasingly strident tone" (Gibson 555).

Spreading Indian activism in ways unknown and foreign to Indian cultures is explained by Gibson as deriving from "the increasing number of urban Indians, their rising ethnic consciousness, their crushed expectations at improving their conditions, and their frequent witness to black and Mexican-American activism [which] helped precipitate their own insurgency" (559). The comparison with the foreign immigrant or migrant surfaces again, when Gibson states that "urban Indians in the ghettos became increasingly alienated and hostile, feeling much like 'immigrants in their own country'" (559). This country evidently refers to the United States, although a deeper examination of the source of upheavals in cities could apply to Indian country, as well.

Quoting Gerald Vizenor, Roy Bongartz analyzes the "Indian sickness" when he elaborates on the "sense of culture schizophrenia in that the very society which creates the sickness in which Indians have had to live for 150 years is the society which now every day becomes a doctor, tries to solve their problem." Such a schizophrenic notion becomes apparent not only in Indian activism but also in the establishment of urban Indian self-help

groups. It is an explicit manifestation of the two-dimensional struggle to be able to bear tradition with dignity and also be enabled to be accepted in society at large. To what extent may these organizations contribute to a better understanding of the two worlds is a question answered by a sum total of two components.

The revolving door image gains significance in urban Indian communities where the reality of “stereotypes construct[ing] an identity from the ‘outside’” (Vickers 3) is more threatening. Maintaining ties with Indian cultures of the home communities is more problematic and that results in the dangerous, imposed identity constructed by mainstream expectations. While not necessarily true in its entirety, there is a certain tendency within the urban Indian populace to possess a stronger “need to identify and assert their culture, a certain neotraditionalism” (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 82). As Indian educator Roger Buffalohead has noted, it is a state of “well-adjusted schizophrenia,” (qtd. in Ebbott and Rosenblatt 129) although the need of adjustment appears to be quite one-dimensional. The examination of urban Indian communities will highlight the significance of the Milwaukee Indian Community School and the culture center as living examples of the possibility of creating a new composite Indian identity.

## **5. WISCONSIN: A MICROCOSM OF FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY**

### **5.1. The Indian Problem in the State**

Allotment

The Indian Reorganization Act

Termination

### **5.2. Treaty Rights Controversies**

### **5.3. Milwaukee: An Exemplary Case**

Organizations: Consolidated Tribes and United Indians of Milwaukee

American Indian Information and Action Group

The Indian Council for the Elderly

We Indians

### **5.4. Diversity**

## 5. WISCONSIN: A MICROCOSM OF FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

### 5.1. The Indian Problem in the State

In the preface to the 2002 edition of *Wisconsin Indians* Lurie claims that Wisconsin “has served as a kind of natural laboratory for most of the government’s policies and programs while at the same time Wisconsin Indian tribes and organizations have exemplified and sometimes led in new developments to improve the lives of Indian people” (IX). The first half of the quotation reveals the experience of being an experimental “species” in government politics, while the second expresses the outstanding nature of, and thus, verifies the case study of Milwaukee and its community school. The analysis of these two distinctive notions will highlight how Indian people profited as the following discussion will prove, and it will be demonstrated how Indian people profited from their relatively early experience of federal Indian policy. Lurie also claims that following the events of 1969--the first publication of *Wisconsin Indians*-- “Wisconsin continues to offer an unusual opportunity to understand the national Indian picture” (IX). This method also works reciprocally; the difficulties in mapping the Indian situation in multicultural America are easier to overcome with a special focus on one selected exemplary case.

Wisconsin hosts a large Indian population with tribes representing cultural and linguistic varieties. According to 2000 Census data, the state’s total population of 5,363,675 includes 47,228 American Indians and Alaska Natives (Demographic). In view of the fact that the Indian population of the state is “the fourth largest east of the Mississippi River” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 1) may explain its function as an experimental area for government policies. The Wisconsin Census data does not offer the category of American Indian or Native Alaskan alone or in combination, but the Census is the only resource one may employ for information of racial composition. The Census of total population by race divided into counties includes

the category of two or more races with no reference to what combination it refers to. Thus, the number of the American Indian populace of the state is rather an estimate than an exact number.

To illustrate the variety of Indian cultures in the state and prepare for the analysis of Wisconsin's particular standing in Indian policy, the seven current tribes of Wisconsin will be discussed briefly. The Chippewa/Ojibwa, Potawatomi, Menominee, Brotherton, Stockbridge-Munsee are Algonquian. The Oneida, former members of the Iroquois Confederacy, and the Siouan Winnebagos belong to three different linguistic stocks. The Brotherton have applied for federal recognition to the Bureau of Acknowledgement and Recognition but have not received federal tribal status as yet.

The United States' "divide and rule" policy affecting Indian populations is also a part of Wisconsin's Indian history. The Menominee, "the oldest known continuous residents [. . .] an undivided exclusively Wisconsin tribe" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 10) and the Winnebagos, who now prefer to be called Ho-Chunk, were the first two nations populating the state. They arrived prior to white settlement, and lived in large communities which explains why "[the Winnebagos] were so particularly hard hit" with the "impact of new diseases" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 13) brought by newly arriving Indians and white settlers. Due to the settlers' pushing of the Indians further west into the continent, Wisconsin also hosts "New York Indians" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 10). The Stockbridge-Munsee, the Oneida and the Brotherton tribes are located in the north of the state. Their moving to Wisconsin in the 1820s and 1830s brought about clashes with the already present Menominee. Federal policy tried to compromise the conflicts "resulting in the most complicated set of Indian land transactions in Wisconsin" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 10). There are six Chippewa--Ojibwa-- reservations in the state, and they are spread over a wide area which accounts for the "rise to virtually autonomous bands" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 9). The tribe also has relatives in Canada, Minnesota and Michigan.

The Potawatomi were also refugees in the state and have ties with their tribe located in Canada, Oklahoma and Kansas. “The Potawatomis had a cohesive sense of tribal identity, and their dispersion into separate entities resulted from their treatment by the government” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 9). The Forest County Potawatomi will be discussed in Chapter 7 in detail as sponsors of the Indian Community School.

Rather than analyzing individual treaties signed by Wisconsin Indians and the United States, the chapter is constructed to provide examples of the government’s Indian policy and how the state of Wisconsin handles its own Indian problem. The twentieth century deserves special attention, as a number of precedents attracted national interest. Lurie states that “virtually every experiment in the history of the Indian policy has been tried out on one tribe or another in Wisconsin, but it seems that no matter what the government attempted, the effect was progressive impoverishment of the Indian people” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 15). The precedents introduced here will describe how federal and state power affected any given Indian population, and how Indian people tried to counteract the destructive forces of certain policies.

Imbedded in the United States Indian policy was the concept that Indian people were disappearing fast on contact with white people. Policy makers constructed their theories around the concept of the “vanishing race” still prevailing in mainstream America. However, already in the nineteenth century treaty making period, the process of vanishing stopped. As Lurie says: “Had the treaty makers glanced eastward at the Indians longest in contact with whites, they would have seen that not all of them vanished and their population had ceased decreasing” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 17). The Oneida provide a relevant example to this fact. By the time Wisconsin gained statehood in 1848, except for their reservation, all Indian land was in the possession of the United States with the intention of Indians being relocated in Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River (Lurie *Wisconsin* 22).

Just as the reservation system provided a potential alliance of former enemies by uniting their forces against the United States, such dangers were also imbedded in settling various tribes in the proximity of each other. Again, Wisconsin proves how federal Indian policy was tested on the state's Indian population. Three of the tribes were resettled in the state from the New York area; the Winnebago were divided within the state and western lands, while earlier Wisconsin tribes were pushed further on to western territories. Only the Menominee avoided relocation (Lurie *Wisconsin* 19-23).

### Allotment

The 1887 General Allotment Act discussed in Chapter 3 had severe consequences in the state of Wisconsin. Due to different tribal organizations, the tribes were variously affected by the parceling out of reservation territory. The Menominee already operated their lumber industry, and held the largest reservation land base in the state never to be subjected to allotment. Proponents of allotment saw the Menominee success as proof of the American Indian's ability to adapt to mainstream values.

The Oneida and the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation were eliminated and by 1910 "all the land was divided and fee patents were issued, taking the reservation out of tribal trust status" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 37). As opposed to the "almost three-quarters loss sustained across the country," in Wisconsin, "about half of the total reservation acreage was lost" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 37). Allotment bears its consequences even today, as when a tribally initiated business requires undivided land, parcels lost through the procedure of allotment may pose a problem. Be it lumbering, tourism, or any industrial or agricultural enterprise in the state, patchwork-like reservations make investment problematic. Self-determination also implies self-sustainment to a certain extent as federal assistance is unreliable for long-term planning.



And, although, allotment was repealed in 1934 with the passing of the Indian Reorganization Act, tribes are still struggling with its effects.

### The Indian Reorganization Act

In 1926, on the request of the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Institute for Government Research assigned the task of investigating American Indian grievances to Dr. Lewis Meriam, a social scientist. Financed by John D. Rockefeller, with a staff of nine education, health, sociology, economics and law experts, Meriam conducted a seven-month research including field trips throughout the United States. In 1928 the data collected was published under the title *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Olson and Wilson 100). The 1928 Meriam Report was designated to reveal the problems of the American Indian population in the United States. The devastating conditions the report showed led to the Indian Reorganization Act. Yet again, Wisconsin was cited as an exemplary case. The Menominee, who did not have to undergo allotment, were shown a model tribe with their successfully operating lumbering and forestry industries. The report did not claim the tribe to be well-to-do, but stated that it could “carefully manage” its business, “[provide] employment” and “[support] community facilities and services” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 40). Interpreted as both a positive example to follow by Indian people and to prove to the United States that tribes could manage on their own, the Menominee case should be ideal. For one, they were exempt from allotment, the effect of which other tribes had to struggle with. More importantly, they seemed to be able to counteract the cultural de-Indianization imbedded in federal Indian policy. Within their own Indian country, supporting themselves on terms mainstream America expected them to, the need to assimilate and lose Indianness was not on the agenda. As such, they counteracted the individualistic nature of American ideals, and still sustained tribal membership as primary affiliation. The Menominee proved that economic prosperity did not necessarily entail

individualism as promoted by mainstream thinking. They provided an alternative to the assimilationist policy by maintaining tribal property and economically functioning according to mainstream societal rules.

Together with the Winnebagos, the Menominee did not subscribe to the IRA as “they already had an elected tribal government that had evolved as their lumbering enterprise required tribal approval of contracts” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 41). The Winnebago, with no reservation of their own, did not vote for or against the IRA, as they believed “it might jeopardize their long-standing hope of collecting money [. . .] from old treaty negotiations” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 41). Yet, other tribes profited from the IRA as two of the Chippewa reservations, and the extension of the Stockbridge and Oneida lands became possible through the act.

### Termination

The policy of termination had two significant consequences in the state of Wisconsin. The first was the state’s acceptance of Public Law 280, a federal statute which enabled states to assume criminal, as well as civil jurisdiction in matters involving Indians as litigants on reservation land. Prior to Public Law 280, these cases were the responsibility of either tribal or federal courts. “Essentially, Public Law 280 was an attempt by the federal government to reduce its role in Indian affairs” (*Public*).

Enumerated in Public Law 280 were six states which were obliged to assume jurisdiction from the outset of the law,” (*Public*) including Wisconsin. Many opposed the enactment of Public Law 280 in the state for numerous reasons. As in many other cases affecting Indian matters, it was passed without the consent of Indian people. Although in 1968 it was amended “requiring the consent of the tribe, consent was not required for states that had assumed jurisdiction up to 1968” (*Public*). Thus, Wisconsin acted without tribal consent.

In addition to this argument based on moral grounds, a more pragmatic explanation was explicit to the opponents. With termination and relocation on the agenda, Public Law 280 was just another move of the federal government to shift economic responsibilities of the pressing Indian problem onto the states.

The second, and more severe, effect of termination is displayed by the fate of the Menominee tribe. The oldest, exclusively Wisconsin tribe had been mentioned in regard to all the policies affecting the tribes of the state. Their success in avoiding allotment backfired with the policy of termination and their exemplary status in the Meriam report brought tragic consequences. As the report proved the Menominee success in their enterprises, they became primary targets on the termination agenda. Although the tribe had about “\$10 million in cash assets” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 47), awards from a suit with the federal government for mismanagement of their business, the Menominee were cheated into termination. “The tribe had voted to use more than half of their award in per capita payments [ . . . ] the rest they earmarked for improvements to their hospital and other tribal purposes” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 47). Still following the practice of the ward-guardian relationship between Indians and the federal government, Congress had the final say in paying the award. The Menominee were called together on two occasions to vote about the issue of termination. The first time they were threatened that if they rejected termination, their awards, even though they were its rightful possessors, would not be allocated for the per capita payments. The voting procedure confused tribal members, since the two questions of accepting termination and renouncing the money already awarded, were posed singularly. A “yes” or “no” was accepted to answer to the two questions. As people were concerned with their legal claims, most of them voted “yes” which in the government’s reading meant an acceptance of termination. By the time the tribe called together a second poll and explicitly voted against termination, Congress had accepted the first results and neglected the unanimous tribal rejection of termination (Lurie

*Wisconsin* 46-50). Just as in the case of the interpretation of treaties, purposefully ambiguous communication was a major weapon in the hands of proponents of Menominee termination to deceive Indian people. “The principle of termination” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 47) and the combination of the two issues entrapped the Menominee in a situation which took two decades to change. The Menominee Termination Act was passed in 1954, and went into effect in 1961.

The consequences of termination were devastating for the Menominee. Most of their “working capital had been wiped out because the government had forced them to pay part of the cost of developing a termination plan they had not wanted in the first place” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 53). As a result of this, the tribe lost its hospital and businesses which they were supporting on the award money. The Menominee Reservation was renamed Menominee County, but the name change was the least harmful of the consequences of termination. For services they provided for themselves before the act was passed, they had to rely on Shawano County. The tribe was turned into Menominee Enterprises, Inc. (MEI) which functioned as a business management body with former tribal members being stock holders in the company. Seemingly a democratic organization, MEI operated with a “voting trust that actually held all the shares and voted those of minors and ‘incompetents’ as a bloc” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 53). This meant that the Menominee people had less say in their own affairs than ever before, and as MEI was headed by white businessmen, the organization could not function as a tribal enterprise. With losing money to termination, and the effects of the loss of federal trust status, the Menominee soon had to apply for emergency investments from the federal government to cope with increasing problems. The self-sufficiency of the tribe was also terminated with its loss of federal trust status. Since MEI was not bound to represent Menominee interests, it soon became apparent that its business transactions did more harm than good. Thus, in 1970, concerned Menominees formed “Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee

Shareholders (DRUMS)” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 54). The acronym was an appropriate choice of name, as it symbolically expresses, on the one hand, the Menominee’s voicing their concerns over mismanagement of business, and, on the other, recalls an American Indian symbol of unity with sacred implications. With the help of DRUMS, a march to the state capitol, an explicit Civil Rights method, the assistance of Governor Patrick Lucey, and lobbying Congress, the tribe succeeded in repealing termination in 1973. The Menominee Restoration Committee, headed by Ada Deer, was set up to recover as much of the loss as possible, and its primary goal was to achieve “federal protection without federal domination” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 55).

Between the enactment of the Menominee termination act and restoration in 1973, the situation of the tribe altered both economically and socially to the extent that a single act could not restore the original state of tribal trust. As it will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, American Indian Activism in the 1960s and 1970s grew intense. At this point in time, the Menominee offered an example with the Menominee Warrior Society, who, dissatisfied with the slow changes after restoration and claiming that members of the newly established Restoration Committee “were insensitive to the grass roots people,” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 56) occupied the vacant Alexian novitiate, property of the Roman Catholic Church. This former place of peace turned into a “war zone” and a “training ground for militants and the military” (Wells n.pag.). The Warriors believed that instead of the slow bureaucratic procedures of the Restoration Committee, direct action was needed for the tribe to be restored. The takeover also had greater implications, as the reasons cited by the warriors varied from “racism by whites against Indians” to “secure[ing] a hospital for the tribe” and “to protest[ing] the terms of the 1934 Indian Restoration Act and the way it was executed in Menominee County” (Wells). Remembering the violence of Alcatraz, and the Wounded Knee trading post occupations, the Wisconsin National Guard was called in to ward off more serious events.

The handful of warriors faced 1000 National Guardsmen in their 34-day occupation of the novitiate. The Restoration Committee renounced any connection with the Warrior Society, and the occupation resulted in tribal factionalism. Commenting on the takeover the acting tribal government described the Warrior Society as a “dissident minority who were disenchanted after losing an election” (Wells 7). “Further internal disturbances [ . . . ] including seven violent deaths” resulted in the fact that “it took the Menominee five years to reach an agreement on a constitution and the election of permanent officers” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 56).

These incidents are proofs of how termination did not only affect the tribe economically, but also had social and political consequences. Tribal factionalism and conflicts between MEI, DRUMS and The Menominee Warriors Society eventually could have led to total dispersion. Yet, cultural bonds are stronger and being a Menominee took priority over these factional struggles. This is not to say that all the problems were solved through the help of tribal culture, but the Menominee tribal spirit proved stronger than the harmful effects of government policy. Their case also demonstrated to the government that termination is not only a dead-end solution to the Indian problem, but, in fact, aggravated it and required more federal assistance than before.

## 5.2. Treaty Rights Controversies

Quoting Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Joe Handrick says: “If King were alive today to make such a statement in northern Wisconsin in 1987, he would be branded a racist by those who support American Indian spearfishing” (n.pag.). The author of “WE ARE NOT RACIST” is referring to the conflicts arising from treaty interpretations, and the consequences they had in Wisconsin. Treaty Rights Controversies affected the Chippewa people the most. Following the Civil Rights tactics already mentioned in regard to the Menominee, the Lac Courte Oreilles Chippewa took immediate action and occupied a dam to

protect their rights promised in 1921. The Lac Courte Oreilles protested the destruction of Indian graves and homes, and the flooding of more reservation territory than the contract allowed to the Northern States Power Company. The flooding affected wild rice beds which the Lac Courte Oreilles were dependent on (Lurie *Wisconsin* 65). The Chippewa's right to hunt and fish on ceded land was upheld pursuant to the treaty of 1837. Although the Lac Courte Oreilles originally based their argument on business contracts, the case soon entailed the issue of treaty rights. As it was mentioned in Chapter 4, language between parties of bilateral agreements, in this case Indian people and the United States, required new interpretations. "A precedent-setting case in 1974 in the state of Washington had special importance for the Wisconsin Chippewas" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 66). The case stated that Indian people were entitled to gather, hunt and fish in the territories they ceded, since they signed away the land itself and not the rights connected to it. Fishing and tourism was a growing attraction in Wisconsin providing increasing revenues, and the state soon became concerned with "illegal" Indian fishing and hunting. The matter became more complicated with the enactment of Public Law 280 mentioned above. On Indian protest in 1966, "the state attorney general ruled that the state could enforce its game laws on Indians only outside the boundaries of reservations" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 66).

1974 saw the evolving conflicts of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band when they argued that the arrest of two band members for spearfishing off the reservation abrogated their treaty rights. The case began in 1974 but it reached final decision only in 1990. The trial went from court to court and the Lac Courte Oreilles were joined by the other five Chippewa bands "as parties to the same treaties" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 68). Over the sixteen years, the case passed through three phases. The first, "declaratory" one was designated to "determine the nature and scope of Chippewa treaty rights" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 68). Anti-treaty concerns targeted the time of signing the treaties and claimed that the Chippewa were only entitled to use the

“aboriginal” methods and the amount of spearfishing should not extend beyond the subsistence level. The second, “regulatory” phase determined “the permissible scope of regulation by the state of Wisconsin in view of the fact that the landscape, ownership, and distribution of species had changed in the ceded area” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 69). The last, “damages” step was to determine “the amount of damages, if any, the Chippewas were entitled to for interference in their treaty rights” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 69). Although the tribe had the opportunity to turn to the Supreme Court to overrule a previous decision denying their right for compensation, they declined “as a gesture of peace and friendship towards the people of Wisconsin, in a spirit they hope may some day be reciprocated on the part of the general citizenry and officials of this state” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 69).

