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## **“I Should Not Be Wearing a Pilgrim Hat”: Making an Indian Place in Urban Schools, 1945–75**

**STEVE AMERMAN**

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“I can still remember walking with my mom to Longview Elementary School for the first day of school,” said Martha Sadongei, thinking back to her childhood in the 1960s. “I remember seeing all these kids, all these parents,” she recalled. “It was crowded, and it was noisy, with the echoing little hallways—they were short hallways but there was still a lot of noise. And I remember my mom taking me to the classroom. I don’t remember being scared. I just remember her taking me and finding the room, and that was it. She just said, ‘This is where you’re going to start school, so just listen to what they say, and I’ll be back. I’m not leaving you. I’ll be back, but you need to go to school.’” Reassured by her mother’s words, Martha Sadongei took her seat in her new classroom and prepared to listen to what her teacher had to tell her.<sup>1</sup>

In one sense, Martha Sadongei’s story is like the story of almost every American child in the twentieth century. In other ways, however, it is different.<sup>2</sup> Martha Sadongei is an American Indian, the child of a Kiowa father and a Tohono O’odham mother. Yet her story is not only different from that of non-Indian children but also from that of many Indian children. Instead of attending a federal boarding school or a reservation school, as did many Native youths in the twentieth century, Sadongei attended a school in the heart of a large city: Phoenix, Arizona. Even though there were tens of thousands of Native Americans like her who attended urban public schools between 1945 and 1975, historians have been rather slow to learn their stories. They have now produced several good studies of federal boarding schools and federal Indian education policy, but they have almost completely overlooked urban Indian school experiences.<sup>3</sup> This is no small oversight, for by 1970 the number of urban Indians in the United States was nearly the same

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as the number of reservation Indians.<sup>4</sup> Phoenix, the focus of this essay, is an especially good place to start listening to urban Indian schooling stories, for it emerged in the post–World War II years as a city with one of the largest urban Indian populations in the nation.<sup>5</sup>

This essay listens to Sadongei and other urban Indian children (quite literally) by using a series of interviews, most of them conducted by the author. It also hears them through the available printed records, such as school yearbooks, school-board meeting minutes, and newspaper articles. This essay particularly listens to these oral and written sources for discussions of what it meant to the Indian children to be in big-city classrooms. What kinds of challenges did they face? To what extent was maintaining an Indian identity in the city one of those challenges? How did Indian children then strive to overcome those various challenges? Did growing up in the city and attending city schools make it impossible to stay Indian? And, what sorts of changes to these answers occurred between 1945 and 1975? They were significant questions for people like Martha Sadongei, and they are also significant questions for the general history of Native Americans in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

### EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Although Phoenix's Native American community grew steadily after World War II, rising from 808 in 1950 to nearly 8,000 in 1970, educators seem to have been generally unaware that there were significant numbers of Indian students in their schools.<sup>7</sup> A survey of the minutes of the meetings of the Phoenix Union High School System (PUHSS) board of education for the years 1953 to 1973, for example, reveals only a handful of very cursory mentions of Native American students.<sup>8</sup> The tendency of Indians in Phoenix schools to be “invisible” to non-Indians reflected the tendency of urban Indians to be “invisible” to Phoenixians in general. After meeting with leaders of the Native American community in 1968, for instance, the city mayor remarked that he was “surprised to learn that there [were] between 8,000 and 10,000 Indians living in the Phoenix metropolitan area.”<sup>9</sup>

This ignorance of urban Indians, when coupled with the American public's lack of accurate knowledge of American Indians in general in the 1950s and 1960s, sometimes manifested itself in troubling ways in Phoenix's schools. Some Indians, for instance, actually reported being commonly mistaken as Mexican American. After all, although the Native American population of Phoenix grew dramatically after World War II, the Mexican American population far outpaced it. By 1970, the city had as residents about 8,000 Indians but more than 81,000 Mexican Americans.<sup>10</sup> Lola Allison, a Blackfoot Indian who attended Phoenix schools in the 1960s and early 1970s, attested to the tendency of some Anglos to confuse Indians with Mexicans. “Since I was from Montana and not from here, I didn't look like Indians here,” she said. “And so people would think I was Mexican until I would tell them. We were kind of mixed in with the Mexicans. They kind of swallowed us up in those days.”<sup>11</sup>