The hope Indian people set forth in this declaration was, however, an unfounded one. The quotation recalling Martin Luther King’s Dream speech appeared in an issue published by one of the Wisconsin anti-treaty and anti-Indian groups. Associations such as PARR (Protect Americans’ Rights and Resources), STA (Stop Treaty Abuse, Inc.) and WARR (Wisconsin Alliance for Rights and Resources) (Lurie *Wisconsin* 70) posed serious threats to any Indian action. The last acronym suggests what these groups really believed to be “peace and friendship.” The Milwaukee Public Museum’s Native American Resource File includes publications of the above mentioned groups which reveal the severity of the conflict. In “WE ARE NOT RACIST,” Handrick claims that “BECAUSE of Indian spearing, more and more people are acquiring racist attitudes.” He also states that those who insist on spearfishing should turn their attention to other matters as “American Indian children do not need fish, they need jobs.” The PARR issue containing this article also features a publication which brings together Wisconsin’s two stereotypical “products”: Indian spearfishing and beer. The irony of the case is unquestionable as the introduction of the Anti-Treaty Beer was timed for a peaceful rally in support of the Indian cause. A Chippewa tribal leader also remarked that



those who “caused the most trouble were the drunks” (Waukau) The Anti-Treaty Beer also demonstrates how non-Indian residents of the state cooperated with the tribes. The drink was boycotted (“Treaty”), but more significant was the assistance of civil rights groups and the foundation of HONOR (Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights) which, by the 1980s, grew from a Wisconsin-based organization to be a national association which still assists in Indian affairs (Lurie *Wisconsin* 71).

Not only did Wisconsin set examples for Indian issues all over the country, the state also actively contributed to federal Indian affairs. As Lurie claims the state “has reflected, exemplified and helped to shape national Indian policy [. . .] [and] sent three people to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Philleo Nash, Robert Bennet and [. . .] Ada Deer” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 89). In such a diverse Indian environment, with such historical experience of federal Indian policy, Wisconsin Indian people present a perfect example on how federal and local forces affect tribes, and how they react to these forces. The state’s largest city, thus, is understandably the focal point of exploring Indian issues in the twentieth century.

One of the earliest unified attempts of American Indian organizations to act as one entity was a state-level venture, the Native American Project of 1975. Launched from Milwaukee, the need for the unification of Indian interests materialized on the state level. Local organizations and their most urgent concerns tend to accord with state organizations and their objectives. The network of familial ties in American Indian communities also contributes to interaction of organizations, whether smaller or larger scale. Upon a 1973 request on behalf of the Indian Community in the State of Wisconsin, Governor Patrick J. Lucey set up the Native American Project. It was to evaluate services in the most problematic fields of health, education, housing, employment and law enforcement offered by the state to various Indian communities. The project board included representatives of American Indian communities in Wisconsin and the Governor’s Equal Rights Council. One direct aim was to

establish clear lines along which local, state and federal responsibilities were distributed in the above mentioned areas (Indian Community Meeting). Another objective, if less overt, is marked by the timing of the project. By the early 1970s, dissatisfaction with services to American Indians caused militant turmoil in various states. The proximity of Wounded Knee in South Dakota and the relatively large Indian population scattered over the State of Wisconsin may explain the Governor's assistance and willingness to contribute to launching a unified American Indian project.

The forces that maintain a sense of coherence among the current Wisconsin tribes have been analyzed on the state level, and will be discussed with regard to their effects on the narrower Milwaukee setting. As tribal affiliation maintains a very strong sense of Indian identity the issues discussed so far are relevant in the analysis of urban Indian self-help organizations.

### 5.3. Milwaukee: an Exemplary Case

"The state's largest intertribal urban population is in Milwaukee (variously estimated today at around 10,000), where Indian people began settling in the 1920s and, in 1937, founded the state's first (and among the nation's oldest) urban Indian organizations, the Consolidated Tribes of Milwaukee" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 1). While other large cities in the United States, such as Denver, Chicago, New York and Los Angeles hosted designated BIA offices to assist relocation, Milwaukee was never declared an official relocation city under the Voluntary Relocation Program of the 1950s. Nevertheless, the growing number of relocatees in the city led to the Bureau's setting up of "information clearinghouses" (Lurie *Wisconsin* 48) to assist its Indian population of considerable size. The city drew most of its Indian migrants from Wisconsin. How urban Indian culture centers and tribally run schools assist in reconciling the

differences between non-Indian urban communities, reservation communities and urban Indian communities is a question to be explored in the Milwaukee setting.

Lurie argues that in the Milwaukee area Indian people have always been present despite the widely shared opinion that in between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1955 introduction of the Relocation Program Indians disappeared from the area. 1953 was the first time in Milwaukee when research specifically targeting urban Indian populations was carried out in the city. Up until then, the urban Indian population was viewed--and the notion is still prevalent today--as a "modified version" of reservation Indians and not as an independent entity. In 1953, Robert Ritzenthaler's research found a "sizable, established population that maintained tribal ties through visiting and sometimes alternating city and reservation residence" (Lurie "Milwaukee's Native" 81).

The size of the Indian population is a key factor in the Indian country within Milwaukee's city limits. Numbers suggest a great deal about how active the Indian community was and they also reveal the American Indian attitude toward city life. Since the school was founded in the late 1960s, it is relevant to list population figures of that time. According to 1970 census data, the number of American Indian residents in Milwaukee was 3,777 ("Relative size"). Taking the natural distrust of American Indians into consideration, and adding the fluctuating nature of the population, this number should be considered inaccurate. A little more than a decade later, based on the following census results, "one third of the American Indians in Wisconsin (8000) are concentrated in the Milwaukee area" ("A Show"). This fact would imply that the city's Indian population decreased by approximately one thousand. Yet another decade later, new data gathered on the city's population defines American Indians comprising a little more than 1 per cent of the city's population. According to 1990 census results, the number of American Indian residents in Milwaukee is 5,858. Statewide there has been a 33.5% growth of American Indian population. Charts, however, do

not display numbers corresponding with Indian populations (Gilbert). In 1991, numbers also based on the 1990 counts, show a significant difference between those in the previous statement and the following quote: “over 7,000 Indians live in the county, more than twice the number in any other county in the state” (Auer). Data collected in 1990 suggest that numbers are expected to grow as the white population displays a tendency to decline in number, while minority populations in general seem to increase. Yet another significant difference between minority and white populations describes how 41% of the minority populations is younger than 18, whereas the white population is aging (Auer).

A 1970 survey conducted in Milwaukee observes that the “desire on [American Indians’] part to keep their separate identities and associate along tribal and Pan-Indian lines” (Mudgett and Wilson 5) resulted in American Indian residents’ tendency to retreat from wider community activities. This fact may explain why urban Indian communities were considered invisible by the city.

Organizations: Consolidated Tribes and the United Indians of Milwaukee

One explicit manifestation of the need to preserve Indian cultures within an urban setting and the active Indian presence in Milwaukee is suggested by the number of Indian organizations. Reconstructing the Indian country of the city of Milwaukee and its immediate surroundings prior to the most militant phase in the history of the Milwaukee Indian Community School should begin with a demonstration of the diversity within the Milwaukee Indian community has been manifested in the creation of numerous organizations, all working towards similar, if not the same, goals. Some Indian organizations will gain more focus than others with respect to their historical and social importance. Those that will be discussed in lesser detail are not of less significance, but either there is very little information available on their birth and operation or they did not contribute directly to the creation of the Indian Community School.

The formation of these organizations and the events evolving around them will follow a thematic ordering rather than a chronological structuring.

An important factor in analyzing urban Indian groups is that “if there is one active inter-tribal organization, there will be several” (Lurie “Survey” 5). The point is clearly demonstrated in the case of Milwaukee’s American Indian organizations. Consolidated Tribes and the United Indians of Milwaukee will be discussed in detail to explain the function and operation of similar organizations in urban areas. As the birth of the latter indirectly caused the decline of the former, causes of factionalism in the Indian community will be explained.

According to the 1970 survey on the city’s Indian population, the Oneida were the oldest and largest nation in Milwaukee, beginning their urban migration in the 1920s. This early date explains how the Oneida became the first to establish an intertribal organization in the city, The Consolidated Tribes of American Indians, founded in 1937. Being the first, and for a while, the only such organization, the group served “a literally lifesaving purpose” (Lurie “Milwaukee’s Native” 81) by counteracting the federal policy to make the Indian disappear. Like other self-help organizations, Consolidated was to balance between “getting ahead” or “staying even” off the reservation. Getting ahead in the urban environment equaled suppressing one’s cultural heritage in favor of mainstream norms and values. Staying even would imply a bare survival for American Indians, with very few of the promises materializing which lured people to relocate to urban areas in the first place.

There are all kinds of factors generating problems in the urban environment. Leaving the reservation for the urban environment results in the conflict between the value systems of the two worlds. The traditional Indian view of economics and politics does not subscribe to the notion of authority in the Western sense. Personal values such as respect for elders, generosity, consideration of the rights of others and self-control (Pease) are also underlying notions of the mainstream value-system; however, they are treated less overtly as virtues in

American culture in general than in Indian cultures. In the city, having left the cradle of Indian values behind, one may have to face the need for the choice of either. The other pool of problems springs from the lack of experience in the home communities. As Menominee Tribal Judge Christine Webster explains, “most of the young Indian men at the reformatory in Green Bay did not know the words “culture,” “identity,” “race.” For race, some answered ‘stock car races’” (Boyd). Having no direct connection with one’s own culture may result in a cultural vacuum very explicitly present in the problems of Indian education. Consolidated came into being at a time when Indian people had a cultural support system to fall back on and this may explain why they did not urge the creation of a separate center to serve as a base for all their activities. Consolidated could not afford to maintain a permanent base for their activities, thus, their operation was limited to various rentals.

The other organization dominating Milwaukee’s Indian community appeared in 1968. Thirty years after Consolidated was established, Father Harry Vetter, an Episcopal minister and “Indian hobbyist” (Lurie “Papers”), called forth the establishment of another group with the promise of a place of its own. After long discussions the group chose to adopt the name The United Indians of Milwaukee, UIM. City powwows and other, mostly cultural, activities started by Consolidated were soon taken over by the newly created organization and eventually UIM contributed to the disappearance of Consolidated Tribes. “UIM is a group of Indians seeking to help themselves as Indians” (“Letter to Department Chairman”) said Lurie in a letter about the organization. This could hardly be in conflict with the functions Consolidated intended to fulfill in their own organization. However, the next statement reveals the difference between the two organizations: “Indians tend to be overlooked as a group by public and private agencies, because of the distinctive, cultural nature of the Indian needs that do not fit most existing programs geared to disadvantaged individuals or nuclear families” (Lurie “Department”) Referring to UIM as the more vocal of the two organizations

Lurie cites the most urgent needs of the 1960s. While Consolidated was founded in 1937 and UIM approximately thirty years later, the organizations had various needs they did not share in their entirety.

Consolidated Tribes, the oldest of the organizations formed in 1930s, lost its priority status due to the fact that it “turned into primarily Oneida organization” (Lurie “UIM” n. pag.). The United Indians of Milwaukee of the late 1960s took over the activities initiated by the Consolidated Tribes. UIM was the first minority organization to claim space prior to the formal establishment of an effectively working cultural organization that would function as the main headquarters for preserving Indian cultures within the city. The acquisition of a former firehouse proffered a firm cause as well as base for the apperception of urban Indian identity.

By the time UIM was created, the Oneida majority had been replaced by a more even representation of Wisconsin tribes. Thus, if the non-Indian community and its agencies were unable to communicate with a relatively homogeneous group of American Indians, the problem became much more intense when a more heterogeneous Indian community was involved. It did cause some controversy in the organization itself. As UIM was very conscious about representing all the Indians in the area, they had special rules applying to the Board of Directors. When explaining the organization’s structure, UIM paid close attention to the fact that every tribe should be represented in the board meetings so that everyone, every tribal entity, had an equal amount of say–so. Referring to Consolidated, one member explained “a similar organization in the past became lop-sided and one tribe dominated the rest” (“UIM Board” 03/30/1970). Rules and by-laws were introduced from the very beginning to ensure every tribe’s equal representation on the Board of Directors. “Board members are closely checked with regard to tribal affiliation” (“UIM Board” 03/30/1970) and UIM even offered an

alternative for those who were “singles”--sole representatives of any given tribe. They were allowed to form their own “tribe” within UIM (“UIM Board” 03/30/1970).

Due to the changes in the Indian community of the city, membership rules also differed in UIM and Consolidated. As Consolidated experienced problems with city life in a different aspect, they were not particularly against non-Indian membership within their organization. They maintained ties with the so-called Haylushka Society. The bulk of the Haylushka members were Indian hobbyists with some American Indian members. Since UIM was “less than excited” about white participation and only one member of the Haylushka society maintained some ties with UIM, the society soon ceased to exist. As Lurie says, “after the acquisition of the fire house, the Indians have taken over promotion of the innuendo image, at the folk fair, performances for church and other groups, even lectures in public schools from whites who play Indian much to the Indians’ long-standing annoyance but they were unable to do anything about it” (Lurie “City” 6).

UIM still has not changed its rules concerning membership. Their 1996 “Proposed By-Law Changes” acknowledges three categories of membership. Those who may serve on the board and thus, are voting members, are of American Indian ancestry. “Indian” is defined according to Secretary of Interior definitions, denoting a member of any legally recognized tribe or member of any tribe terminated since 1940 and as such, it conforms to the political definition of one’s race.

The status of associate members is reserved for those who are married to Indians and thus became involved in community work. The third category was open for honorary members who made contributions not only to the organization but to the community in general, and this way they earned the same rights as associate members. At a 1970 meeting, when briefing a visitor on the various tribes represented in the Board, one member included Nancy Lurie as a UIM board member and remarked in the tone of traditional Indian humor



that “they need a mascot anyway” (“UIM Board” 03/30/1970 2). Such a statement reveals that although outside assistance was very much appreciated, the designation of the self-help group was meant to be by and for Indian people exclusively. Another implication underlying this notion is that UIM was convinced of its own strength and capacity to withstand the paternalism that still prevailed in federal Indian policy during the 1970s. Furthermore, the intent to offer alternative institutions was by the end of the 1960s not only an urgent need but an aim very likely to be achieved by Indian people without non-Indian support.

Consolidated and UIM started on different grounds regarding their first courses of action. Consolidated was hosted by charitable organizations and did not word its wish for a permanent place. In a 1980 letter to the city development commissioner, minority organizations posed a request to enable them to use city property rent-free for self-help purposes. Explaining the reasons, Lurie stated that with the social events such as powwows organized by these groups in Milwaukee a lot of visitors are drawn from the state, thus “waiving the annual rent, the city will still be receiving more benefits from the United Indians than it will be giving in return” (Lurie “City”). This is quite tangible a reason why the city should add financial support to an Indian organization.

UIM was the first organization to approach the city for the use of a vacant building, thus setting a precedent for others. Prior to that, although Consolidated had been operating for decades by the time United Indians came into being; their first targets did not include the acquisition of a building to serve as a permanent base. Furthermore, “there are quite a number of Indian organizations in the city serving Indian needs which have sprung up as a result of this initial organization which brought Indian people together to work in their own behalf” (Lurie “City”). The more support the city was willing to provide for launching minority programs, the less assistance these minority groups needed, now being capable of maintaining such self-help organizations on their own. This fact also indicates an independence that would

not necessarily agree with integration into mainstream culture. In addition, both Consolidated and UIM created grounds where Indians and non-Indians could interact, this way solving one of the most burning issues in the urban environment: lack of communication between the two communities.

The issues of visibility and invisibility, communication, lack of understanding and, sometimes, racial misunderstandings, called forth the creation of channels connecting the Indian and the non-Indian sides. As Lurie points out in a letter, “The United Indians of Milwaukee was formed in the first place because there was inadequate delivery of social services to Indian people in the city. Often they did not know what was available or social workers did not know how to communicate with them” (“City”). Despite the conflicting views of various Indian organizations the firehouse did serve as a common place for all Indians in the city. This meant that not only could Indian and non-Indian relations improve, but American Indians also had a sound base to defeat the “invisibility” that posed a problem for individuals.

The problems that led to the formation of United Indians of Milwaukee are recorded in the minutes and correspondence of the organization. Probably due to the initially informal structure of the group, there is no explicit and independent declaration of goals by UIM but objectives were documented in the same minutes. In addition to practical and palpable aims, United Indians intended to be more than a “recreational facility” for Indians in Milwaukee. UIM struggled for the establishment and maintenance of a center to function as headquarters for future plans “to develop education programs, social events and recreation activities; to provide a library of Indian history and culture, to hold powwows for Indians in the Milwaukee area and other areas” (United “Proposed”).

When voicing the main objectives of UIM, the organization very openly declared its standpoint on remaining nonpolitical. This latter addition to the proposed goals was needed to

secure the organization's future by establishing a "safe" ground for both the Indian and the non-Indian communities. The comparatively peaceful situation in Milwaukee becomes evident in view of a UIM member's account of how and why American Indian organizations had been formed in Minnesota. There she worked "with a radical and progressive group which got the money it needed and had a recreation room [. . .] where they had various programs and dances. The main issue they sought to tackle was police brutality and harassment" ("UIM General" 02/23/1970).

The apolitical declaration was also needed to have the largest possible number of Indian people in the city to participate in the activities of United Indians. Distancing American Indians from political issues secured a peaceful relationship with the non-Indian community, and it also encouraged American Indians to be involved in community activities, despite their distrust of organizations. Due to the invisible nature of urban Indian communities, UIM began its operation by designing a survey to assess people's interest in the creation of the proposed Indian Center in Milwaukee. They also intended to appraise the significance of the proposed center in view of what American Indians expected most from such a center. When first asked about their aims and services, one member summarized UIM's central role as fighting the main problems of "discrimination in housing and work but more in housing, also educational needs and communications" ("UIM Board" 3/30/1970). Thus, even though methods remained apolitical, UIM did perform tasks related to a political standpoint. Both housing and job assistance were crucial and the operation of a phone service for placing people in jobs and housing filled a gap overlooked by other social organizations. Distribution of used clothing and rummage sales not only helped the economically disadvantaged community members but, in turn, the proceeds were invested in the UIM center bit by bit. Sport events such as setting up lacrosse and softball teams also contributed to the betterment of the entire community.

The shortage of formal communication channels posed a serious problem resulting from the lack of a permanent location prior to the acquisition of the firehouse. By the time the survey was constructed, a list of names had been completed including people who had been active in various activities organized by the Indian community. Those who were included in the list were known for their involvement in educational procedures. The “Moccasin Telegraph,” as the informal communication channel was known, carried news of various scholarships, federal grants supporting young American Indians who planned to attend college, and correspondence with schools offering scholarships or special training for American Indian youth contributed to the range of services offered by UIM.

The goals and activities listed above all targeted Indian people and assisted them in achieving a more secure position in an urban environment. However, this was a reciprocal relationship that benefited the non-Indian community as well. While language training programs were to retain as much of Indian culture as possible in a non-reservation environment, the setting up of arts and crafts workshops could also be utilized by non-Indians. Another significant impact UIM had was to help the city population at large perceive Indian people as “they really are and not as TV shows them” (“UIM Board” 3/30/1970).

The recognition of such a possibility came from the city itself when it contacted the Milwaukee Public Museum to help set up an Indian village with authentic setting, dances, clothes and activities. The Museum’s public relations officer then contacted the United Indians of Milwaukee, promising to provide various sponsors to subsidize the Indians’ participation. Argument then arose over the amount of money to be paid to UIM with the city’s representative suggesting other groups were not being subsidized to the same extent or even at all. At this point, a UIM member voiced the organization’s opinion that “anyone can learn to tootle a flute but we are genuine Indians--we’re the only ones who could put on this

performance and we should be recognized for that. Actually we're just doing this for peanuts" ("UIM Special" 4).

It was not only financial questions that discouraged full-fledged support of participating in such an event. The lack of recognition and due attention they should have deserved were both missing from the negotiations between the two sides. As one UIM organizer put it, "it doesn't seem that we have made much progress since 1948 and it's time the Indians were properly recognized and properly paid" ("UIM Special" 5). Even though the dispute seemed to evolve around monetary issues, both the Indian and the non-Indian parties recognized the possibilities underlying participation. To quote the minutes of the meeting, "the Indians were not going to be cut short and were not all that avaricious to make money for the organization. They fully recognized the advantages pointed out by the women of the publicity of the United Indians and the opportunities for future activities in regard to the United Indians" ("UIM Special" 8).

In the minutes of this 1970 special board meeting members of the United Indians of Milwaukee discussed some questions evolving around the creation of UIM as a "counter" organization to Consolidated. Being aware of the fact that the museum staff was more familiar with Consolidated, UIM wondered about its own role in the proposed American Indian village. Lurie, who was affiliated with both the Museum and Consolidated as well, explained that UIM was invited "because they [UIM] had the building and would be able to organize things but [ . . . ] United Indians would involve all of the people in the city in the affair and that the proceeds would go to the Center which would serve all Indians" ("UIM Special" 7). This way the UIM policy to incorporate all the tribes in the city could be put to a test.

### American Indian Information and Action Group (AIIAG)

Along the same train of thought regarding “rival” Indian organizations, another group in close connection with UIM was mentioned briefly. One member expressed his concern over the newly formed American Indian Information and Action Group’s (AIIAG) presence at any UIM event and added that he hoped that “they’d keep the Action Group out at least in terms of preventing them from handing out ‘radical leaflets’”(“UIM Special” 9). The remark was a reaction to the turmoil elicited by the Action Group’s supportive comment on young Indians upsetting an ecology meeting in Madison. Similar situations occurred in connection with the local chapter of the American Indian Youth Council, which was not supported in its involvement with the federal program of Model Cities as it was considered too political and too problematic to be an appropriate ally for UIM. The above mentioned apolitical standpoint, thus, manifested itself as a conformist acceptance of mainstream norms.

The American Indian Information and Action Group is an accurate example of a relatively more militant route suggested by the above statement. Their name implies more emphasis on direct action than either Consolidated or UIM displayed. Being much less ardent in their protests than the American Indian Movement, AIIAG was still regarded as a representative of dangerously radical views in Milwaukee. AIIAG came into being two years after UIM was born, as a splinter of the latter. AIIAG advocates were not satisfied with the “peaceful” tactics of UIM in achieving their goals. As the minutes of a 1970 September UIM Board meeting reveal, “UIM is already faced with the problem of overcoming the image as middle-class, affluent Indians, along in years” (“UIM Board” 9/27/1970). Comprised of mostly young American Indian community members, AIIAG demanded a more direct and much faster solution to problems. With traditional Indian humor AIIAG’s titled its newsletter *Smog Signals* which served the urban Indian community with news of available services, local

activities and information on local and national Indian affairs. Targeting mostly education, AIIAG was essential in spawning the Milwaukee Indian Community School and, in 1972, the group also received some \$70,000 from the Office of Economic Opportunities to establish an Indian center in Milwaukee (“Health code”).

To prove its preference for direct action, not long after its birth, the Action Group declared open season on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to reform but not to abolish it entirely. The 1970 attack was published when the urban Indian population was still not entitled to programs that were financed through the Indian Bureau and mostly targeted reservation communities. Mrs. Loretta Domencich, secretary of AIIAG, stated that the steps to “try to change certain values of the dominant culture which are alien to the Indian way of life” should be taken soon otherwise the people would be transformed into “white Indians” (Hatchett “Indian”). The same year saw a demonstration staged to protest the Apostle Islands bill to take over former Chippewa land in Northern Wisconsin, an action also carried out largely by the Action Group. A year later, AIIAG voiced its discontent with discriminatory housing practices employed by the city. Commenting on the poor housing situation for most of Milwaukee’s Indian population, William Kelly, coordinator for AIIAG, cited the invisibility of the Indians in urban areas as a cause. He stated that “documentation of Indian problems is practically impossible. Indians don’t like to be classified” (“Indians Protest”).

The demonstrations organized by the American Indian Information and Action Group evoked criticism from the city’s older Indian organizations. One key to the reluctance to support AIIAG is revealed by the statement of its director, Michael Connors, according to whom the ultimate goal of the new movement was to “be part of this country but to keep our identity,” (Hatchett “Indians”) having already discarded some traditional practices. Although AIIAG’s seizure of houses subsidized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

(“HUD”) reveals that all organizations were working towards the same goals; the new tendency to utilize direct action was not accepted by older organizations.

This does not mean that any of these organizations wished to isolate themselves from each other. Interaction was essential in order to survive hardships in the city. Besides, some events required a unified appearance on behalf of the groups. The opinion, voiced by Wayne Martin, chairman of United Indians of Milwaukee, reveals the relationship among various American Indian organizations: “we like to meet several times a year, not only as a social function but also to discuss our social problems. The tremendous success of these gatherings is a testimony to the interest most Indians have in each other” (Sheard). The recognition of the need for mutual support is explicit as Martin continues. “We as American Indians are an integral part of this great city as few as we are. We can be a greater force in this community if we take part in our organizational affairs no matter which group we are affiliated with” (Sheard). Martin’s attitude explains how members of separate organizations formed a network by their multiple memberships. American Indian people soon had to acknowledge that despite their low representation in census numbers, the city had to be made aware of their existence. This also implied a need for the unification of various aims, although at this point, militancy, such as in the Coast Guard takeover case, did not divide the community.

The network of Indian social organizations, although all linked, operated independently in Milwaukee. Even though the number of American Indian organizations constantly increased, all preserved their independence. The 1970s played a significant part in the history of the Milwaukee Indian community, and the decade shaped the future American Indian issues in the city. As this chapter is devoted to the beginnings of Indian organizations and their roles in Indian and non-Indian community life, the 1970s Indian militancy will be discussed in Chapter 6. Despite the twenty-year gap, problems similar to those in the early 1970s recurred in the 1990s, and these issues will be explored here.



## The Indian Council for the Elderly

One explicit example of comparable disputes in the 1970s and the 1990s is the Indian Council for the Elderly, a non-profit agency serving the needs of senior citizens in the city. Though “the Indian Council for the Elderly is a coalition of several Wisconsin tribes, but primarily Oneida,” (Murphy) it is officially not affiliated with any Indian tribe, thus, it is not eligible for tribal reservation status and receives no proceeds from bingo revenues. However, it does receive funding from foundations, Indian tribes and individuals as well as applying for help from federal agencies to expand their nutrition site program.

When the Council proposed the construction of a combined senior center and housing on the Southwest side they ran into serious opposition. Opponents of the plan argued that the center would not be sufficient to serve the needs of seniors in the area with so few parking facilities to offer and would be likely to draw away business from already operating restaurants. The district Alderman Annette Sherbert seems to have made the most persuasive argument against such a center when she complained about “having another tax-exempt property on my district’s tax rolls” (Bauer).

The 1999 dispute over the establishment of a senior center dates five years back, when the Council came forward with plans of a proposed center located on the Southside. Voices of opposition were echoed in 1999 with the listing of problems: how subsidized meals would draw a large amount of traffic into the neighborhood. One resident added that “if the Indians get it--North Americans, I should not say Indians--it would be tax exempt” (Nichols). Residents tried to be very cautious not to merge tax and parking problems with the Council offering services primarily to Indian people. Nevertheless, the 1994 opinions reflected the experience of increasing racial slurs over the construction of such a facility. A more mildly put opinion over the possible ruling of the Common Council said that the Council was likely to display “anti-minority sentiments” in their decision (Nichols). Since eligibility for federal

funding was only possible if nutrition and housing programs were offered to “people of all races,” the fact that the target group consisted of people of “very low income” (Nichols) combined together with the Council’s name were sufficient enough reasons to discourage residents from allowing the center in the neighborhood.

*The Journal* “Editorial” responding to Alderman Sherbert’s and residents’ refusal of a senior center in the area coined a very appropriate term to describe such attitudes displayed by non-minority residents. The atmosphere is well characterized by the request of a nearby condominium’s residents, who “wanted a beautiful cyclone fence” to separate them from the proposed center in order to be able to “keep the quiet, very secure neighborhood that way” (“Elderly”). Milwaukee, yet again, came forward with the “NIMBY (not in my backyard)” argument (“Elderly”). The NIMBY argument perfectly corresponds with the opinion expressed by the Menominee Tribal Judge when she said, “There are stronger anti-Indian feelings the closer people live to Indians” (Reipenhoff). A reciprocal notion may also operate, as the most active, if not militant, groups are born, in urban areas. The closer Indian people live to non-Indians, the more “aggressive” their politics and tactics may become.

### We Indians

Some organizations managed to establish a connection between not only the Indian and non-Indian communities but also resolved conflicting views within the Indian community. Targeting mainly educational goals, the group called We Indians was successful in maneuvering along all these lines. As an integral part of the Milwaukee Public School’s bilingual and multicultural program, We Indians assists American Indian students by providing teachers and tutors for extra academic help, support services for parents and students (Bewitz). Although We Indians was not connected to any specific tribe, it did provide special instructions about the Woodland cultural heritage (Bewitz). Since there have

been very few Indian members on the Public School System's Advisory Panel, We Indians filled the gap caused by the lack of representation in the school system. The organization also aims at bridging the generation gap that has caused some splinters in Indian organizations by including in its membership "parents or legal guardians of enrolled Indian students, teachers, counselors, and students between grade 7-12" ("Six new").

#### 5.4. Diversity

The United Indians Powwow handout of 1992, titled "American Indian Agencies in Milwaukee," contains a list of twenty-two organizations targeting American Indian residents. Only one of them, the American Indian Advisory Council, claims to undertake political activities for American Indians. Seven organizations are education related, either affiliated with universities or departments of universities. In the field of economics and business four groups offer their services, including the Governor's Council on Urban Indian Affairs. The Milwaukee Indian Health Centers together with the American Indian Council on Alcoholism cover the field of health. Two groups are religious organizations, although Siggenauk includes numerous congregations. The remaining six, including United Indians, are organizations primarily concerned with cultural and social issues.

Only three years prior to this list Mayor John Norquist announced that one way to raise public interest in Indian issues was to "have the Indians involved in the public's agenda" (Wysocky). What he meant by "public" is not explicit in the article, but the Mayor considered environmental issues a vehicle to "break down racial barriers." A voice from the Indian community displayed a somewhat skeptical attitude when saying "hopefully Indians will be more than just 'ceremonial window dressing'" (Wysocky).

However pessimistic this opinion may sound, improvement in Indian and non-Indian urban relations is evident in Milwaukee. Wisconsin tribes in general came to be part of the

urban scene and this generated the establishment of new organizations. Not only the Indian community but all Milwaukee residents were witnesses to the change. With the new awareness Indian groups promoted among Indians and non-Indians equally “Indian Summer,” the closing event of Milwaukee’s Summerfest ground bears symbolic significance (Lurie “Milwaukee’s Native” 82). The annual Summerfest at the Lake Front evolved into a separate Summerfest starting the season to be followed by various ethnic festivals.

To be present and perceived in the city of Milwaukee as a people was an objective both Consolidated and United Indians aimed at. Traditional organizations chose peaceful, less “spectacular” means to overcome the difficulties American Indian people had experienced in the cities. In the early 1970s, a different climate of opinion resulted in the birth of organizations which were not satisfied by the methods utilized by groups who wished to remain non- or apolitical. The American Indian Movement and, to a certain extent, the American Indian Information and Action Group, followed a more aggressive pattern to achieve their aims.

Milwaukee Indian groups not only are open to the seven Wisconsin tribes but also are ready and willing to serve the needs of members of other tribes in the city. However, factionalism does hinder absolute cooperation. UIM has declared its aim as rather nonpolitical serving the Indian community in the city, regardless of tribal affiliation. Generational differences further hinder cooperation, as in the case of UIM and their Youth Group. How, despite the given clashes of interests, the urban Indian population can still have the power to voice grievances and assist newcomers in adjusting to city life will be demonstrated with the creation of the Milwaukee Indian Community School. The Congregation of the Great Spirit, a primarily Indian denomination within the Catholic Church follows both the American Indian belief traditions and Christianity. It is an exemplary case reconciling the differences between various cultural traits. Serving both the Indian and the non-Indian communities, one of the

key elements of such organizations is to present American society with a more realistic picture of the modern American Indian. Emerging obstacles, such as those generated by the birth of the Indian Community School attach further significance to urban Indian organizations.

## **CHAPTER 6: LOCAL ACTION WITH NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

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## 6. LOCAL ACTION WITH NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

As it has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, Indian activism in the state of Wisconsin and active Indian presence in the city of Milwaukee both foreshadowed a radical phase in the creation of the Indian Community School. The present chapter will explore the controversial occupation of a vacant coast guard building by the Milwaukee chapter of the American Indian Movement. Since direct action had evoked criticism from the already established Indian organizations, the eventual unification of urban Indian forces will be explicated here.

Emphasizing the pan-Indian efforts of the Indian community it is necessary to explore how conflicting viewpoints eventually reached consensus with regard to the Indian Community School. The fact that “stress on tribal identity is inseparable from Indian identity” (Levine and Lurie 309) is not contradicted by the sometimes opposing actions of the Milwaukee Indian community. While the goal to provide Indian education for children of American Indian descent has always been a unifying force, during the course of events, clashing interests within the Indian community also surfaced. What part these interests played and how they demonstrate diverse viewpoints will be examined in this chapter.

Although the Indian Community School had been operating by the time the local chapter of the American Indian Movement decided to take action, I will treat the reasons and roles of its formation in a separate chapter. Since the Coast Guard takeover had national implications, the present chapter will also focus on direct action as interpreted by AIM and relate local events to the national scene. AIM had already set a precedent with the involvement in the occupation of Alcatraz Island in California, and it had conforming incidents in Wisconsin as well. Yet, it is essential to establish a connection between the Alcatraz and the Milwaukee occupations to gain a better insight into the environment the Indian Community School functioned in.

The Coast Guard takeover on August 14, 1971 was one of the most militant phases in the history of the Milwaukee Indian Community School. In addition to the actual takeover of the Coast Guard station and its effects on the Indian and non-Indian communities, the relationship between them during and after the takeover will also be discussed in detail. Also, diverse viewpoints within the Indian community will be analyzed as they exemplify various goals and the tactics utilized to fulfill them. In order to gain a better insight as to how crucial the occupation of the former Coast Guard station was, the event has to be placed in a historical context. Since action was initiated by the Milwaukee chapter of the American Indian Movement, the organization's birth, existence and the responses to its existence are all significant aspects of the Indian Community School's history. Chronological ordering will not be followed as most of the events were similar at the local and at the national level.

### 6.1. Radicalism vs. Conservatism

The immediate predecessors of the Milwaukee takeover were deeply rooted in the 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, the 1968 founding of the American Indian Movement in Minnesota and the 1969 takeover of Alcatraz Island--the latter serving as a kind of model action. Although indirectly, the 1944 foundation of the National Congress of American Indians, NCAI, also contributed to AIM action. All these events raise the question of how the confronting forces of integration and separation permeated Indian country, with emphasis on urban Indian communities. They are also examples of the creation of the revolving door by urban Indian communities who intended to create their separate sphere of Indianness within a mainstream environment. The new generation of urban American Indians, dissatisfied with the tactics of existing Indian organizations chose to take direct action towards establishing their own means of commuting between mainstream and Indian cultures.



There had been indications of growing American Indian activism as early as 1961. The most radical standpoint was to demand the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs but to most American Indian leaders, the idea bore too much resemblance to the government's termination policy. Although advocates of absolute tribal sovereignty were outnumbered in Chicago, the principle of sovereignty did not dissolve with the end of the conference and the formerly small minority grew to an important faction on the American Indian political scene.

A significant impact of the American Indian Chicago Conference was to establish the second national American Indian organization, the National Indian Youth Council along with promoting major regional organizations, such as the Great Lakes Intertribal Council. "AICC also inadvertently planted the seed of protest demonstrations, an idea that many Indian people rejected" (Lurie "Commentary" 113). The urge to raise public awareness to contemporary and unique Indian problems was manifested in various forms such as fish-ins, demonstrations and the rapidly increasing number of publications expressing American Indian discontent.

Deloria claims there were only two "mainstream" national Indian organizations in existence at the time of the 1969 publication of his *Custer Died for your Sins*. The National Congress of American Indians and the recently formed National Indian Youth Council were strong rivals in various fields of Indian affairs. NCAI being the more conservative of the two had not yet achieved the concept of "unity for unity's sake" (Deloria *Custer* 26). Concerned with mainly legislative issues, tribal membership played a crucial role within the leading circles of NCAI. Thus, by its nature, NCAI was more involved in procedures directly affecting reservation populations and had little contact with urban Indian populations.

Conservatism also prevailed in the organization's attitude towards rising Indian activism. Responses to a group of Iroquois leaders picketing the White House and claiming their right as heads of sovereign nations to discuss grievances directly with the President of the United States evoked harsh criticism from NCAI. The reasons for labeling 1958-59

demonstrations “cheap publicity stunts” (“NCAI criticizes” 3-4) deemed such actions detrimental to the public perception of Indians as patriotic Americans. The rising new activist movement was condemned militant, rather than nationalistic, offering only criticism but no alternative solutions.

Even under a more liberal climate of opinion, civil rights demonstrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s were denounced as “not being the Indian way” (“Street”). Although NCAI admitted that the Indians of the cities may only solve problems if they speak for themselves, communicating problems was strictly restrained. The organization declared “work through regular organizations and governmental channels” (“Street”) to be the best way to fight for the rights of the Indian. This attitude prevailed in the urban Indian communities’ endeavor to create their own institutions, and the obstacles such efforts generated. As Grant Arndt demonstrates using the example of the Chicago Indian community trying to obtain a center of their own, the idea of an alternative and separate institution for the urban Indian groups was very much contradictory to mainstream Indian thinking. Opponents of the independent American Indian centers argued that the only way to full-fledged integration was the application and utilization of already existing sources.

### Milwaukee Radicalism

Despite growing Indian activism, the culmination of rising discontent was yet unforeseen by the general public. While in Milwaukee, Indian activism is said to have started with the protest to the Apostle Islands bill, there were forerunners prior to that demonstration in 1970. In 1969, the response to a court ruling and the presiding judge’s comment on how he was going to put an end to the Indian wars already anticipated direct action. The “Indian war” was a reference to the growing number of brawls initiated by American Indians of various tribal

affiliations. The rather sarcastic Indian answer to the judge was “General Custer also tried to stop Indian wars and look what happened to him” (“Indian Protest”).

Another indication of rising American Indian discontent was the stir caused in one of the public schools in Milwaukee. A substitute teacher utilized the widely known stereotypical images of the American Indian population to demonstrate the meaning of the word “propaganda.” Although she did not intend to promote images such as “lack of intelligence, not taking baths, alcoholism and laziness” (Lurie “Survey” 8) American Indian parents protested the event and demanded apology. The two incidents already implied that the “silent minority” refused to remain in that status assigned by mainstream America.