Another possible consequence of urban Indian “invisibility” was that educators, perhaps because they assumed there were no Indians in their classrooms,

seemed prone to engaging in insensitive portrayals of Indian history and culture. For Martha Sadongei, this happened one particular November. In a grade school ritual that is still practiced today, Sadongei's teacher had her students dress up as Pilgrims and Indians to honor the Thanksgiving holiday. She divided up the class and placed Sadongei with the Pilgrims.<sup>12</sup>

Other Phoenix schools showed their insensitivity to Indian cultures in other ways. At Central High School, just a few blocks away from Longview Elementary, students engaged in a yearly celebration known as Maverick Day. Maverick Day, which existed at least into the 1970s, attempted to honor popular, and largely mythical, Anglo-American versions of the history of the "Wild West." It involved beard-growing contests for young men, a "Sagebrush Swing" dance, skits, mock gunfights, the selection of a Rodeo Queen, a pie-eating contest (the connection to the "Old West" is more difficult to see in this case), and dressing in "cowboy" garb. Indian stereotypes, and donning Indian "costumes," were also a part of the festivities. The 1961 yearbook caption reads, for example, "It's Maverick Day, and all you dudes in Eastern clothes are gonna' be thrown into the Corral," preceded by the dictum, "Go west, young man, go west, but watch out for hostile Indians!" Such attitudes were echoed in the 1970 yearbook as well, which reported that, "Sheriff Jim Christenson and his posse went after the paleface Indians that happened to be visiting our campus. And it came to pass that these officers of the law killed the Indians and placed those without proper dress in jail."<sup>13</sup> One wonders how such portrayals affected the forty-five Native American students who attended Central High School that year.<sup>14</sup>

We do not have to wonder how some Phoenix Indian students viewed the way in which their teachers and textbooks presented Indians. Diane Daychild, an O'odham woman who attended schools in the city in the 1950s and early 1960s, declared, "I can't even remember focusing on any Indian history at all."<sup>15</sup> Michael Hughes, of O'odham and Hopi ancestry, offered a particularly direct assessment. "I hated history in high school," he said, remembering his student days from the late 1960s and early 1970s. "I just considered it to be white supremacist indoctrination. I didn't consider it to be history at all." Hughes recalled one of his textbooks in particular:

It was a pretty big textbook on American history, but I think there were only about two sentences on Indians in the whole book. And one was at the very beginning, when the Pilgrims came over and they met the Indians, and then the other one was in the 1800s when the settlers were trying to settle and the Indians were being hostile to them, always fighting with the settlers.<sup>16</sup>

When one examines some of the textbooks that the Phoenix schools used, one begins to get a sense for Daychild's and Hughes's frustrations. In 1965, the PUHSS school board approved the adoption of a text entitled *The Growth of America*, a 1959 Prentice Hall publication.<sup>17</sup> *The Growth of America* was one of many books that were scrutinized by Jeannette Henry in her 1970 publication, *Textbooks and the American Indian*. Henry, an Eastern Cherokee,

published the book through the Indian Historian Press, a press established by her and her husband, Rupert Costo (Cahuilla) in the early 1960s. Henry and Costo had created the Indian Historian Press in California as part of their organization, the American Indian Historical Society, which was dedicated to countering the pervasive misrepresentations of Native peoples by non-Native writers at that time. Henry was relatively mild in her evaluation of the PUHSS's chosen text, compared to her often-scathing critiques of many other textbooks. *The Growth of America*, she wrote, did provide a "fair treatment . . . concerning Tecumseh and the Indian war." Still, it fell short of her desired standards. "The approach is European. Contributions of Indians to American life and to the world [are] generally not treated, except the admission that the Iroquois contributed to the founding of the nation through the philosophy of their confederacy," her analysis reads. "No treatment of the Indian today."<sup>18</sup>