1969 saw yet another event stirring the Milwaukee Indian community. To obtain more accurate census data on the city’s Indian population, Indian school children participating in public education were called on in every classroom and sent to report to the principal. Indian parents voiced massive complaints about how their children were singled out, embarrassed, frightened and later confronted by their peers for acknowledging their Indianness. Although the results indicated that there had been a 26 per cent undercount of the Indian population in Milwaukee in the 1970 census, the school board’s methods still could not be justified. Interestingly, the undercount percentage largely coincided with the number of school age children enrolled in the Milwaukee Public School System at that time.

Although the climate of opinion in the entire country would suggest that minority groups were allowed to voice their discontent, it took some adjustment and toleration in Milwaukee. As a police officer stated, “I never had any troubles with Indians or Mexicans or even Negroes before, only in the last few years have the militant minority groups started to be troublesome” (“UIM Board” 03/02/1970).

In Milwaukee, Indian militancy proper began in 1970. Two demonstrations were organized to protest the Apostle Islands bill which would have affected parts of the Bad River

and Red Cliff Chippewa Indian reservations by declaring the land a national park. Although the issue did cause controversy nationwide, within Milwaukee's city limits it received particular attention as many Chippewas--now termed Anishinabe--were already living in Milwaukee and their expressions of concern for their homeland was supported by friends from other tribes in the city. Activism associated with and generated by the bill was still termed "faint," partly due to the fact that it did not directly criticize or affect the city itself, partly because it was not presented as a unified voice of grievance from the Indian community. The "new left" within the Indian movement was still not considered strong enough to be praised or feared. Although Alcatraz had already had its material achievements, local Indian groups were seriously doubting the techniques employed in California. The demonstrations organized by the American Indian Information and Action Group evoked criticism on behalf of the city's two older Indian organizations, the United Indians of Milwaukee and the Consolidated Tribes. One key to the reluctance to support AIIAG is revealed by the statement of its director, Michael Connors, according to whom the new movement wanted to discard some Indian ways that were no longer functional and adopt some of the white man's ways. Militancy as an answer to the Indian problem becomes problematic when the ultimate goal is to "be part of this country but to keep our identity," (Hatchett "Indian") having already discarded some traditional practices. The answer of the new activists is Indian nationalism, but how that would allow complete participation in American society is not explicitly stated. Milwaukee's Indian activism came into being at a time when the federal government acknowledged its incapacity to solve the Indian problem.

## 6.2. Federal Concerns

In a statement addressing the National Congress of American Indians in 1968, President Richard Nixon declared the American Indian "striving for a brighter future in an active

constructive American society” (Nixon n.pag). How the strife was manifested and to what extent the Indian population intended to be incorporated into the larger American scene in the end is demonstrated by the events evolving around the takeover of the Milwaukee Coast Guard station.

Senator Edward Kennedy’s address the following year echoed President Nixon’s rhetoric. The findings of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education largely neglected the problems of the urban Indian population just as President Nixon had done. Furthermore, the latter address concluded that even though the Indian population was well aware of the shortages it had to face “there was no way for the Indians to get them” (Kennedy 1). Although the Subcommittee was to target educational practices, such perceptions of the Indian problem suggest that the federal government remained skeptical about Indians gaining control over their own affairs. While the attempt to free the United States of its responsibility for Indian tribes--namely termination--proved to be a failure, paternalism still prevailed.

With regard to unemployment, Senator Kennedy concluded that “our nation gets visibly upset” (Kennedy 2) if national unemployment rates exceed four percent. Whether the emphasis falls upon unrest or visibility in reference to unemployment, the statement implies that protest was almost to be expected and tolerated. However, the same course of action came as a surprise to the general public and was less than acceptable in the numerous instances of American Indian turmoil. Moreover, urban Indian communities had been struggling to achieve visibility and overcome their status as a “virtually unknown population” (Lurie *Survey* 2).

### 6.3. The Birth of the American Indian Movement

Under such circumstances in 1968, a group of Concerned Indian Americans decided to take direct action to counteract police brutality American Indians had experienced in Minneapolis

and St. Paul, Minnesota. Realizing that the acronym of their name could hardly attract many sympathizers, they chose the name the American Indian Movement. The new acronym, AIM, symbolized the organization's attitude to the current state of Indian affairs. The birth of the American Indian Movement was an "offensive defense" maneuver on behalf of urban dwelling, "left-wing" American Indians. From the very beginning, the organization intended to by-pass tribal differences and support a national trend to stop endless talking about the Indian problem and take direct action to achieve practical solutions. "Up until now the urban Indian has had no means of communicating with others in his city and other cities who share his fears and hopes, and no means of making his needs and demands heard by the non-Indian society that surrounds him" ("Urban" 4). Although previously existing urban Indian organizations attempted, and I must add, successfully, to defeat communication problems between mainstream and Indian communities, AIM may well be considered a pioneer in the process of including political issues lacking in the already established communication channels.

The movement's creed originated from Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce: "Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself--and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty" (Means). The concepts of both integration and separation are embodied in Chief Joseph's words. Also indicated are the desired level and depth of both. "Law" and "penalty" may well be imposed by the majority. The will or denial to provide the American Indian with freedom is also a privilege of the stronger American society at large. Yet, only in these fields does the United States have the right to dominate. Chief Joseph's plea foreshadowed the concept of the future revolving door which would operate on mutual consent and allow existence within individually selected affiliations.

Laura Wittstock defined AIM as “[a] spiritual and cultural movement with no formal membership” (n.pag). What she fails to mention is AIM’s political involvement in Indian affairs. Manifestations of this can be seen through the effort to transfer principles to practices, often contrary to a given community’s will, and to create organizations that would assist housing, education or employment services. Wittstock claims that such goals were realized in Minnesota. However, the same article takes no notice of either the Alcatraz events or Milwaukee. Thus, in spite of the declared attempt to “nationalize” the Indian problem and bring forth understanding and cooperation within the national Indian community, local actions were not seen to influence national politics.

Another point worth demonstrating is number fourteen of the twenty points AIM presented to President Nixon after the 1972 BIA takeover in Washington, D.C. According to the statement, “The abolishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs” is a claim that would signify the sovereignty of Indian nations. Even though on the national scale, the abolition of the Bureau received priority among goals, in Milwaukee, the long-criticized government agency was considered a source of financial and official support. The notion will be further explicated in regard to the Coast Guard takeover.

Commissioner Bennett (1966-69) when taking office, explained the difficulties of the American Indian as a “conflict between wanting to be part of the full American life, while still retaining a persistent desire to keep most of their own ways” (“Bennett” 2). Commissioner Bennett considered this fact a serious obstacle to the progress of the Indian problem. He voiced much less pessimism when stating that “any Indian born at this time of life has an opportunity to develop into becoming a full participating citizen and to the fullest extent [. . .] The air of overt discrimination, as far as the Indian people are concerned, is pretty much a thing of the past” (“Bennett” 4) which the new activists could hardly contend with.

Replacing Commissioner Bennett, Louis Bruce took a different path to solve the Indian problem. Although Commissioner Bruce did not criticize militant action, the Bureau's standpoint was hardly supportive. Many conservative tribal leaders feared that Bruce's "packing the bureau with young militants" (Bigart 1) would endanger the relatively calm situation. The young militants in this case is a reference to members of the National Congress of American Indians, the organization which labeled AIM to be militant and detrimental to American Indian Communities. Such viewpoints resulted in the controversial Indian reactions to the Milwaukee Coast Guard takeover.

#### 6.4. Coast Guard Takeover

AIM verified the takeover of the vacant Coast Guard building on the basis of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie that included the proviso that Indians could claim any abandoned government property and land with the implication it meant property within the Lakota area discussed in the treaty. The treaty was signed by the United States and the Lakota led by Red Cloud. Although geographically, neither Alcatraz nor Milwaukee was included in it, such claims form part of the long standing debate on the different readings of treaties by Indian tribes and federal authorities. In the case of the Milwaukee occupation, the issue is further complicated. Opponents to the legacy of the claim said that the site of the Coast Guard building site was under water at the time of signing the treaty, thus the land should be excluded from the treaty provisions. Such a statement implies that AIM's action was clearly illegal.

AIM had no other intention with the takeover but to raise public awareness of the Indian presence in Milwaukee and draw attention to the trying conditions of Indian people in the city. Plans included visits of national AIM leaders and members of the Chicago Indian Village, who had occupied an abandoned Nike missile site. Thus, AIM's presence forwarded the message of the takeover onto the national scene. Some of the participants did share the



interest in reinstilling the pride of being Indian but hosting the Indian Community School was not included in the original objectives. Yet, the success of the enterprise was credited with the immediate launching of two programs in the occupied building: the community school and a half-way house program for recovering alcoholics.

The fact that the building itself was not suitable to house a larger student body already reveals that AIM leaders did not give priority status to opening a school on the site. What Herbert Powless, director of the local AIM chapter, did say in an interview after the first week at the Coast Guard station was admittedly more of an ideal than a real objective: “if we could have our way we would put all the whites--their sicknesses, their diseases, their alcohol--on a ship and put them where they came from” (Marose). He added “To exist, the Indians today must take the best of both worlds, the white and the Indian, though sometimes I don’t know what’s best in the white world” (Marose). Powless seems to recall the revolving door image but, at the same time, expresses his doubts concerning affiliation with mainstream America. Yet, his statement does not denounce participation in both spheres.

In a pamphlet entitled *Objectives of the American Indian Movement*, AIM lists the organization’s short and long term goals. The two categories would also coincide with local and national objectives. The Milwaukee Coast Guard takeover targeted and achieved four of the six short-range, local purposes: “Establishment of a program directed toward Indian youth; improve communications between the Indian and the community; establish a program to better the Indian housing problem; and educate the Indian citizen in his responsibility to his community” (American Indian Movement n.pag). Long-range objectives included the attempt to “generate unification within the Indian people; encourage Indian Americans to become active in community affairs; and bring the economic status of the Indian Americans up to that of the general community” (American Indian Movement n.pag). Although seemingly general statements, these long term or national goals were the causes of most of the antagonism the

Coast Guard takeover participants experienced from other Indians. Unification within the Indian community was not yet achieved in Milwaukee. AIM represented the “new left,” the militant or alternatively labeled, nationalistic trend that most established American Indian organizations disapproved of. Even within the programs launched after the occupation of the building, misunderstanding and clashing interests hindered absolute cooperation. The press coverage of the event not only kept the majority misinformed but all those as well within the Indian community who were not directly involved in the action. AIM received comments both pro and con, trying to encourage and discourage the takeover. Most importantly, however, the declaration of purposes includes explicit reference to what AIM wanted from American society at large: integration with self-imposed limits. The economic status of the American Indian is the first important step towards integration but as the rest of the objectives reveals, not the single one. Therefore, the rights of a citizen begin with economic integration.

Comments and reports on the takeover reveal how the mainstream populace reacted to the proposed goals. The media coverage constantly referred to the fifty plus participants as “the Indians,” “the trespassers,” and the “the thieves.” The pejorative overtone of these designations implies that the government and the general population had a different reading of the Fort Laramie Treaty, returning surplus federal land and property to the Lakota and, by extension in the takeover cases, to all other Indian nations. Moreover, considering the other Indian organizations’ reluctance to unanimously support the takeover, the Indians in the news did not necessarily include the entire Indian population. Nevertheless, they generated outright racism, apparent in a number of local politicians’ comments with regard to the takeover.

When explaining why he had not voted for a new financial aid program for the people living on federal land, one County Board member said: “Indians came in and stole federal property in our county. The federal government had no guts, they should have kicked them out. It's a good thing that we are not living in the last century, or there might have been some dead

Indians” (“Aid”). Whether reminding the public of stealing other people's property was a wise act remains a moot question here. Did the “admiration and sympathy” the County Board member claimed to feel towards American Indians include AIM, the community school, students and parents, or the urban Indian population of Milwaukee at large?

It is relevant to discuss how the Indians of Milwaukee were considered a unified entity. As early as 1971, differences among various Indian groups and their methods, if not goals, were already publicized. Wayne Martin, president of the United Indians of Milwaukee claimed to be “as much surprised as anybody” (Dobish “Government”) when he first learned about the takeover. United Indians did not come forward with an official statement on the occupation of the site. George Amour, member of the American Indian Information and Action Group, said that his organization “was supportive of this effort which dramatized the severe conditions under which the greater majority of our people in Milwaukee are forced to live,” (Dobish “Government”) but assistance was only offered by individual members, not by AIIAG as an organization. The fact is surprising as AIIAG was always associated with radicalism. UIM wished to remain a non-political organization, but why AIIAG, which was the radical splinter group of UIM generated by the latter’s alleged lack of action, did not wish to give full-fledged support, still remains an unanswered question.

However silent the older, more conservative Indian organizations remained, it is apparent that their goals and objectives coincided with those of AIM. At a United Indians board meeting in 1970, problems of “discrimination in housing and work, educational needs and communication” (“UIM Board” 03/30/1970) were listed as the most urgent needs to address. Lack of tolerance from not only the majority but also from other minority groups further hindered cooperation in fulfilling the declared goals. The following quotation appeared in the British *Punch* magazine in 1969, explaining and, to a certain extent, criticizing the lack of minority tolerance with regard to each other’s actions.

Their [the Indians'] point is that integration is all wrong ... Their heroes are the separatists of Quebec rather than the descendants of Martin Luther King. [ . . . ]

Ironically, this puzzles and annoys many Negro leaders. They resent, too, this attempt to jump onto what has up to now been an all-black bandwagon. (Davis)

The author then makes a rather sarcastic statement on the outcome of all minorities' awakening. "Red Power, indeed. Next thing you know there'll be a revolution in Chinatown" (Davis). However diverse the viewpoints were that surfaced in the Indian community, united action was necessary to defy factionalism within the Indian group and, as a later event shows, in the whole minority community as well. In 1973, the Indian and Latino communities organized a sit-in at the city hall demanding a meeting with the mayor joining forces to solve similar grievances. The main issue at stake was the communities' involvement in determining federal revenue use for programs targeted at the Indian and the Latino populations of the city. The argument also included the fact that "not until 1971 did an Indian Agency receive federal funds in Milwaukee," (Sparks) as opposed to Latino groups which received federal aid as early as 1965.

Contrary to Davis' statement, the course of events emphasizes the civil rights parallelism during the Coast Guard takeover. Both AIM and Martin Luther King incorporated younger generations in their scenarios of demonstration. Relatively peaceful, at least in the Milwaukee case, AIM still had often been criticized for its aggressive tactics. Dr. King was also criticized for encouraging school children to participate in the marches, with the very real threat of possible violence. In Milwaukee, on the day of strengthening security precautions in fear of special federal forces being called in, the Indian Community School moved from its former church basement location to the occupied building. The special eighty-man force that had been used in takeovers prior to the Milwaukee events posed a threat to everyone. According to contemporary newspaper accounts there was no potential for armed conflict

although, later, Wounded Knee would imply a very different ending. Direct involvement with the Chicago Indian Village whose occupation was dispersed by police action could also have discouraged relocating the school at the Coast Guard site. Photographs of armed AIM guards added to the dubious nature of peacefulness. Despite the possibility of a physical affray, the director of the school gave her consent to move the 25-person student body. AIM's own half-way house program for recovering alcoholics had already been operating to justify the action towards the city, county and federal agencies. An attack on the Coast Guard building was not likely to take place with children on the site as it could have strengthened public support for the Indian cause in opposition to the federal government.

The takeover was to be a dramatization of the Milwaukee Indian situation but the results very soon surpassed the intended goals. The same forces of integration and separation run parallel throughout the history of the Milwaukee Indian Community School, most explicitly present in the events evolving around the occupation of the abandoned Coast Guard station in 1971. Both the time and the place of action bear significance and, to a certain extent, symbolic characteristics. AIM's Milwaukee chapter, although it employed some of its methods, never associated with, and in fact, denied the goals set by the predominantly African American Civil Rights movement. Apparent similarities would suggest the goal was to achieve an integrated status for the urban Indian community just as in the case of other minority group actions. However, the intent to initiate the creation of an urban Indian center would imply the acting and active forces of separation.

However radical the action was declared, their idea of separation did not go beyond resigning their Indian privileges. Although, as it has been mentioned before, there were voices who called for the entire abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, occupants of the Coast Guard building needed and wished to cooperate with the federal agency.

To be able to claim the right to remain at the Coast Guard site, a federal organization had to represent AIM to receive priority compared to county or city organizations. This broker position on AIM's behalf was to be held by the BIA. Another candidate to act as a mediator was the Office of Economic Opportunity, but the case never materialized due to the disputes over withheld funding from the school after the 1972 Washington takeover. Even local AIM chapter leader, Herbert Powless, agreed that the proposed center should be established under BIA trusteeship. Although the Bureau waited three months to submit its application for the possession of the unused federal property, it did contact the General Services Administration to obtain trust status on behalf of the American Indian Movement. Not only was this the "first step to help Indians in the cities" but with trust status achieved, "the first urban reservation" ("US Agency") would also have been established. Eleven months after the takeover, the General Services Administration approved the transfer of the abandoned Coast Guard building to the American Indian Movement. They were represented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the basis of the Sioux Treaty which returned surplus federal property to American Indians.

#### National Implications: Alcatraz and Milwaukee

Gerald Vizenor's notion of cultural schizophrenia had already been discussed in Chapter 4. Such a schizophrenic notion becomes apparent in the case of takeovers. It is an explicit manifestation of the two-dimensional struggle to be able to bear tradition with dignity and also to be accepted by society at large. The resolution of cultural schizophrenia would be the revolving door, where tradition is respected and there is no pressure from the mainstream culture to suppress it. At the time of the takeovers, the revolving door had not yet materialized.

The irony of the fight for equal urban rights lies in the numerous parallels and images the accounts of the takeovers reflect: the ideal conditions to express one's Indian identity offered in the reservation setting. "Alcatraz is [a] rocky, isolated, rundown, nonproductive small island. It's very much like a reservation" ("Indians say"). The same sense of a more stable definition of Indian identity is explicit in the chant the Milwaukee occupants composed: "We are on the reservation/ at the Coast Guard Station/ We are people of this land/ we are here to make a stand" (Morrison). The isolated urban minority status, denied by the federal agencies, could thus be best expressed through the imagery well known to American society at large.

A cartoon, appearing in *Akwesasne Notes* shows US generals observing Alcatraz Island worrying that "if Alcatraz falls to the Indians, then San Francisco falls, then Oakland and Berkeley." (Simmons) The generals' fears of the "domino effect" were justified. The Alcatraz phenomenon did indeed spread over the entire country. One of the symbolic elements of the various takeovers in the United States was a response to the often stated fact that, "the government could take Indian land whenever it wanted" (Hatchett "Indians"). American Indian radical groups chose to fight with exactly the same weapon that has served the federal government so well: observing standing rules and practices they took the initiative on the legal basis of treaties signed by the United States and certain tribes.

Parallels between the California Island and the Milwaukee Coast Guard building substantiate Alcatraz's importance with regard to the history of the Indian Community School. Launched to raise people's awareness of the plight of Indian peoples in the cities, it defied the popular concept of the already assimilated, romantic, historic Indians in both places. Soon after it took possession of the abandoned sites, AIM promoted schools at both locations. Education and the problems of Indian education were incorporated into AIM's short range goals although not exclusively targeting schools. The objective of establishing

schools at the occupied buildings was first to draw attention to overt faults in education practices and, of equal importance, to secure the success of the actions viewed as illegal by the white public. Many claimed that the core of the problem regarding Indian education and the Indian problem in general was considering the urban and reservation Indian population “those Indians.” With the occupation of the abandoned federal property, American Indians exercised their right to be viewed as those Indians but not to be submitted to that status. On Alcatraz Island, it only took three months to set up two schools in the former guard residence. In Milwaukee, it was an even shorter period of time, hardly two weeks. Since the Indian Community School had been operating for a year by the time of the takeover, AIM did not directly organize an Indian education program at the Coast Guard building but offered new facilities to an already existing one. This fact is responsible for the controversies and conflicts that divided the Indian community during and after the takeover. Ironically, contrary to native educational practices, the schools of Alcatraz Island and the Coast Guard building presented the most formally regulated aspects of the takeovers.

National criticism of AIM provides the events with a valuable frame of reference. In response to a Senate Internal Subcommittee report labeling the American Indian Movement a “revolutionary organization, committed to violence,” the director of the Portland Urban Indian Center responded: “Any time a minority wishes to express some sort of self-determination the FBI and other conservative groups are going to call it revolutionary and associated with Communists,” drawing a parallel between the treatment AIM received and that of Martin Luther King. It was also added that the organization was willing to be identified as “‘revolutionary,’ if a revolutionary is defined as a person who seeks change” (“Response”). The Subcommittee hearings included the testimony of an FBI operative. The former Iowa policeman stated that the American Indian Movement is “dedicated to the overthrow of the government.” Furthermore, having an insider’s view, he added: “They



[AIM] have trampled the rights of Indian as well as non-Indian citizens in the country. They are in cooperation with Communist groups, within the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Cuba” (“Report”). The reports all appeared after the murder of two FBI agents at Wounded Knee, a subsequent event to the 1973 takeover there. Testifying that the Bureau never considered AIM a terrorist group, FBI director Clarence Keely stated that the “objectionable, subversive or un-American” consideration of the militant urban organization did not account for its appearance in the *Weekly Terrorist Digest*, a publication circulated among law enforcement officers (“AIM Members”).

The public was easily manipulated by such news since reports on the various schools, including AIM’s first direct action manifestation, the Little Red School House in Minneapolis, or the organization’s Alcoholics Anonymous programs never reached nationwide publicity. In contrast, the occupied Washington BIA headquarters were open to the media to combat the threatening, vandalizing left-wing minority image. The Indian communities affected by AIM’s direct action policy also voiced their concerns as to the effect militancy could have on them. As early as 1969, one Milwaukee community member, who had just recently arrived from Canada, commented on Indian centers she had visited in urban areas. She described the presence of “pretty conventional centers” existing side by side with centers run by a “radical left-wing group [. . .] Stalinists, Leninists and the like” (Lurie “Field Notes” 3-4). AIM members did receive a lot of serious criticism. Written by a Lakota author the following statements reveal AIM’s failure to achieve a complete unification of Indian voices:

They [AIM] come to spread racism and hate, pitting light Indians against dark.

AIM’s only approach to life has been violence, and mostly directed against our own Native people. We don’t want these kind of people around us anymore.

We want real things not phony AIM revolutionaries. We want these AIM people

to stop using Indians for their political rip-off games. (“Native American indictment” 1-2)

Many Indian people interpreted AIM’s tactics to be detrimental to the Indian image, which accounts for a different and rather offensive interpretation of the organization’s name: “Assholes in Moccasins.” When cooperation within the Indian bloc is hindered by such factionalism, achievement of even the most universally supported goals is seriously jeopardized.

### 6.5. The Indian Community School

Negative perceptions of AIM soon surfaced in its relationship with the Indian Community School. The Coast Guard building became the most significant key to the break between the school and AIM. It proved to be the base of the political and economic conflict of 1972. On the way to the Washington, D.C. takeover in 1972, participating AIM members from all over the country stopped in Milwaukee at the AIM center. Compared to the events in Milwaukee, the Washington takeover was a much more aggressive one: destruction of BIA documents delayed payments to tribes for years. In retaliation for the vandalism in Washington, the Office of Economic Opportunities decided to cut the funds for three Indian community schools located in Milwaukee, Minneapolis and St. Paul. OEO’s decision was based upon the three directors’ alleged connections with AIM. Although Herbert Powless, director of AIM’s Milwaukee chapter, stated that he was not the director of the school, and, apart from “offering space in the AIM center and lobbying for federal Safe Streets Act and OEO funds” (Kole) he had no other affiliation with the school, the money earmarked for the Milwaukee Indian Community School was withheld. The directors of the two community schools in Minnesota were actually AIM members. However, the school in Milwaukee had no affiliation with the movement other than being hosted in its culture center. A cartoon showing OEO kicking a

student in the face, thus teaching his elders “to get militant with the Bureau of Indian Affairs,” highlights the fact that the Indian population was placed in a single, homogeneous category. By the same means, American Indian students were warned well in advance which actions would be tolerated and accepted by the local and federal governments and mainstream society.

The conflict between the school and AIM culminated in an aggressive confrontation. While the school’s director, Dorothy Ogrodowski, claimed that AIM members stole and destroyed school property, AIM questioned the director’s not being Indian enough and, consequently, not possessing the traditional upbringing to be able to identify with the needs of her Indian students. Her Menominee ancestry was not acknowledged by the same people who claimed to discard the non-functional part of their own culture. The bickering was rooted in clashing interests: the school intended to remain as independent of AIM’s political concerns as possible. Neither did the school board refrain from voicing its distrust and rejection of the very same techniques that allowed the school to have its location. Since the Washington events did not only put the Milwaukee funds in jeopardy but also had an impact on schools in Minneapolis and in St. Paul, OEO had to clarify the reasons for its punitive sanctions. In Milwaukee, unlike in the two other cases, there was no proof of AIM’s direct involvement in educational affairs. Yet, the funds for the Great Lakes region were distributed from Minneapolis. The Upper Midwest American Indian Center, responsible for the distribution of the funds claimed to have received no sufficient proof of how the money was spent at the three schools. The Center, although it had been given specific guidelines on how to monitor the recipients’ spending, failed to do so. This paved the way for OEO’s claims of mismanaged funds. In addition, by this time, AIM had earned a reputation of “employing people with criminal records and guilty of large scale nepotism,” and antagonism against the organization was growing ever stronger (“Indian Aid”). Although none of the above charges proved to be

true with regard to the Milwaukee Indian Community School, not until 1974 did the school become eligible for the sums it was to receive in 1972.

## 6.6. Results

Such events resulted in the need to reevaluate the outcome of AIM's 1971 action. Reynold "Spider" Denny, AIM's Milwaukee spokesperson, made a quite pessimistic statement evaluating the success of the event. Three years after the fifty participants broke into the Coast Guard building Denny said, "It's been a moral victory, that does not mean anything as far as what it is doing for the community" ("Indians still"). Denny's somewhat disillusioned comment highlights the fact that AIM could not move beyond the dramatization of the lack of facilities for American Indians in the area. Such bitterness also echoed the fact that Indian awareness was not complete within two years of the occupation.

Although the Coast Guard building still provided an easy target for the media, in 1973, yet another organization was brought into existence to fight for the same causes AIM had fought for four years before. With assistance from various denominations, the Wisconsin Indian Resource Council incorporated eleven tribal councils and the Great Lakes Intertribal Council under the auspices of the Wisconsin Council of Churches. The matter deserves attention since two key objectives of the organization were to "develop a youth program for Indians in Milwaukee" and educate the average Wisconsin resident who only had "a smattering knowledge about the contemporary Indian" ("Wisconsin"). Another indication of the further need to be heard was the 1975 takeover of the former Alexian Novitiate discussed in Chapter 5. The pattern of action was almost identical with that of the Milwaukee events. This issue of sovereignty permeated every takeover and occupation case initiated by AIM from 1969 on. In Milwaukee, public interest in the Indian cause was lost by 1973. AIM and

its halfway house program left the site, and the school has continued to operate at various locations.

In 1976, five years after the takeover, the city of Milwaukee was criticized for its attempts to hinder all the results the Indian community had achieved since 1969. Part of the desegregation attempts was to integrate all ethnic groups in the city. Acting upon national requirements, Milwaukee refused to acknowledge that the programs long fought for and finally displaying positive impact on Indian children would have been in jeopardy due to the integration attempts. At that point, Herbert Powless declared that “we are unique. No one has the treaty rights that we have. You are the melting pot. We are not” (Janka “Indians”). AIM’s local leader implied more than the rejection of white values and immersion in white culture. In this case, the Indian population was not even counted on its own terms; they were grouped as non-black. The editorial of the *Milwaukee Indian News* leaves no doubt that the entire integration program is designed “to discredit the idea of integration” by “pitting minority against minority” (“Indians labeled”).

Even if the usage of the term “minority” is strictly numerical, the fact that it is confined to institutions designed, set up, and in most cases, dominated by the majority cannot be denied. In a multicultural society, racial aspects are to be incorporated in the above mentioned institutions. In the Milwaukee case, racism is evident. As opposed to American society at large, if dissected, to white and even African American communities, the Indian population of the city was seeking alternative institutions. Although not the first American Indian organizations to operate in Milwaukee, both the American Indian Movement Center and the school were crucial aspects of the city’s Indian community in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Both the American Indian Movement Center and the Indian Community School it hosted were to create grounds from which urban Indians would be able to freely commute

between the white world and the Indian way. The Center was not only to assist adaptation to city life but also to unite all the Indians of Milwaukee. The same goal was manifested in the operation of the multitribal community school. While unification of all Indians in the city did not materialize, the multitribal school does at least owe the space they could operate in to the gains made by AIM.

The metaphor of physical distance and the door separating cultures is evident in such local examples. Research to solve the Indian problem has been overloaded with stereotypes, further strengthening them instead of finding answers. In 1968, AIM declared its organizational goal “to upgrade the conditions in which the urban Indian lives, and to improve the image of the urban Indian (American Indian Movement n.pag.). No matter how radical a standpoint AIM took from the very first movement of its existence, nor however militant it was considered by onlookers, changes and shifts of focus are easily detectable in the organization’s political goals. In 1973, Clyde Bellecourt explained AIM’s most urgent goal being “trying to form a young warrior society again out of our young people, who are once again identifying with their history, their proud culture, their religion. (“Bellecourt”). He declared the Indian movement a “‘sovereign rights’ movement because what we are saying in effect is that the native people, the Indians, have the only right to be in this part of the Universe” (“Bellecourt”). Bellecourt’s statement largely coincides with the main issue and target of AIM’s actions being the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. By 1975, intentions had changed and the annual AIM meeting declared the main objective to be the expansion and improvement of already existing Indian schools and an increase in the number of schools to be established. While termed as a means of “staged imitation of revolutionary warfare,” AIM still continued to be “the vanguard of Indian thinking,”--as a *Calgary Herald* headline would suggest--as “many Indians need the heads-up self-confidence that has been associated with being in AIM” (“AIM continues”). Dennis Banks’s threat “if there is no

visible change by 1976, then the self-aggrandizement that white America is going to have for itself is going to be an unhappy birthday party,” (“AIM is the Same”) never materialized even though AIM continued its warfare against the American majority.

In Milwaukee, AIM took action by starting integration on the individual level, and as the declared goals reveal, expanding it to the community. The ambiguity of the matter is, however, that AIM attempted to create an institution to be able to stay outside but still be able to function within majority limits. AIM defied its status of the “colony of strangers” and being “no more than onlookers as the rest of the nation proceeds to build a truly Great Society” (Humphrey 2). The organization sought answers to the question of how to “become part of the total spectrum of American political, social and economic life without each one [American Indian] having to ask himself the question: To be or not to be an Indian?” (Humphrey 2). With the occupations and demonstrations, the new activism attempted to find a way to form a constructive part of the larger American scene, but on their own terms. They also defied the view of the American Indian possessing a “lack of preparedness for change that makes a minority mistrust the inevitable progression of the human race from one phase of cultural and social accomplishment to the next” (Humphrey 2).

## **CHAPTER 7: THE INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL (ICS)**

**7.1.** Problems in Indian Education

**7.2.** The Indian Community School: the Beginnings

**7.3.** The Bartlett Avenue School

**7.4.** Function and Role

Curriculum

**7.5.** The Potawatomi Assistance



## 7. THE INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL (ICS)

The Indian Community School's history and its importance are more comprehensible if studied through the locations that hosted the institution. Following this method, chronological ordering becomes problematic, but the geographical distinctions make the problems and events evolving around the school more explicit. As some of the phases evoked more criticism and antagonism from the non-Indian community, and caused factionalism in the Indian community, I will treat those separately in Chapter 8 to explain ICS's relation to the city of Milwaukee.

Beginning in the 1970s, the present chapter targets the problems of Indian education within the public school system. It has to be stated that the term Indian education refers to educating children of American Indian descent in mainstream institutions. Following the analysis of the most commonly cited problems, the Coast Guard event will be recalled to provide an explanation of how ICS acquired its first permanent location. The possession of the Bartlett Avenue building led to the possibility of purchasing a more appropriate site for the growing student body. The connection with the Forest County Potawatomi provided the first really secure financial base for ICS, but it also entailed mainstream community opposition. Although ICS has had to relocate five times between its beginnings in a living room and the future Franklin site, its goals and curriculum had undergone very little change. In regard to problems in Indian education, the student body, the curriculum and operation will be discussed here.

### 7.1. Problems in Indian Education

In addition to the Coast Guard takeover, Chapter 6 also included the analyses of two incidents which caused turmoil in the Milwaukee Indian community. The sight count and propaganda cases were on the agenda of a UIM meeting where people voiced their concerns not only in

regard to these humiliating and offensive incidents but also what the Indian community could expect of the public school system. One member asked Lurie “What kind of things are our children learning in *your* schools? How many things are bothering Indians in the city that we don’t know about but could change if we did?” (Lurie *Self-Survey* 9). Lurie concluded that Indian people’s concern came from the culture shock they experienced due to these two incidents. The sight count and the propaganda cases demonstrated the experience of children in the public school system and made parents aware of the problems of education. Referring to the propaganda case, when children were illustrated the word’s meaning through stereotypical images of American Indians; Lurie also noted a remark by a UIM member: “Indians don’t teach that way. [. . .] if you don’t know anything about people you don’t make things up” (*Self-Survey* 9).

American Indian opinion of public education as reflected in the 1969 *Self-Survey* reappear in the following quotation of 2000. Using different rhetorics, the thirty year gap does not change the implied intentions. “The battle for Indian children will be *won in the classroom*, not in the streets or horses. The students of today are our warriors tomorrow” (“Won” 1). Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller’s words echo both a romantic Indian past and the Indian radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s. The rhetorics of the 2000 quotation still bear truth in regard to Indian education. The classroom, whether public or tribal, is a real battlefield where war is not fought for literal territorial spaces. Yet, figuratively speaking, this war is directed at securing a cultural Indian space and providing a safe ground for generations of American Indians to freely commute between mainstream and Indian cultures. The relevance of educational issues has not lost its importance in the course of white-Indian relations, as it has always formed the core of the Indian problem.

A large proportion of the nationwide assimilationist policy has centered on education. In turn, resistance to assimilation is most evident in the creation of tribally run schools. While

mission schools and boarding schools focused on assimilation, modern tribally run schools aim at “dissimilation,” reinstilling the pride to be Indian. All schools challenge the presumption that the average individual in all societies appears to “be a rather passive carrier of culture, receiving it from his predecessors and passing it on to his descendants without any particular modification” (Linton 54). In either direction, schools have been designed to modify the passive acquisition of culture. While the values mainstream society intends to transmit do not require modification in regard to the Indian population, Indian culture has had to struggle for maintaining its essence by counteracting mainstream educational practices.

Education has always been viewed as a relatively easy and long-lasting way to assimilate people in mainstream society. If education is targeted at producing individuals who are to take up a definite number of roles assigned to them by the society in question, the benevolent nature of the enterprise may be questioned. If a school system is to produce more dropouts--or push outs--than the desired goal, it takes community action to reverse the situation. The matter is further complicated with American Indians who defy their assigned “vanishing” status. “Salvage ethnography,” (90) a term used by Philip Deloria, proves especially applicable to the educational scene. It implies the duality and contradiction of “capturing of an authentic culture thought to be rapidly and inevitably disappearing [and] to believe in both disappearing culture and the existence of informants knowledgeable enough about that culture to convey worthwhile information (Deloria *Playing* 90). Public schools celebrating Columbus Day and portraying Columbus as a culture hero, Little Big Horn as a massacre of General Custer’s Seventh Cavalry, and Wounded Knee as a battle in 1889 to end the glorious westward movement and close the Frontier, all exemplify the notion of salvage ethnography. With American Indian students sitting in the same classrooms the above mentioned events would have a different interpretation, that of conquest, victory and massacre. Yet, however long Indian education history is, mainstream society realized its

faults relatively late. The fact that changes were called forth by the federal government in the late 1960s and early 1970s may be explained by the proximity of the Civil Rights Movement, growing Indian discontent and radicalism.

Ever since the policy of educating Indians in public schools was adopted, it was assumed that the public schools, with their integrated settings, were the best means of educating Indians. The subcommittee's public schools findings--high dropout rates, low achievement levels, anti-Indian attitudes, insensitive curriculums--raise serious doubts as to the validity of that assumption. (AIIAG *Proposal* n.pag.)

AIIAG in its *Proposal for An Indian Community School* cited the Senate Subcommittee findings on Indian Education. The 1969 remarks were surprisingly shocking to the federal agency as apparent in the quotation but Indian parents and students had already had first-hand experience of these matters. Firstly, statistics were appalling at the elementary level. Regarding kindergarten attendance of American Indian children, 10 percent of them attended such institutions, as opposed to the 73 per cent of non-Indian children ("Kindergarten" 29). Eventually, changes were introduced on the federal level as the Indian Education Act of 1972 will prove, but in Milwaukee, direct action was taken prior to that by those examined and affected.

The following year, Indian education continued to be the target of federal attention. In 1970, President Nixon informed Congress that "one of the saddest aspects of Indian life in the United States is the low quality of Indian education" (Currier). Citing statistics, Nixon's statement was verified, with elementary school dropout rates being twice as much for the American Indian than the national level, and the average education being less than six years for Indians (Currier).

In 1971, two years after the Senate Subcommittee's findings, and a year after President Nixon's announcement, Senator Edward Kennedy remarked: "Indian education has not provided Indian children with a minimum competence necessary to prepare them for a productive role in society at large, neither has it been responsible for perpetuation of the values and culture unique to the Indian people" ("Education" 2). While the Senate Subcommittee and President Nixon only vaguely referred to the lack of cultural awareness-raising programs in the current public school system, and mentioned anti-Indian attitudes as an explanation for high drop out rates, Senator Kennedy made explicit comments on the need to "Indianize" existing curriculums. His words do not only target preparation for life in mainstream society but also emphasize the unique needs of Indian students. However, by the time Senator Kennedy addressed Indian education; Indian people in Milwaukee had already acted to counteract the detrimental effects listed in the quotation. What Senator Kennedy meant by Indian education has to be interpreted within the public school framework and in this respect, his words verify Milwaukee actions. In the footsteps of the Indian Reorganization Act, discussed in Chapter 3, Congress passed the Indian Education Act in 1972 which established "innovative and compensatory educational programs for Indian students" (Gibson 563).

Despite the interest and surprise that Congress, Presidents and several federal institutions expressed on the examination of the Indian educational situation, very little was done to counteract its sad statistics. Changes brought forth by the Indian Education Act were rather slow paced and, from the Indian point of view, the issue of education was just another example of the federal attitude of endless talking, but no action taken to eventually solve the Indian problem. Indian people realized that it required their initiative on both the national and local levels to better the situation. This fact should not be evident considering the special relationship of American Indians with the federal government and federal supervision in all

aspects of Indian life. Yet, in Milwaukee it took little time to organize, despite the lack of federal support. Just as in the case of self-help organizations, Indian people solved the problem of education on their own and in their own terms.