Students in the PUHSS took courses in American history and Arizona history. One text that was used in these courses was *Arizona Pageant: A Short History of the 48th State*, written by Madeline Paré and Bert Fireman. Paré was the chair of the social studies department for a Tucson high school, and Bert Fireman was a lecturer at Arizona State University as well as the head of the Arizona Historical Foundation, an organization that he founded in 1959 with Senator Barry Goldwater. Paré and Fireman published *Arizona Pageant* in 1965, still a time when few Euro-American historians were stopping to think about how American Indians might view their histories. Their book, not surprisingly, reflects that fundamental deficiency. The authors, for example, frequently referred to southwestern Indians as violent "savages." They described Geronimo's actions as a "rampage" of "savagery," and wrote that the famous Apache leader "could be trusted no more than a fierce animal." They also adopted a long-standing Euro-American attitude toward Native cultural traditions, which held that, although Indian cultures could be intriguing, they were still inherently inferior to Euro-American cultures. They called the Hopi Snake Dance, for instance, a "weird ritual" that was "steeped in magic," and referred to Pueblo spiritual views as "superstitions." As for attention to twentieth-century Arizona Indian history, let alone the migrations of Indians to Arizona cities such as Phoenix, there was none.<sup>19</sup>

When non-Indian Phoenixians did notice Indians in their classrooms, they often viewed them merely as stereotypes, a tendency that textbooks similar to the ones previously mentioned must have helped foster. Tricia Palmer was one who had distinct memories of what it was like to be seen in her school as a stereotype. An Omaha Indian, Palmer attended Longview Elementary, the same school as Martha Sadongei, though Palmer was there in the late 1950s and early 1960s (several years before Sadongei). Although the marital friction and alcohol problems of her parents made Palmer's childhood household an often-unsettled place, Palmer's grandmother helped make it sufficiently stable and affirming. "I was raised in a warm home, with nice things around—not expensive things, but Indian things," she said. "Then, I'd go to school, and it was like entering a whole other world." She recalls being fascinated with the relative affluence of most of her Anglo classmates. "A lot of the people

that went to Longview in those days went to the Phoenix Country Club,” she noted, then added:

I adored them. I wanted their clothes. They had matching everything. I wished my mom would come pick me up from school in tennis clothes, because that’s what their mothers would do. They would come to school in their tennis clothes and take their kids to dental appointments. I never got to go to dentist appointments!

But Palmer also remembers that while the lifestyles of her classmates attracted her, she repelled the classmates. “If I sneezed accidentally on one of them,” she said, “they’d go ‘eww!’ and they’d make a big thing about it, saying, ‘You’re Indian! Yuck! You’re making me sick!’” She summed up her feelings on her elementary schooling experience with the following statement: “At home, Indian families treat their children very well, with a whole lot of love and warmth, and a lot of encouragement. You’re always feeling reinforced and praised. So, when you walk out the door, it’s like someone throwing a glass full of water at you. You hit the white world, and it’s not a very nice world.”<sup>20</sup> For Palmer, the unpleasant memories continued to affect her into her adult life. “Even today,” she said, speaking in 2000, “if I walk into a room of white people, at meetings or a conference or something, and I’m the only minority there, that insecurity that developed at Longview School starts bubbling up, like I’m still not good enough to be around white people. It bubbles up at me, and I stand at the door, and I have to work to push it back down. It’s like a demon that always pops up.”<sup>21</sup>

Being visible to educators as an Indian also could mean being automatically labeled as academically deficient. Upon beginning first grade, for example, Martha Sadongei was immediately placed into a lower track. After one month of witnessing Sadongei easily and quickly accomplish the teacher’s assignments, the school finally put her into the high-track classroom. Although this was the right move for her academically, the change made the young Sadongei somewhat apprehensive. She explained:

It was so interesting because I do remember, in the low group, there were—there were never that many Indians at Longview when I was going through there—but at least in that low group, there were Hispanic kids, so I saw more brown kids in that low group. But then when I went to [the high-track] group, it was just almost all white in there. And that’s when I kind of got nervous. . . . I was more nervous going into that new classroom than [I was on] the first day of school.