## 7.2. The Milwaukee Indian Community School: the Beginnings

The origins of the Indian Community School pose a problem when trying to find sources and documentation on its founding. The explanation lies in its informal nature and the fact that until the Coast Guard takeover, ICS did not attract much attention from the Milwaukee community. The single source of information is a typescript of a brief synopsis of a meeting held at the office of AIIAG. The rest was gathered by personal interviews with Indian community members, educators and Professor Lurie. The minutes of the meeting reveal that right at the point of its origin, although not officially yet, the school started to use the name Indian Community School. ICS was founded in October 1970 in a living room of a mother whose child was one of the seven children who dropped out of the public school system. "It is the nation's first urban Indian school" ("History" 1) claims the document. At that point in time there was no official curriculum published as the mothers took personal care of instructions. Yet, it took little time to have the student body rise to nineteen students, between the ages of 11 and 17. The mothers needed a larger space to host their educational enterprise. They moved to a church basement, which they were allowed to use rent-free, and within a year they had thirty six students. By this time they were assisted by an elementary school teacher, university student volunteers and one VISTA worker, who supervised the school's operation full time. With parental assistance, these four people formed the staff of ICS which did not have an official board yet. Supervision and directing was performed by the parents themselves.

The only revenue the school received was a federal grant funding breakfast and lunch (“History” 1). The other source of income was a gift from a local church in addition to the possibility of rent-free space. When asked about the need for the establishment of ICS, parents listed reasons such as the high drop out rates, non-attendance and lack of achievement. Beginning with the overcrowded conditions of local public schools, through neglect of individual student needs, they concluded that

since the majority of the pupils in the area public schools are black, the Indian children find themselves in the position of a “minority within a minority” [which] results in discrimination and harassment on two levels; both physical [as] they are at the bottom of the “pecking order,” and cultural in that their history, languages, arts, etc., are ignored. (“History” 2)

Although there had been attempts to transfer all Indian students to one school to find solutions to the above mentioned problems; on the one hand, overcrowded conditions did not allow it, on the other, it would not have corrected the problems of public school curricula. ICS settled the problem of non-attendance and discrimination, but due to its small space, it had to turn away a number of applicants.

With practically no budget, parents and staff still believed that the school would succeed. They faced a number of difficulties from shortage of personnel to material needs. From paper supplies through writing implements to textbooks, ICS was short of sufficient educational material. Another problem, due to lack of funding, was the employment of full-time, preferably Indian teachers. ICS also required special staff to assist curriculum compilation, application for grants and funds, and acquainted with local, state and federal Indian law relevant to the operation of an urban Indian school.

An incident in 1976 highlights the educational problems Indians in the city of Milwaukee experienced. As part of the city’s integration program, Indian children were bused

away from schools which actually did offer Indian programs; even if their curriculum did not include the aims ICS had set forth. We Indians (Wisconsin Education for Indians, New Day In Awareness of Native Studies) received federal funding to organize Indian programs at schools with ten or more American Indian students. To encourage urban Indian education programs, the Indian Education Act of 1972 limited these funds only to schools not located on or near reservations. AIIAG's *Smog Signals* described the most significant aspect of We Indians to be assisting American Indian students to "develop a positive self image, a sense of personal pride, a feeling for their cultural heritage" ("Education")

John Clifford, head of the We Indians program, summarized the importance of Indianizing education in the cities in these terms: "identifying and understanding one's heritage and values are important to give a person secure identity and allow them to be 'fully functional. Until then, it's like having a cloud over your head'" (Bewitz) The director, who grew up on the Rosebud Reservation, emphasized the particular significance urban Indian education bears. Regretting that his generation was taught to assimilate into mainstream society and ignore their native language and ceremonies, he believed that the new urban Indian has the possibility, and, to a certain extent, duty, to recover the Indian image his parents may have lost due to old educational practices. Clifford added in reference to mainstream society: "The first thing we want to do is to stop them saying 'those Indians'" (Rummler "Crafts"). The statement implies that the We Indians program was geared towards American Indians as well as non-Indian residents of Milwaukee.

The list of goals also targeted assisting dropouts to return to the public school system, identification of special needs and abilities of students and counseling to develop a more positive attitude towards learning ("Education") The Indian community protested busing and integration as they considered themselves already integrated and rejected the role to fill quotas with Indian children. Their main concern was "why Indians are only 'Indians' when schools



want federal money” (“Indians Labeled”) and when federal money is not an issue, Indians are categorized as non-black. The community meeting reached a decision which stated that “since Indians are not now segregated, there is no need for busing to integrate them and Indian parents will not allow their children to attend these schools” (“Indians Labeled”). Parents feared that the already existing Indian programs offered by schools with substantial Indian student body would lose their Indian students to the public school system and thus students would be invisible to Indian programs. The denial to participate in the integration program was based on the special Indian treaty and legal ties with the federal government (Rummler “Indians”). As the We Indians program already operated at certain schools parents’ fear of losing access to it by busing children away from these schools was very realistic. If We Indians was not available to American Indian students, parents had to find other means to secure their children’s future. Again, the integration policy contributed to the growing importance of ICS.

Parents who started the school with seven students were brought up at the age of strong assimilationist policy. Yet, 1970 offered a new climate of opinion under which they could practice their right to express discontent with the existing mainstream institution of public schools. Considering the Indian population of the time, it is significant to mention that in regard to the approximately 8000 Indian residents of Milwaukee, the original number of students does not seem significant. Yet, soon after its foundation the student body began increasing. The fact verifies the successful attempt of Indian self-help organizations to defy invisibility. It also supports the idea that these organizations did manage to overcome communication problems within the urban Indian community which rapidly came to assist the school. American Indians believed that creating a separate institution will provide the next generation of the Milwaukee urban Indian community with stronger voices, more direct ties with both their Indianness and mainstream culture. While ICS was founded on the failure and

frustration of the public school system, it exemplifies the wish to have access to both mainstream and Indian cultures. As one parent voiced it: “I didn’t want my son to learn the falsities: I was confused when I was growing up and I was actually ashamed at times of my own Indian people because of the way history was taught to me” (“Indians See”) The mother decided to take her son out of the public school he attended and enroll him in ICS.

Community schools are phenomenon of contemporary urban life, reflecting the dissatisfaction, largely on the part of minority peoples, with curricula geared to white, middle class life-styles, and expectations. The Indian Community School offers the main ingredient needed by these students that is lacking in public schools: a sense of pride, identity, and direction as Indians. The city Indian child is often denied supportive awareness of his worth and traditions. (Lurie “Department”)

The “supportive awareness of his worth and traditions” has been the main goal of ICS from its beginnings but often it triggered opposition from the non-Indian community. As it has been mentioned, such reactions were always related to the physical space the school occupied, but in all cases the question of Indianness surfaced in the non-Indian argument. Such was the case with the Coast Guard takeover, which led to the possession of the first independent school site in ICS’s history.

### 7.3. The Bartlett Avenue School

Prior to the Coast Guard takeover, permanent place was not granted to the Indian Community School. They operated at various locations, the last one being the Old Highland Methodist Church, from where they relocated to the occupied building. The previous chapter already touched upon the connection between the Coast Guard takeover by AIM and the Indian Community School. Although the relationship between the two organizations ended in a bickering and disruptive fight, the School did benefit from AIM’s action.

To secure AIM's success at the occupied Coast Guard site by moving the students there, eventually ICS gained indirect possession of a school building. By 1972, many people believed that the School's presence prevented the building from being given to either the County Park Commission or the University of Wisconsin (Blackwell 29). The *Milwaukee Journal* article wrongly states that this was the first Indian action to occupy surplus federal property, as the Alcatraz incident had already set precedent. The strengthening dispute between AIM and the School was due to the latter's reluctance to associate themselves with AIM and Herbert Powless' wishes. The directors' bitter argument over the place culminated in questioning Mrs. Ogrodowski's Indian ancestry and by the same token, her right to be heading an Indian school. Although she was active member of DRUMS, it did not suffice for the AIM director and his supporters.

Still located at the Coast Guard site, the school was given financial support by the federal Safe Streets grant but it was not sufficient enough. Neither was the place itself as Mrs. Ogrodowski stated: "We only have room for about 50 students and we have 76 with another 75 or so waiting to get in" (Blackwell 31). These numbers suggest that however ambiguously the takeover and AIM action were viewed by the Indian community; the School did enjoy parental support and Indian education gained priority over community factionalism. The director also added that "it's hard to refuse a student who says he wants to come to this school because he's had some bad experiences in the public schools" (Blackwell 31).

However, the takeover did not only have beneficial outcomes for the school. Due to OEO's cutting back funding, salaries of teachers were dissatisfactory. Internal factions also contributed to the fact that while still at the Coast Guard location, two cultural advisers resigned their positions. Since they were cultural instructors, they did not hold full position as teachers. They claimed their resignation was based on the "low priority placed on Indian culture and history" ("2"). Also complaining about disciplinary methods, they accused the

director of ignoring unsuitable punishments for young children. Due to shortage of funding, their resignation was accepted, and explained as dissatisfaction with salaries.

In 1981, the Coast Guard offered the building to the city of Milwaukee with the provision that the city would provide an alternative space for the school as the building was seriously deteriorating. After leaving the Coast Guard station, the city offered the school a new location, a condemned school building on Bartlett Avenue. For two years the school had been operating at that location among hardships and serious financial difficulties. The building was presented grant free, but the costs of its renovation and maintenance burdened ICS. The school hoped to raise enough revenue to be able to operate but, yet again, federal Indian policy intruded in Indian education.

The Reagan administration cut government funding that financed non-reservation programs and transferred the remaining ones to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As a result, the school closed down in 1983. President Reagan's budget for 1984 included the recognition of a "government-to-government relationship existing between the federal government, and tribal governments on Indian reservations, but he ignores the half million members of urban Indian communities" (Zuern). The budget plans entailed the phasing out off all non-reservation health and educational programs, thus seriously affecting ICS. Reaganomics was also responsible for the termination of the Office of Indian Education operating within the Department of Education "whose grants have provided for culturally stimulating approaches in Indian education" (Zuern). American Indians were angered by President Reagan's attitude to the Indian problem and Indian people were offended by the President's statement whereby "the United States had done everything to meet [the Indians'] demands as to how they want to live. Maybe we made a mistake. Maybe we should not have humored them in that, wanting to stay in that kind of primitive life-style. Maybe we should have said, 'No, come join us; be citizens with the rest of us'" (AIIAG "American" n.pag.) What the President failed to

recognize was that his own budget made it impossible for the urban Indian to become the citizen he wished for. In addition, if the President meant reservations by “primitive life-style,” again, it was the cuts in federal Indian assistance that he had imposed on the American Indian.

Applying the President’s words to the Milwaukee situation, more specifically to the Indian Community School, whatever integration plan President Reagan had in mind, he made it impossible for the one institution the Indians themselves had supported to educate United States citizens of American Indian ancestry. Not until 1987 were there funds enough to reopen the institution. By that time, the School Board contacted Joe Preloznik, the attorney who assisted Menominee restoration, and with legal help, they made the city transfer “full and clear title to the Bartlett Avenue property” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 84). This meant that ICS could freely sell the building and with the income invest in purchasing property. The Board decided on a vacant college campus, Concordia. The Concordia College site will be analyzed in Chapter 8 as a demonstration of increased opposition of the city’s non-Indian population.

#### 7.4. Function and Role

Stanley Webster, Chairman of AIIAG stated that “the Indian home teaches a sense of family, sharing, and acceptance. The school and white society teach individualism, mercantilism, or commercialism and acquisitiveness” (Bednarek). Such conflicts may only be reconciled in an environment where culture shock is not expected when facing different values. In addition, such an environment may also prepare students for the tolerance of those values mainstream society displays. Webster did not claim an exclusive sphere for the Indian value system, he only intended to highlight the discrepancies children experience in a world insensitive to the values they own.

In 1970, the American Indian Information and Action Group compiled a five-page proposal to describe the purpose of a community school. The proposal includes three criteria to be utilized in evaluating the function of the school. It centers upon increased student and parental involvement in the proposed program, “personalized educational achievement and attitudinal changes and interest of students and parents.” The three evaluating categories were designed to measure the success of the establishment of strong links between Indian cultures and the curricula, similar links between the Indian child and the larger educational context, the restoration of Indian dignity, and assistance with adjustment to city life. These goals have been realized, and they forwarded urban Indian acceptance. The role Indian education, and in particular, the Milwaukee Indian Community School plays in educating Indian Country citizens and, by extension, their non-Indian neighbors are demonstrated by the school’s achievements. As with many Indian projects, ICS also targets deconstructing the stereotypes still dominating the perception of American Indians. The most authentic sources of this goal are the students themselves. ICS’s own student publication, *Penoongi-Gii-GiDowin*, provide two exemplary opinions in forms of poems composed by two students. Cheryl Williams wrote: “It feels good to be American Indian/ We have all the old ways/ to look like one/ and dress like one [ . . . ] I am Oneida and Stockbridge/ If you are an Indian/ You should be proud of it too/ and I am proud to be one, too/ I go to a school called/ Indian Community School/ it’s a school for Indians (n.pag.). As if to answer the mother who recalled her own confusion when she faced public education and the shame she felt for being Indian, new perceptions are offered to students of ICS. Byron Williams’ poem in the same issue reveals the success of reinstilling the pride to be Indian and the experience of coming to terms with mainstream American society. “To be Indian is like/ not to be afraid/ and to hold your head/ up high and to say/ we are all brothers./ [ . . . ] I am not saying /white people are bad people/ all I’m trying to say is/ we are” (*Penoongi-Gii-GiDowin* n.pag.). “We are” is the justification of urban

Indian life and also an acknowledgment of the multicultural existence students experience in the city.

Just as the student body' tribal affiliation reflects the tribes' numerical presence in Wisconsin, so is the Board of Directors largely composed of the seven Wisconsin tribes. This is significant as in other intertribal schools problems have arisen from tribal differences. Even though these have their deep historical roots, such conflicts have led to fighting, vandalism, rock throwing and attack on the police in Brigham City, Utah. As the school's spokesperson explained that the conflicts were due to "native differences become[ing] exaggerated [and] the BIA failing to keep the promises to provide counseling" ("Fights"). The success of the first urban Indian school lies in the nature of Milwaukee's Indian community. "Many Indians here have had closer contact with white men and are better able to adapt to their society" (Rummler "Urban"). While this may seem as an assimilationist standpoint, Rummler continues: "Indians here are probably closer knit and better organized than Indians elsewhere" ("Urban"). As the two notions equate each other, that is, the acquisition of closer ties with the white population, accompanied by strong Indian cooperation, Milwaukee stands as a counterexample to the incident of the Utah school.

## Curriculum

Not until 1972 were the goals of the school publicized. The relatively low number of students, the uncommon space the school occupied and the neglect by the Milwaukee community only came to the fore with AIM's takeover and, in retrospect, problems of Indian education were cited to explain the formation of the school. Mrs. Ogrodowski, when explaining the necessity of the existence of ICS, stated how it would "build bridges of understanding between all people" (Pepan). When referring to population statistics she presented the rather shocking data of the 60 to 90 % drop out rate for Indian students in the public school system. Her

explanation of the problem was that “nothing in the curriculum relates to their lives, Indian children are made to feel inferior” (Pepan). The problem is even more serious when “almost half of the Indian community [in Milwaukee] is fourteen years of age or younger” (“Did”). Mrs. Ogrodowski’s words recall Senator Kennedy’s comments on Indian education and, as the following quotation proves, the director of American Indian ancestry and the senator representing mainstream society shared the same viewpoints. “We wish to strengthen them to go out and function in this society, with the Indian value system” (“Indian School”) said Mrs. Ogrodowski, and it is at this point where the revolving door image surfaces as it should enable students to bring mainstream and Indian cultures to a balance.

In a 1971 letter to Nancy Lurie, Suzanne M. Curtin of the American Indian Center in Chicago explained how the Indian community there was in the process of developing a high school curriculum to be a model for other Indian communities in the country. The expression Curtin used “Indianizing the total curriculum” (Curtin). Curtin’s push for “Indianizing the total curriculum is a cornerstone of the current primary school’s operation.

Originally intended to offer education from kindergarten to high school, ICS remained an elementary school offering education from kindergarten to eighth grade. ICS places special emphasis on reinstilling the pride in being Indian. Eligible children must be enrolled tribal members or descendents of enrolled tribal members. The fact that the entire student body and most of the staff is of American Indian descent implies that Indianness plays a special role in the school’s curriculum. Today’s Indian children have less difficulty with their racial identity than their parents or grandparents did but as an established urban generation, they also need more input of Indian cultures.

“Won” identifies American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian as “any person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and maintaining cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition” (11). As opposed to the



federal blood quantum criterion, emphasis here falls on maintaining relationship with the cultural ties and does allow community recognition to define cultural affiliations. It is important in cases of federally unrecognized tribes, whose self-perception is that of American Indian, but, although the Indian community supports such perception, there is no federal proof of tribal enlistment.

With the special curriculum, the Indian Community School also had to prepare specific aids to assist their educational purposes. While textbooks have posed major problems for neglecting or distorting the Indian image, instructional materials now are composed to be consistent with the objectives of the curriculum. Thus, publications like *Wisconsin Indian Treaties and Tribal Sovereignty: Classroom Activities*, *Current Federal Indian Law and Its Precedents*, *American Indian Tribal Government*, and *Indian-White Relations: Historical Foundations* (“Won” 2) are included in the selection of appropriate instructional materials. The utilization and reference to such works implies how ICS focuses on not only national, but local cultural knowledge. At the same time, these sources also help students’ awareness of the diversity of American Indian cultures, and historical perspectives. They assist in students’ awareness regarding current Indian affairs, and work against the destructive stereotypes of the American Indian still existent in mainstream thinking.

While using modern technology as part of the education process, students are declaratively “expected to analyze and value cultural diversity and inter-tribal/ national perspectives” (“Won” 7). Even more significant in today’s world is the expectation “to live in harmony with Mother Earth, others, and the self” (“Won” 7). These goals reflect how Indian culture forms the bases of educational practices while preparing students for participation in mainstream America. It is at the combination of these values and value systems where the revolving door can truly function without the destructive forces of making exclusive choices in participating in one culture or another. ICS places special emphasis on involving not only

the student, but parents and the community in the educational process. A visit to a Saturday rally on the campus proved how Indian and non-Indian community members could cooperate and benefit from the School's values.

On examining ICS's curriculum, academics are balanced with "Indian spirituality, languages, ceremonies, cultural identity and pride" (ICS). As it was demonstrated in Chapter 5 diversity within the Indian community does exist, but there are tribes with a larger numerical presence. This data is also reflected in ICS's student population. Coming from fourteen different tribes, Ojibwa, Oneida, and Menominee students compose the largest numbers of students. Thus, language programs mostly target the instruction of these three languages.

The curriculum lists seven core values, which, regardless of academic subjects and tribal affiliations, form the basis of education. "Bravery, Love, Truth, Wisdom, Humility, Loyalty and Respect" (ICS) are interwoven with academic studies as is Indian culture. The curriculum explicitly states that students "who embrace these values will be successful not only in school, but life as well" (ICS). Interpreted as the two spaces in between the revolving door, "success" in school may symbolize Indianness, whereas "life" indicates mainstream culture. On a personal visit to the school, I experienced how teachers prepare students to be able to participate in mainstream society without losing their Indian culture. The school canteen's atmosphere was dominated by a grand American Indian design. Fifth graders before writing a math test were provided the time to leave the classroom and give their offerings to Mother Earth, trees or stones. The symbolism of a tobacco offering prior to an academic test verifies how value systems are integrated by ICS.

### 7.5. The Potawatomi Assistance

The relationship between ICS and the Forest County Potawatomi will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, but the origins of the connection are relevant to be analyzed here. Due to the effects of the restrictive economic steps of the Reagan administration, the Indian Community School was at the verge of announcing bankruptcy, while the Potawatomi with their small parcels of land in Forest County, sought a means to provide a somewhat permanent income for the tribe. At this point, the two interests culminated in a common solution.