Other Phoenix Indians corroborated Sadongei’s general experiences. Michael Hughes told of how, as a fourth grader, he sat down with his classmates at Washington Elementary with a number 2 pencil in hand and proceeded to take the required standardized test. He earned a high score, and recalled, “The way my mother says it—and I don’t remember this part—she thought that the school believed I had cheated on my test. . . . So, they made me take it again,”

he said. "They called in a psychologist, and I remember him giving me this intelligence test—I don't know, a Stanford IQ test or something like that." Hughes again did exceptionally well, prompting the school to ask him if he would not mind joining the fifth graders and skipping the rest of the fourth grade.<sup>22</sup>

For Lola Allison, a similar experience proved more debilitating. Similar to Hughes, she received a high score on a seventh-grade standardized aptitude test, and her performance was questioned. Her teacher told her that Indians were incapable of doing that well and accused her of cheating. Allison had been doing well in elementary school up to that point. She said that she quit trying after that incident. As a result, she barely graduated from the eighth grade.<sup>23</sup>

Diane Daychild did not tell of her testing results being questioned, but she believed that she had encountered a more subtle kind of stereotyping in the Phoenix schools. Her experience is an example of how even a seemingly positive stereotype is still, nevertheless, a stereotype. In high school, she enjoyed art classes and developed a good relationship with her art instructor. The teacher even tried to assist her in gaining entrance to the prestigious Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, a school that has been associated with famous artists such as Allan Houser and Fritz Scholder. Daychild, however, was not convinced that she belonged in the company of Houser and Scholder. She felt that, although she was competent as an artist, she did not possess the talent to make a career out of it. When she acted on this assessment and decided to drop art class in order to pursue a college preparatory track, her teacher seemed to take it personally. "She really was pretty pissed off at me," Daychild said, laughing a bit. "She said, 'I suppose you want to be a nurse and change bedpans for the rest of your life.'" Daychild still enjoys art and sometimes wonders if she should have continued developing her abilities. But she also wondered if popular notions of Native Americans as people who are somehow genetically programmed to become artists might have clouded her art teacher's well-meaning goals for her. "It's just something that's sort of interesting to think back on," she said. "You know, I think that, with that field, there's sort of a stereotype that Indians are artistic, that it's just natural for them, and that's what she might have been thinking."<sup>24</sup>

### INTERNAL CHALLENGES

In addition to the challenges that the Anglo-dominated urban world posed to Native Americans, some challenges also arose from within the Native community. For many Indian children, one of the greatest struggles was to understand and learn about their distinctive ethnic identity. In several cases, there was a link between this and another aspect of the history of Indian education: the boarding schools. After all, many of the Indians who moved to Phoenix had attended federal boarding schools, and some of them carried those particular educational lessons with them. They then imparted these lessons to the children they were raising in the city.<sup>25</sup>

Michael Hughes's mother, Aleene, who was raised in the city of Flagstaff before moving to Phoenix as an adult, was someone who experienced boarding school legacies through her parents. In the early decades of the

twentieth century, her mother, a Hopi, attended Sherman Indian School and her father, who was Tohono O'odham, attended Carlisle Indian School. Their experiences at those schools seemed to affect their attitudes toward Aleene's education in powerful ways. They were, for instance, strict—even severe—disciplinarians. Speaking of his grandparents, Michael Hughes explained that “both of them had been raised by disciplinarians in the boarding schools, and basically, you were just punished for everything and marched around and stuff like that. And then they raised my mother the same way. You know, you hit first and ask questions later. So she was raised pretty rough.” The boarding schools also made them value vocational education over a more academic one. “Most of their education was an industrial type education,” Hughes said, and added:

My grandfather was trained to be a worker in a factory, and my grandmother was trained primarily to be a domestic. . . . So they didn't really value higher education that much. . . . And I remember my mother telling me that she would try to read books at home and my grandfather would tell her it was a big waste of time. She needed to get out in the yard to pull weeds and stuff like that. When she was going to school, they had real . . . ambivalent feelings about it. They never really understood what she was doing and didn't know whether to support her or not.

In addition to learning to disdain book reading and to “hit first and ask questions later,” Michael Hughes's grandparents also learned to denigrate parts of their Indian identities. Michael's grandmother in particular actively tried to distance herself and her family from Native culture. “My grandmother and . . . one of my aunts . . . were both real fundamentalist Christians,” Michael noted, “and so they really discouraged us from having a lot to do with other Hopi people, especially if they were non-Christian.”<sup>26</sup>

Similar to Aleene Hughes, Diane Daychild was also brought up with a boarding school influence. Her aunt and uncle, who were responsible for most of her upbringing, had attended such schools, and one of the legacies they passed on concerned language. “As far as teaching me my language,” Daychild said, “their thoughts were that they both had to go through so much for speaking their language—corporal punishment and other kinds of verbal abuse from the teachers and the missionaries—that they felt that it would be better if I did not learn our language, because it would be better for my transition to the larger community. So they didn't speak it with me, or they would only speak it when they didn't want me to know what they were talking about.” In terms of her O'odham culture in general, Daychild reported that her aunt and uncle did take her on monthly trips to the reservation, which helped her learn at least something about her heritage. Overall, however, she believed that her understanding of her Native identity was minimal by the time she graduated from a Phoenix high school in 1965.<sup>27</sup>

As it happens with many people, it perhaps took leaving “home” for Daychild to realize just how much she did not really know about that “home”

and its heritage. After graduating from high school, Daychild in 1967 accepted a position as a counselor at an upstate New York summer camp for African American children from the Bronx. "They were just regular kids," she said. "But they were special in that they had always lived in the city. Most of them—maybe they went down South to see their grandparents occasionally—but most of them had just been raised in that urban environment." In that respect, their experiences had not been too dissimilar from hers. In that extended stay away from central Arizona, Daychild not only taught the summer campers but also was taught by them. She believed, for example, that she was successfully concealing her discomfort about being so far away from the place she knew, until one day in art class a young camper told her, "I know you're homesick." Daychild was impressed. "I said, 'Really? How can you tell?' And she said, 'Because you keep drawing mountains and cactus.'" Daychild laughed at the memory. "And I said, 'Oh, yeah. I guess so!'" Similar to most children, the Bronx youths were not shy about asking questions of Daychild and her fellow Indian counselor, especially when they found out that they were both American Indians. "They were real curious. They asked about the way we lived, and why my hair didn't frizz up when I washed it, they wanted to hear us 'talk Indian,' and stuff like that. I knew a few words, but then I thought, gosh, maybe I should know more about myself." She added, "It was real interesting, because, actually, when I think about it, that's sort of when I started thinking about 'Well, who in the heck am I?'"<sup>28</sup>

Delores Johnson, a Hopi, also wrestled with issues of identity, not so much for herself as for her children. Similar to Aleene Hughes, Johnson was an urban Indian who grew up in Flagstaff whose parents were products of boarding schools. As with Daychild, language issues were a notable boarding school outcome. Johnson recalled that, as a child in Flagstaff in the 1940s and 1950s, she and her siblings spoke Hopi with their grandparents, but their parents mainly used English. This partly helps explain why, when Johnson moved to Phoenix and began raising her own children in the 1960s and 1970s, she let English be the main language in her home. A second factor, though, was that she married a Maricopa man, so English was their common language.<sup>29</sup>