After gaining full and clear title to the Bartlett Avenue school building and selling it, ICS found an unused college campus which was to be the final site of the school. As federal assistance was easier to obtain on reservation land, plans focused on applying for reservation status for the school site. Trust status was also a key issue in establishing an enterprise which would provide a long lasting, secure financial base for ICS. The fact that “tribal lands under federal jurisdiction have special potentialities for community economic development which are now being explored and acted upon by the tribes” (Lurie *Presence* 4) was to be utilized by ICS and the Forest County Potawatomi. Finding a suitable location for educational and cultural facilities at another location was an equally important factor.

At the core of the conflict lie two parcels of land, one in the residential neighborhood of the West Side, the other in the middle of an industrial area in the Menominee Valley. Both areas are to be turned into reservations with the title and implications of federal trust land. The Menominee Valley is to host a casino complex which would provide the necessary financial means for the Indian Community School operating in the West Side residential area.

Concordia, the former college campus in the middle of the West End community, generated conflict with local residents. Looking for sponsors who would extend their reservation status to a property in the city of Milwaukee, the school contacted several

Wisconsin tribes. Drawing upon the 1833 Chicago Treaty, the Forest County Potawatomi brought evidence on behalf of their rightful claims. Once again, the legacy of treaties signed by the United States and various Wisconsin tribes gained significance in the history of the Indian Community School, and by extension, the entire urban Indian community. The Forest County Potawatomi provide a good example of how Indian sovereignty and self-provision may be blocked by hypocritical arguments in favor of a virtuous life in the entire city of Milwaukee. The tribe is not the first one to initiate a gambling enterprise in order to secure a “self-sufficient, self-determining” (Lurie “Editor”) status for themselves.

The Milwaukee Indian community, the Indian Community School, the Forest County Potawatomi and the city’s mostly white West Side residents are all active participants in the events. The Forest County Potawatomi, the School, and through their presence, the entire Indian community was about to construct the bases of their city life without burdening Milwaukee with further needs. The establishment of a reservation within city limits seems to be a realistic request whereby the American Indian community would benefit from services available mainly for reservation Indians and start a tribally run business that would provide constant and dependable revenue for both the Indians and the school. The struggles evolving around the acquisition of the two pieces of property were viewed as a war on the supposedly homogeneous residential neighborhood where the school was eventually to be located.

In the 1980s, Vine Deloria proposed a reevaluation of the term “tribe.” Arguing that treaties had been signed by the U.S. Congress and particular political entities, that is tribes, rather than a group of people associated with a given geographical area--in this case the reservation--Deloria asked for a similar interpretation of American Indian nations (“Letter” 1). This would also imply that urban groups should be eligible for tribal treatment with all its concomitant notions. The possibility to establish reservations within city limits would favor the American Indian who might have lost his direct ties with home/ reservation culture. This

may raise issues of a rather complex nature with regard to urban communities as it is very hard to find homogeneous tribal affiliation in any city with a significant Indian population.

Parallel to the upheaval over a reservation's establishment in the city, the entire Indian community had to fight its war against stereotyping, discrimination, racism and anti-Indian sentiments. Not only was the urban Indian population seen as a problem, but there was nothing desirable in the distant reservation Indian life, either. Yet, in the face of such oppositions, the school sought urban reservation status to improve its quality and extend its services to every American Indian in the city.

In 2000, the plans were accepted for relocating the village of Franklin on a 147 acre farmland, and the Planning Committee gave consent to construction of the Indian Community School there. A provision was included in the contract that the woodlands culture of the land will be preserved to provide instructional ground for the children. The area originally was to host single family homes but ICS provided a "small commercial development" (Hemman) with bingo revenue still coming in from the Forest County Potawatomi. The proposed school site still has to be rezoned from residential to institutional codes.

Assimilation and the distant nature of the Indian problem surfaced in channeling money to mostly reservation areas. How the notion of associating the Indian problem with reservations manifested and what effect this notion had on the urban Indian population have been demonstrated with the problems evolving around the Bartlett Avenue School. How the struggles led to the unused Concordia campus location and seeking reservation status for that property constitutes an important part of the school's history.

**CHAPTER 8: INCREASED OPPOSITION****8.1.** Trust Status**8.2.** Bingo: the New Buffalo**8.3.** Concordia**8.4.** ICS and Bingo

Conflict resolution

## 8. INCREASED OPPOSITION

The present chapter is, in essence, the continuation of Chapter 7. Yet, while the focus of Chapter 7 was education, the present analysis concentrates on the political, legal and financial aspects of the school's operation. The previous chapter concluded with the introduction of the present school site at Concordia College campus. In order to gain a better insight into why ICS had to struggle with neighborhood opposition and Indian factionalism in regard to Concordia, I will begin with the explication of trust status and its importance for both the Forest County Potawatomi and the Indian Community School. This will be followed by analyses of tribally initiated businesses and their function and a brief history of Indian gambling. As the Concordia site could only exist on gambling revenue, antagonism and anti-Indian attitudes evolved around the school's establishment in the West side residential neighborhood. Chief Dan George's legendary statement that "What you do not know you will fear. What one fears one destroys" was a very likely future for the Indian Community School. Inability and unwillingness to differentiate between trust status and gambling, and the relationship between the two, led to discrimination, miscommunication and misunderstanding. As the Indian Community School's future depended on trust status, I will demonstrate how the school, although already acknowledged by the Milwaukee community, still faced opposition rooted in stereotypes. I will also introduce how non-Indian community support helped counteract neighborhood antagonism. Eventually, the joint forces of the Forest County Potawatomi, the Indian Community School and the city of Milwaukee reached an agreement to secure the future of the tribe, ICS, the urban Indian community and cooperation between Indian and mainstream cultures.

### 8.1. Trust Status

The basic interpretation of trust status is that land is held in trust by the federal government in the name of a tribe. It equals the legal standing of a reservation. While trust status was vital for ICS, its implied reservation meaning was responsible for much of the antagonism from Concordia neighbors. In a letter to Nancy Lurie, Loretta Ford, Chairperson of ICS Board of Directors, explained why trust status for the Concordia building was essential for the school's operation. She claimed that tribal trust status would enhance the school's self-sufficiency by the gaming enterprise which would provide financial security (Ford). As the Concordia buildings were in a devastating condition, ICS needed money for renovations and maintenance. In addition, the federal government continued to finance reservation educational programs, whereas it withheld money from non-reservation Indian students. Thus, reservation status seemed inevitable for the Concordia Campus location. As Ford said "tribal trust status will also allow the school to apply for Indian education funds to continue the Indian culture oriented education along with standard curriculum for our Indian students."

"What is the purpose behind reservation status? Is it to preserve Indian culture and traditions? Or is it to provide a healthy income from gambling" ("Many")? The answer is both. One generates the other: without trust status and gambling, there is no means to financially maintain an Indian school where students are educated to preserve Indian culture and traditions. Without trust status, the culture and tradition of a tribe may be lost to poverty, and lack of cultural education. As "tribal trust status [. . .] means access to a host of federal programs essential to a group trying to work in their own behalf without natural resources, capital or credit," (Lurie "Editor") the Indians of the city rightly claimed an opportunity to provide for their own means in their own terms and most importantly, within their rather limited range of possibilities. The group in question includes the Forest County Potawatomi, the Indian Community School and the urban Indian population of the city, and, by extension,



the city of Milwaukee. The notion was familiar, statewide casinos already provided income for the economically underprivileged Indian nations. Besides the economic advantages rooted in a reservation within city limits, the attempt also targeted a significant cultural aspect. Just as the opponents of the Concordia reservation were concerned about much more than the possibility of gambling, the American Indians had a “socio-psychological aspect” at stake: their rather vaguely defined and perceived Indian country would be “validated by tribal trust status” (Lurie “Deloria” 1).

Vine Deloria’s theory of expanding the notion of tribe to urban Indian communities is validated in the Potawatomi case. In his letter to Nancy Lurie, Deloria claims that the Forest County Potawatomi are entitled to apply for tribal trust status in the city of Milwaukee because it is “precisely the way the government had always treated them in regard to property and so assign these tracts [of land] is fully within the purview of their political / historical relationship with the United States” (1). In addition, application for trust status in the city of Milwaukee formed the basis of business which, constitutionally, Indian tribes were to negotiate with the federal government.

“Tribally owned and generated businesses should have the sole purpose of producing social profits that benefit tribal unity, individual and community pride and the attainment of reservation self-sufficiency” (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 91). On the basis of this definition of tribally run businesses the proposed bingo hall would fulfill all the criteria and would be a suitable and logical tribally initiated economic enterprise that would provide relatively fast, constant and reliable revenue. When ICS first faced opposition to introducing bingo at the Concordia campus, it immediately started to look for another location, which would not affect any residential neighborhoods. They chose a two-acre land in the Menominee Valley, surrounded by only slaughterhouses and a sewer company. In this aspect, the vehement opposition of West Side residents may be surprising. Fears of increased traffic, organized

crime, and alcohol abuse constituted the basics of the disagreement between the Indian community and the city of Milwaukee. Losing the land to federal trust status was also of concern, as it would have removed it from city zoning, governing rules, and taxation. The third component of fervent antagonism was represented by charitable organizations governed by State law that dreaded their loss of income to high stakes Indian bingo under much more permissive federal law.

Commemorating the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Chicago, Dorothy Jones, drawing upon Felix Cohen's words, concluded: "No other nation in the world [ . . . ] set itself such high standards for dealing with a native, primitive population. And no other nation has been so self-critical in trying to correct the mistakes that it made" (n.pag). The issues surfacing in contradictory interpretations of treaties had already raised controversies during the time of the 1970s takeovers in the State. At that time, the question of extending the areas included in the Treaty of Fort Laramie proved to be a successful argument on behalf of the urban Indian population of Milwaukee. However, when the actual occupants of former Potawatomi lands demanded reservation status for a territory formerly belonging to them, the request was received with antagonism from both the white and other Indian communities. The explanation behind opposition lies in the time of the trust status case. With Northern Wisconsin boiling with Indian treaty rights and protests, many feared that similar events would be entailed by a reservation within the city limits of Milwaukee.

## 8.2. Bingo: the New Buffalo

Indian bingo and casino were not Wisconsin inventions. In the late 1970s, to counteract the unreliability of federal grants to their tribe, the Florida Seminoles contacted a lawyer to investigate whether State gambling laws applied to reservation land as well. Since the State of Florida allowed gambling, with imposed opening hours and limited stakes, the Seminole

assumed that the tribe was not subject to State laws within reservation boundaries, since they were a federally recognized tribe living on land held in trust by the federal government. The 1979 favorable ruling of *Seminole Tribe v. Butterworth, Florida* (Lurie *Wisconsin* 78) affected the entire Indian country by setting precedent for the acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty and, by extension, allowing tribes to set up and regulate their own bingo games on reservation land (Lurie *Wisconsin* 78). Indian country saw the possibilities in the case as federal grants were rather limited and unpredictable to support reservation economics, and without restriction of opening hours and high stakes bingo, tribes became able to produce their own income.

In addition to the self-determination and sovereignty of tribes to initiate their own enterprises, there is another factor which is not overtly stated in the establishment of casinos. Tribally set up businesses also demonstrate the attempt to counteract the stereotypical and discriminatory image of the American Indian living off exclusively government aids. Reservations, by establishing their bingo halls and casinos, open up for visitors and provide them with a more realistic picture of what Indian people are like. A personal visit to the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin proved how gambling revenues improved the widely publicized devastating reservation conditions. Driving through Oneida land, one sees a new library, police station, health care center, a renovated reservation school, a museum introducing Oneida culture and recently built housing for those elderly tribal members, who for a long time could only afford to live in trailer homes.

The drawbacks of the Seminole case ruling have been most obvious for states in which gambling is legal. As bingo halls and casinos are located on federal trust land, they are untaxed and unregulated, thus states were bitter about losing their share of revenue to Indian bingo. In addition, however good an economic solution bingo proves to be for tribes, it is not an overall bliss. On the one hand, not all tribes are available for gambling enterprises, as they

are located in states which do not allow gambling. Also, some reservation areas are so far from tourist routes that they cannot attract visitors, even if they set up a bingo hall or a casino. On the other hand, community opposition to introducing high stakes bingo has been a practice in most cases when a tribe desired to open a business.

In Wisconsin both disadvantages were present at the time the Forest County Potawatomi joined ICS in their communal enterprise. Although gambling is legal in the state, Forest County is far from heavily populated areas from where it could attract visitors. The tribe does operate a casino there, but major revenue is provided by the Milwaukee casino complex. The connection with the school and the distance of their reservation led to the eventual application for urban reservation status, both in the name of the school and for the tribe.

The Potawatomi bingo enterprise began in 1991 as a joint effort to generate funding to support both the tribe in Forest County and the intertribal Indian Community School in Milwaukee. The two parcels of land, Concordia in the West side of the city which belonged to the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church who relocated to another site in the city of Milwaukee, and the other in the heavily industrialized Menominee River Valley, now both form parts of the Potawatomi reservation land base and are under federal jurisdiction.

“The rise of Indian gaming [. . .] has evoked old antagonisms that Indians are getting ‘special privileges.’ The complaints play on the widespread misunderstanding that confuses Indian as a ‘racial’ minority group of individual persons, with Indian tribes having constitutional recognized sovereignty comparable, though not identical, to that of states, and much older” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 82). A little less than a hundred years after the national Indian problem came to a tragic end at Wounded Knee, a new kind of Indian warfare disrupted the seemingly peaceful phase in white-Indian relations. The avalanche of direct action initiated on Alcatraz Island paved the way for a relatively cooperative climate of opinion after the 1970s.

Problems, however, were not solved effectively and satisfactorily enough for the American Indian population, much less so with regard to urban Indian communities. Various conflicts arose phrased in a rhetoric that was all too familiar for both American Indians and the majority population, but resounding with bitter memories.

War, buffalo, fight, reservation, land claims, treaty and, without any intention of irony, even glass beads are entries from the vocabulary often used in relation to American Indian affairs of the 1880s and 1890s as well as the 1980s and 1990s. They frequently bear the core of the rather tragic American Indian history. Yet, the 1980s saw the revival of such a vocabulary and the sentiments evoked by them were only a little different from their historical legacy. Just as the mass butchering of the buffalo equaled the massacre of a number of tribes by destroying their source of substance, the war on bingo implied much more than the extermination of Indian gambling in the state of Wisconsin. Unlike the Lakota, Mandan or the Pawnee, the Potawatomi who became involved in the new kind of war declared on the American Indian were not traditionally considered a great horse/ buffalo nation. Still “through casino profits, the buffalo are abundant again and running” (Locke) and the Potawatomi had to learn to cope with their “enemy” to defend their buffalo.

The Potawatomi with their small parcels of land in Forest County sought a means to provide a somewhat permanent income for the tribe. Drawing upon the 1833 Chicago Treaty, the Forest County Potawatomi brought evidence on behalf of their rightful claims when the tribe initiated its application for tribal trust status in the Menominee Valley. Historical evidence supported the Potawatomi claim, but the tribe was not welcome. As a *Milwaukee Journal* reader voiced his opposition to the Potawatomi urban trust status: “if the Forest County Potawatomi need quality help, as I believe they do, they are much more likely to get it from better schools, better leadership, better health care and better opportunities than they are from their city slicker cousins.” Ted Vogel also warned the city of Milwaukee to avoid any

attempt that would result in a neighborhood that “even remotely resembles today's Indian reservations.”

Despite his labeling the urban Indian population “hustlers” and hinting at the “sticky fingers”--of Indians--Ted Vogel's historical facts were proved a fraud by a number of scholars of American Indian history. However, Vogel's statements are significant, as they demonstrate how the distortion of facts, re- and misinterpretation of treaties and stereotyping were all part of the arsenal of the party against an independent American Indian enterprise. The traditional view of the American Indian still confines them to reservations, although in her response to Ted Vogel, Nancy Lurie says, “this year's reservation Indian is often last year's urban Indian” (“Response”). Interpreting Ted Vogel's opinion implies that no matter how problematic the urban Indian population may seem, there is nothing desirable in the distant reservation Indian life either. On or off reservation, American Indians are still expected to conform or assimilate to the majority culture, in order to be appreciated by mainstream America. Vogel also demanded better leadership and better education. What he failed to realize is that these two notions are intertwined and can only be solved by that same enterprise he was so vehemently criticizing.

### 8.3. Concordia

“While any school property was tax free, high-stakes Indian Bingo required that the property be tribal trust land” (Lurie *Wisconsin* 85). In the 1980s establishing a bingo hall to provide revenue for both the sponsoring tribe and the school constituted one half of the problem.

Harmony, to which the etymology of “concord” relates, is nowhere more ironic a concept in the history of the Milwaukee Indian Community School than in its final struggle culminating in the late 1980s. According to a US District Court Judge “the courts have flip-flopped on several decisions concerning Indian rights [. . .] the bottom line is governmental desire for

assimilation of the tribe. But it is kind of hard to assimilate a sovereign nation” (Ebbott and Rosenblatt 17). The Potawatomi and the Milwaukee Indian community in their attempts to achieve trust status for the Milwaukee lands had to negotiate with local, State and federal agencies. The difficulties the Indian community had to face while on the way to obtain trust status for both the Menominee Valley and the Concordia locations demonstrate yet another ironic concept in this case.

“First the prostitutes, then the topless bars and now this [the school]” (Mitchell) as public opposition was voiced. Not only did homeowners near the campus fear neighborhood deterioration and a sharp decrease in property values, but the most active opposition sprung from fear from casino gambling. The concept of absentee landlordism which would arise from a geographically distant tribe applying for reservation land in the city might add to the peculiarity of the problem. Neighbors failed to understand that while the Forest County Potawatomi may be physically distant from the Concordia site, the tribe had its regent, the Indian Community School.

The problem of the existing practice of treating American Indian communities as a homogeneous entity surfaced in the case of the Milwaukee Indian Community School. While the school, in close association with the Forest County Potawatomi was fighting for trust status, another one of the Wisconsin tribes, also represented in the city in relatively large numbers, criticized the urban reservation plan and asked for their share of the revenue. When obtaining trust status seemed to become a reality, the Menominee came forward with a claim on the land where the bingo hall would be built. Tribal Chairman Apesanahkwat criticized the Indian Community School’s plan to buy the Menominee Valley land for a high stakes bingo facility. The Tribal Chairman claimed to have two arguments against ICS’s plan. On the one hand, the land was due to the Menominee and the Potawatomi had no right to extend their reservation trust status there. Thus, the Menominee should be incorporated in the proposed

bingo facility operations. Apesanahkwat's other argument stated that due to financial mismanagement ICS and the Forest County Potawatomi are jeopardizing future securing of Indian lands elsewhere. As it surfaced later, the Menominee Tribal Chairman had personal motivations behind these arguments. His friend was fired from the school board for criticizing the amount ICS and the Potawatomi were paying to the attorney representing their case in obtaining trust status. The same attorney was also involved in Menominee business cases, and he stated that there would be a conflict of interests if the Menominee filed against ICS (Umhoefer).

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* editorial presented the image of the Forest County Potawatomi, ICS and the urban Indian community as unreliable fortune hunters, who, at any time would go back on their promises, even if they are signed in contracts, and turn the city into the scene of organized crime. The author of the editorial referred to the "Florence County Potawatomi" and the "Menomonee Valley" which might be ignorance or mistyping. But inciting non-Indian residents against American Indians and bingo only being the second issue, stereotyping them as liars contributed to the turmoil around setting up the school. West Side residents often gave voice to their concern that the Indians would not keep their promise, that is, they would break the "treaty" with the city and would introduce gambling right in the middle of the neighborhood. Such an argument sounds rather ironic in view of Indian history and the treaties signed by the United States and any tribe. In addition, the twenty years included in the contract signed by the Indians seems much more tangible than the earlier treaties' time frame of "as long as the grass shall grow and rivers shall run." The editor's question why a contract forbidding bingo on the Concordia campus is signed for twenty years, and not two hundred or forever, echoes treaty rhetorics.