Raising children in the city without making a concerted effort to teach them their parents' languages or cultures could have interesting and unsettling consequences. Johnson was made acutely aware of this one day when her eldest child returned from elementary school with an intriguing question. She recalled:

He came home from school one day—I think he was in the first or second grade—and said, "My best friend, he's a Mexican. And this other guy at my school is a colored boy. And this other guy is a white boy." And then he said, "What am I? I'm brown, but what am I? I know I'm not white." And my husband and I said, "What? You're Indian. You're half Maricopa and half Hopi. You're American Indian." And he said, "Well, where are my feathers then?"

Delores Johnson and her husband were understandably taken aback. “It dawned on us that we had never talked about who we were, that we had never talked about who they were,” she said.<sup>30</sup>

Lola Allison added an insight from her experience that, given the questions of Johnson’s son, is not so surprising, though it is no less disheartening. She noted that, in her Phoenix high school, some of her American Indian peers would actually go so far as to deny their Indian identity altogether by simply identifying themselves as Mexican American.<sup>31</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum, and as yet another reminder of how complicated ethnic identity can be, some urban Indian children had their “Indianness” challenged not by Mexican Americans or by Anglos but by other urban Indian children.<sup>32</sup> Martha Sadongei was one such child. In 1972, she graduated from the Osborn Elementary District and began her high school studies at North High School. The move to North, which had rapidly changed from being a virtually all-Anglo school in the late 1960s to being a school with large non-Anglo populations by the early 1970s, was a rather “shocking experience,” Sadongei said. “I had been so used to being one of few Indians, and one of few minorities even, at Longview. . . . And, so then I went to North High, and I had never seen so many blacks in my life, so many Mexicans, or even so many other Indians.” She was also struck by what she calls the “ruggedness” of the North students. “You know, they were streetwise,” she said. “And they knew about ‘inner city school survival.’ . . . And here I was: I came from this very soft white side to get thrown in with these ‘rugged’ groups.”<sup>33</sup>

Though she had grown up around some other Indian families in her part of the city, she found it difficult at first to relate to many of the Indians at North High. Some of them, she felt, were swept up in the “militant” attitudes of 1970s Indian activism. Sadongei and her younger sister suddenly had their identities challenged in a different way than they had been at Longview Elementary. “Because, one, we didn’t speak our Native language, and, two, we didn’t come from a reservation, and didn’t have a lot of ties to those two things, they would tell us, ‘Oh, you’re just a little white girl,’” she recalls. Sadongei maintains that, for the main Native group at North High in these years, being a “real Indian” also meant rejecting the teachings offered at a Euro-American educational institution such as North High. “That was really my first experience of being torn down by my own,” she said, “of getting that sense that, ‘Who do you think you are because you want to go to class? Don’t you know that you should be cutting? Education is not worth it.’” Sadongei and her sister began to abandon the more proper clothing that they had usually worn at Longview and began dressing in the jeans and sneaker attire that most of their Native peers at North High preferred. Martha Sadongei also started skipping class on a regular basis. Though her mother had passed on to her an intense love for reading as a young child, she cut so many reading classes that she failed the course and was placed in a remedial reading program for her sophomore year.<sup>34</sup>

## ADJUSTMENT, RESISTANCE, AND IDENTITY

Sadongei's pastor, however, must have believed in Sadongei even in that troubled part of her childhood. Joedd Miller, an Anglo who ministered at a Phoenix church that the Sadongei family and other Indian families attended, knew Margaret and the rest of the Sadongeis well and was convinced of their determination. The Sadongeis, he said in a 2001 interview, "would have made it in life if they had a row of tanks in front of them."<sup>35</sup> Miller's words could have actually spoken for many of the Indian children in the city. They all saw their paths blocked by "tanks" of various sorts, but they found productive ways of moving past them, whether by adjusting to the reality of the city, resisting the city's pressures outright, or doing a bit of both.