Very often the reasons to oppose the Indian community enterprise were termed "racist and bigot," concerns of an "elitist group" (Howard). Opponents to the Concordia reservation



plan claimed they were not against “the aims of the Indian Community Center, but [worried] over the loss of municipal control that trust status entails” (Howard). It is hard to believe how West side residents did not concern themselves with the Indian aims, as it was explicitly stated that “it would be an irreversible mistake to experiment with the placement of an Indian reservation in a residential neighborhood” (Howard). Such reactions might seem like overstatements, but at the heart of the matter the forces of racism and discrimination were a very realistic notion. An example to illustrate this is provided by the minutes of the City Council meeting when members agreed on taking a neutral stand in the urban reservation question. As the Council proposed not to support or resist trust status, one member remarked that “Indians were not as trustworthy as other people in the city” (Lurie “Deloria” 3). Again, may the long history of broken treaties explain such a statement? As the Indian community waived its immunity and exception from local and State rules, apart from the benefits they gained by reservation status, their property was to be treated as any other parcel of land within Milwaukee city limits. Long after the Indians signed the three-way agreement with the city and the state, residents around the Concordia campus still did not feel secure about the promises. Concerns like “[h]ow will the city enforce its rules on federal land? And how long will it be before the tribe comes in for a modification of the agreement?” (“Many”) imply an outright distrust of the American Indian community

The Indian Community School owes much of its original operation to the grants received from Milwaukee churches of various denominations. Yet, when gambling surfaced as an issue in regard to ICS, churches were afraid of losing their limited bingo revenue to the Indian enterprise. Disregarding the fact that the school has outgrown rent-free, charity places, one Catholic Church member wrote: “Catholic Education in the City of Milwaukee has a long and historic influence of Milwaukeeans and the quality of life here” (Fitzgerald). Ignoring the Indian presence, the Indian Community School and the “long and historic influence” of

American Indians in the city, Fitzgerald continues by posing questions of how the city will deteriorate due to Indian gambling and how land taken off tax rolls would result in serious financial difficulties. As an alternative, Fitzgerald's concluding question is "Or will the Catholic Schools be the focal point for the stability of our city." While the tension is explicit in his words, the closing line states that ICS would be welcome "to help add diversity to our ethnic city cultures" (Fitzgerald). Understandably, the fear of losing income was real in such cases, but what the last line ignores is that without bingo revenue there is no Indian Community School, and without ICS the so much welcome diversity becomes questionable.

Many residents rejected being labeled racists for opposing the trust status of the Concordia site. While they claimed that they were not against Indians, and particularly not the Indian Community School, what they failed to realize is that without trust status ICS could not have operated at Concordia. It was easy for the defenders of the Indian cause to abuse the situation and unanimously identify opposition with racism, as sometimes it did surface in the bitter arguments. Yet, rejecting a minority's wish and attempt at sovereignty and self-sufficiency borders racism. As Sally Pettit, a non-Indian Milwaukee resident wrote to Ms. Gail Sahagum, president of the West End Community Association, Inc., "if your association is getting bad press and people are calling you racist, it is because what you are saying and doing comes across as very racist." The response was inspired by Gail Sahagun's statement that she "did not oppose an Indian school or culture center, just the method of attaining those goals." She adds "I have fought and testified at the City Hall against prostitution, strip joints, and girlie bars, badly run rooming houses and for limiting liquor licenses" (Sahagum). What Sahagum implies is that her crusade against trust status at Concordia equals the above mentioned fights for a moral neighborhood, which should not be disturbed by the presence of the Indian Community School.

Of course, that is exactly what West Side residents fear. Thus, when they argue against the campus's trust status their explanation is somewhat more complicated than the explicit fear from organized crime and increased traffic. Moreover, their effort to hinder, if not block, the possibility of trust status does not only target gambling laws and city zoning rules, but the opportunity to create and support a self-sufficient Milwaukee Indian community, and an intertribal school, where new generations of urban Indians could well learn how to participate in mainstream culture without giving up their Indianness.

#### 8.4. ICS and Bingo

The school has been leasing the Concordia campus site from The Forest County Potawatomi. Tribal trust status was the only option available to both ICS and the Forest County Potawatomi presence in Milwaukee. While West End concerned neighbors were claiming they were not racist because “they are quite willing to have a black-white neighborhood,” (Lurie “Preloznik” 1) integration was likely to manifest in token black residents, but no Indians were welcome. After overcoming the disputes over trust status, bingo, gambling, and law immunity, the last concern neighbors voiced was that as a reservation, Concordia facilities would not be available to non-Indian residents. ICS had contacted the Milwaukee Public Library to open a branch on the campus site, and they were also planning to offer the use of the swimming pool and gym as soon as they had the funds for their renovation (Lurie “Preloznik” 5).

Despite West Side residents' concern that trust status and gambling would bring organized crime into the neighborhood, after ICS moved to Concordia and started renovating the campus buildings crime rates decreased in the area. Quoting the Milwaukee Police department statistics *News from Anishinabee* reported that crime rates fell back to the numbers when Concordia was still operating as a college.

Under the terms of the original contract signed by the Forest County Potawatomi, ICS, and businessman John Burke, the investor received forty percent of the proceeds for seven years and the remaining sixty percent was divided between the tribe and ICS. The contract also included that after the expiration of the seven-year term, the proceeds would be split between the tribe and the School. Dispute over financial matters eventually led to ICS's filing a federal lawsuit against the Forest County Potawatomi "alleging the tribe conducted secret meeting and devised ways to deny the school its rightful funding" (Kissinger).

ICS sued the tribe because the Forest County Potawatomi intended to nullify the contract, based on the 1995 ruling of the National Indian Gaming Commission that only a tribe was entitled to bingo revenues. If it wished, it could donate money to the school but the original contract was declared faulty (Kissinger). The bickering over millions of dollars is understandable, but prior to disputes over revenue sharing the tribe and ICS were mutually dependant on each other. It is not likely that gambling within city limits would have been allowed with the required trust status, had an educational institution not been involved in the case. ICS was afraid of losing its income, as it would have faced the same financial difficulties that surfaced throughout its sixteen-year operation. The tribe's standpoint is acceptable as far as the first time in the course of its history the Forest County reservation did not solely have to rely on federal support. This is not to say that the argument supported ICS. Even though there were Potawatomi students, the school was not tribal but intertribal. The Forest County Potawatomi had to support their reservation school as well.

In 2004 the school faced financial difficulties, due the anticipated loss of Potawatomi money. Under the original contract between ICS and the tribe, the school received a given percentage of the casino proceeds. The practice was changed in 1996, whereby the new agreement provided ICS with annual payments totally \$376 million in fourteen years. The changes meant that ICS would lose its casino income in 2011, and such financial alterations

required long-term planning. This included substantial layoffs, about one quarter of the staff. Despite all these hardships, Board member Diane Amour, promised that “we are going to have a quality program for our students” (Schultze) despite the financial difficulties ICS faces.

### Conflict resolution

Under the new climate of opinion, the issue of trust status brought forward not only antagonism, but also non-Indian Milwaukeeans support. Many people understood that trust status was not a loophole for bingo, but it was vital for developing the urban Indian community, and the Indian Community School. Some realized what possibilities tribal sovereignty and self-sufficiency meant. As Bob Jansen, a non-Indian Milwaukee resident stated “we should be happy that the Potawatomi Nation is taking proper place in society.” Interpreted as recognizing a minority’s right for maintaining their culture, such voices in the 1980s would prove that multiculturalism was to manifest itself in Milwaukee.

Contrary to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* editorial, The *Milwaukee Journal*’s, in favor of the Concordia campus reservation status, lists the advantages rooted in the American Indian community’s plans. Besides the restoration and renovation of the area, Indian trust land would ensure a healthy diversity in the neighborhood. The editorial also supports the Indians’ case by citing their continuous pledges that they would “waive their immunity from lawsuits for any violations.” This is a significant aspect, as Wisconsin assigned to Public Law 280, discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, the fear that trust status would equal reservation immunity to any laws and rules is unfounded. The editor rightly closes by posing the question: “Must another century pass before Indians are finally treated like natives instead of interlopers” (“Indian Plan”)?

While conflicts were still evolving around the two parcels of land and the question of trust status, in 1988 the Forest County Potawatomi agreed with the City Attorney that if they get reservation status for both sites they would not introduce gambling on the Concordia Campus. The city was willing to cooperate, provided that separate agreements would be signed for the two locations. Although this had been a progressive measure on behalf of the city, the question arose whether it was necessary to grant trust status to the Concordia site once the Menominee Valley could host a bingo facility. This hesitation reveals that at the city level, the Indian Community School's functioning was not an issue unless gambling questions were satisfactorily resolved. The neglect of the need for ICS's trust status implies that officials were not aware of the vital needs of the school within federal limits. The three-party contract signed by the Forest County Potawatomi, the Indian Community School and the City of Milwaukee with its built-in safeguards presents a relevant example of Indian sovereignty. It is a hard to grasp the concept of sovereignty in a case where the government sets rules for the parties for twenty years, with the knowledge that Congress has the right to nullify it any time. The thin line dividing protection from domination still remains to be defined.

Attempts to further the Indian cause of the proposed school and culture center started as early as 1972 with informing tax-payers that inhabitants of the half-way house program located in the Coast Guard building did not require county assistance, since they resided on federal land. At the same time it was also widely publicized that the school was receiving federal aid under the Safe Streets Act, as many students were referred to the institution by their probation officers. While Milwaukee residents were eased of the burden of providing for the school, emphasis on such information also furthered the more favorable welcoming of other organizations in the neighborhood.

Without the intention to idealize bingo and gaming, the Indian Community School would not have been able to operate but for the revenue it received from the Forest County

Potawatomi enterprise. The casino complex was expanded in 2001, and employs 1500 people, mostly non-Indian (Lurie *Wisconsin* 60). Additional conflicts arising from the introduction of high stakes bingo and gaming in the city came from other organizations which feared the loss of their own income. For this reason the Forest County Potawatomi set up a fund to compensate church and charitable organizations for possible losses. Revenues are also sources for various charity grants such as health care, the Make-A-Wish foundation, and environmental groups. Such utilization of the money generated after so much conflict may resolve the tension and makes the Indian presence, not only in the form of casinos, acceptable and appreciated by mainstream society.

During the course of time the school had gone through many changes regarding leadership and organization. ICS's interest in the casino business has been bought out, and the money thus obtained has been used to maintain the school. As mentioned in Chapter 7, it is relocating from the city of Milwaukee to the village of Franklin to expand its operation on a 147 acre farmland.

In 2004 while the school had been preparing for the relocation in the new building in Franklin, financial matters caused controversies between the Board and parents. With more and more endowment coming in from the Potawatomi bingo enterprise and ICS "per-pupil budget being far more than an elite institution," (Murphy) parents still feared that the Board and its unexplained and unpublicized large spending would jeopardize the future of ICS. To investigate the matter a protest group of parents and former Board members, ICS4Kids has been arguing with school official Jacqueline Schellinger over the amount of Board spending on stipends, travel fares, and legal cases. ICS4Kids, as its name implies, voiced concerns that the Board is mismanaging the school's finances. As a parent stated "the board is cutting our academic and education spending for our kids, when instead they should cut in areas like their own sky-rocketing pay" (Murphy). Concerns such as the above quotation were generated by

the ICS's cutback on financing and firing forty-five staff members. Parents were afraid that with the proposed planning of the Franklin site, even though sums are earmarked for that, education could suffer more cutbacks.

The new school is to open some time this present year, unless further monetary problems cause some delay in its relocation. The Concordia site became too crowded with the ever growing number of students. The new site in Franklin will also host an Indian culture center, along with offering instructions from kindergarten through eighth grade. The architect of the new school complex stated that he wanted to design "a wonderful collision of the new millennium and an ancient time" (Gould). His *ars poetica* may symbolize how through its twenty-six years of operation, the school has managed to build a bridge between mainstream and American Indian cultures. Without discarding Indian features, it has prepared students to be citizens of mainstream America. Oneida architect Chris Cornelius also emphasized that "our culture is not in-your-face, it's about stories and how each individual interprets them" (Gould) and the same applies to the role the ICS has played in the recent history of Milwaukee.



## 9. CONCLUSION

The two goals of this study have been to analyze the multicultural context of American society and to establish the particular standing of the urban Indian population in multicultural America. Present-day urban American Indian population in multicultural American society has been explored through the case study of the State of Wisconsin, and the formation and operation of the Indian Community School in Milwaukee. I have intended to demonstrate how the Indian community of the city exemplifies American Indians' participation in mainstream America and how the establishment of a separate educational institution serves the purpose of being members of both Indian and mainstream American cultures. While separation would imply the wish to distance oneself from mainstream ideals, the Indian Community School's operation has proved to serve a double purpose.

I have explored American Indian participation in multicultural America through the metaphor of a revolving door. The establishment of the Indian Community School and its curriculum work towards the preservation of a cultural sense of Indianness, while, at the same time, it provides a safe ground from which to voluntarily enter mainstream culture. The revolving door metaphor has been employed as a cultural tool to signify participation in both Indian and mainstream cultures, to express the possibility of freely commuting between two cultures, but fully be present in one at a time. Constant mobility and free choice of directions are essential features of this cultural metaphor.

The revolving door does not exclusively imply individual but also mass mobility. This latter factor is a key determinant defining the American Indian role in multicultural society, as integration has always been encouraged at the individual level, while Indian people are more willing to participate with group objectives in mind.

Chapter 2 analyzed various definitions of multiculturalism, and arrived at the conclusion that Hollinger's postethnic theory with certain modifications should be the ideal case for the American Indian to participate in multicultural American society. The lack of acknowledgment of communities of descent is the point in Hollinger's theory where American Indians do not fit his structure. The presently existing ethno-racial pentagon's Indigenous bloc wishes to maintain communities of descent as well as new, voluntary affiliations. The stronger need for the former is expressed in the creation of the Indian Community School.

Chapter 2 also addressed the notion of the American Indian as the Other in the eyes of white America. Writing on colonial racialism Franz Fanon says: "In the degree to which I find in myself something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origin to someone else" (88). Juxtaposing Fanon's projection concept with Philip Deloria's Indian Other results in the particular standing of the American Indian in American society. To keep the Other as distant as possible in order to serve as model or counter model is a primary factor. The attempt to assimilate the far distanced Other in the larger American context is a constituent of equal importance.

Chapter 3 explored various government policies attempted at solving the Indian problem. The dates of enacting the given policies are also suggestive of their assimilationist tendency or their willingness to offer self-determination and sovereignty to Indian people. Advocates of multiculturalism could hardly find any benevolent intent in the policies of allotment, termination and relocation. In addition, while both the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act and the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act supposedly favored the American Indian, the Indians themselves seriously questioned the benevolence of these programs. Except for the Indian Child Welfare Act, the question whether "Americanization cannot happen," or "it should not have to happen" (Miller 10) remained at the core of federal Indian policy.

The difficulty the federal government faced lies in a very distinct feature of American Indian culture, which is the lack of urge to be integrated in either white, and/or by extension, into the multicultural scene. The majority of American Indian sources would associate dominant culture with white culture. The phenomenon is explicitly stated in a letter sent from California to the American Indian Chicago Conference, June 13-20 1961: "The American Indian has never wanted anything from this government but to be left alone. While Negro minority groups are working for integration with the white people the Indian minority has only been interested in freedom from the white man." The letter was composed prior to Indian activism which came into being parallel to the Civil Rights Movement. American Indian activism and radicalism did change this standpoint in a direction where Indian people wanted to participate in mainstream society but on their own terms.

Chapter 4 and 5 listed examples of such participation. The wish to be accepted manifested itself in the creation of Indian country and active Indian presence in this figurative country of Yet, it is at this point, when Indian people started to voice their concerns over their place in American society, that frequent application of stereotypes surfaced. Being declared the invisible minority Indian people had to struggle with this invisibility, that is, the invisibility of the real American Indian. The issue was even more crucial in cities where sporadic population patterns, geographically and culturally varied groups, further complicated the matter. The uniformity with which the general public perceived Indian tribes was also a dangerous attribute of stereotyping. This was rooted in the mainstream tendency to associate the American Indian populations with reservations, disregarding the growing number of urban Indian communities. Actions, aiming at defeating both invisibility and uniformity, such as the creation of urban Indian self-help organizations and the Coast Guard takeover awakened attention to the real Indian problem.

Chapter 6 explored the issue of Indian factionalism, with regard to conservatism and radicalism. Under a more liberal climate of opinion, the late 1960s saw changes in the ways Indian people reacted to their own problems. Radicalism, although deplored and considered detrimental by already established Indian organizations, did benefit Indian communities. In Milwaukee, the 1970 Coast Guard takeover, following the object of national attention at Alcatraz Island, provided the first permanent base for the Indian Community School to function at full operation. However factionalism hindered cooperation between various Indian interests, ICS could not have been able to operate much longer without AIM's assistance.

Although the relationship between the school and the American Indian Movement ended in altercation, both organizations, along with other Indian self-help groups in the city had one common aim: to fight invisibility rooted in explicit, overt and covert stereotypes of the Indian population. While they chose different means, all of them achieved their desired goals in this matter.

Chapter 7 and 8 examined the effect stereotypes and how they contributed to the creation of the Indian Community School. ICS was founded by concerned parents whose children were pushouts of a public school system insensitive to culture specific needs of Indian children. After its humble beginnings, ICS developed into an institution which serves double functions. On the one hand, at the beginning of its operation, following the goals of other Indian organizations, it intended to undermine the application of the very same stereotypes that hindered its creation and operation for decades. By constructing a new curriculum and a culturally safe environment, ICS started to reinstall the pride of being Indian, a notion the founding parents had lost due to assimilationist policies. The school also offered an Indian cultural space within Milwaukee's city limits that the new generations of urban dwelling Indians could fall back on for cultural pride, thus being strengthened to enter mainstream society with a secure cultural identity. Literally and figuratively the school

became the revolving door not only separating cultures but also providing access to them. Another significant aspect of ICS's beginning is how it united the forces within the Indian community and how it managed to overcome the communication difficulties with non-Indian Milwaukeeans.

The application of trust status within city limits and the connection with the Forest County Potawatomi resulted in antagonism and hostility. The seemingly peaceful relationship with the non-Indian community, and unification within the Indian community were jeopardized by these two events. Again, stereotypical imagery of American Indians and miscommunication hindered cooperation at all levels. Political, legal and racial questions affected the school's existence to the extent that its future became insecure. Eventually, with a cooperative attitude of the Indian community and the awakening multicultural sense of non-Indian Milwaukeeans led to a compromise which secured not only the future of ICS, but also the acceptance of visible Indian presence in the city. The above mentioned practices have been analyzed by Scott Vickers, who offers quite broad perspectives in regard to the nationally still existing Indian problem.

The identity of the individual and collective Indian throughout postcontact history has been largely one of manipulation and schematic Other destruction. Central to their fight for cultural autonomy is the realization that Indian stereotypes, whether noble or ignoble, must be defused internally within Indian communities and individual psyches, and externally through Critical theory, vigilant demythologization, and resurgence of Indian "autohistories" and individuated Indian voices in the arts and literature, as well as in politics. (Vickers 43-44)

Although Vickers does not list education as a separate entity, I strongly believe that education of American Indian generations and, through and by them, of non-Indian community

members will be the only solution to attain Hollinger's postethnic America in the future. Sherman Alexie's *New York Times* article "White Men Can't Drum" highlights the inherent difficulties one is to face before such an ideal future dawns on the horizon. When so many are looking for the lost spiritual outside their own and within American Indian communities, as also demonstrated by Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian*, why would Indians offer a native solution to outsiders if they are not given European—Alexie's non-Native term—solutions to Native problems in return? The question implies the notion of compensation, rather than asking for more imposition of Euro-American culture. How this cultural conflict can be resolved, how such cultural trends are accepted by society at large is to be testimony to the peculiar nature of the urban Indian experience.

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