One manner of adjusting to the reality of being an Indian in an urban school was to develop social networks within those schools, even if demographics dictated that those social networks might be partly or largely non-Indian. Sadongei and her sister certainly made friends with non-Indians, perhaps out of necessity as much as by design, because she believed her elementary school only had one other Native American student at the time. "We mingled with everybody," she said.<sup>36</sup> Mary Astor, of Laguna and O'odham ethnicity, also made connections with her elementary school classmates in the late 1940s. Even some fifty years later, in 2001, she retained warm memories of them. Looking at an old photo of her almost entirely Anglo class, she simply said, "We all went to school together. These are all my friends." She has kept in touch with at least one of those friends throughout the years.<sup>37</sup>

Michael Hughes had significant interactions with his non-Indian peers. He described the high school he attended in the early 1970s, East High School, as being similar in terms of ethnic composition and economic status to the schools that Astor and Sadongei attended. "It was mainly Anglo, and pretty solidly middle class," he said. It was also a school with the sort of cliques that one now associates with most American high schools. "The jocks were a real big group in school," he recalled, "and then there was sort of this fringe group of students who were interested in intellectual kinds of stuff, and so I hung out with some of those people." As with adolescent American peer groups throughout the twentieth century, music was a common interest for Hughes and his friends. In terms of popular music, however, Hughes's group found the early seventies to be somewhat troubling times. "I remember that, to me, that was the tail end of what I considered to be the rock [music] that I had really liked," he said. "Jimi Hendrix, Cream, Jefferson Airplane, that was sort of dying out. People were getting more into Rod Stewart, Cat Stevens, and Elton John. And I just couldn't get into those guys." He recalled a day when, out of boredom, he decided to listen to some of the records that one of his mother's boyfriends had left behind at their house. Included in the collection were jazz and blues LPs by people such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Howlin' Wolf. "I said, 'Wait a minute, I remember this stuff!'" The records rekindled his appreciation for such music, an appreciation that his friends at East High shared. Some even attempted to play the tunes themselves. "One guy played sax and one guy played trombone, and so we would just hang out and listen to them and to the records," Hughes remembers.<sup>38</sup>

Although Hughes and many other Indian students socialized extensively with Anglos, many also said that they felt a certain solidarity with other non-Anglo students. Lola Allison attended a grade school (Emerson Elementary) that counted few African Americans and Mexican Americans—and even fewer American Indians—in its enrollment. Allison made friends with one of the few African American boys among her classmates because, she felt, they could relate to each other's common experiences of prejudice. Still, she maintains that she had friends from various ethnic groups.<sup>39</sup>

Other students had more interactions with other nonwhite students simply because they attended schools that were more ethnically diverse than the school that Allison, for instance, attended. In the two neighborhoods that Diane Daychild's aunt and uncle raised her in, one east of downtown and one west of it, Mexican Americans formed the majority of residents. Daychild developed social ties accordingly. "My friends were pretty much Mexican people, because that's where I lived," she noted. "I know a little more Spanish than I do Pima."<sup>40</sup>

Where the ethnic composition of Lola Allison's elementary school was considerably less diverse than Diane Daychild's schools, however, the ethnic composition of Allison's high school—Phoenix Union—was actually considerably more diverse than Carl Hayden High School, Daychild's alma mater. Allison's mother had purposefully chosen her grade school *because* it tended to cater to middle-class—and even upper-middle-class—Anglos. Confronted with a choice between Emerson, a school that had been home to such prominent Arizona families as the Udalls, and a mainly "minority" public school near their neighborhood, Allison's mother selected the institution that she believed could offer her daughter a superior education. For her choice of high school, however, Lola departed from her mother's philosophy. After completing eighth grade, most of Allison's classmates from Emerson would attend North High, which in 1967 (several years before Martha Sadongei would go there) was still a mainly Anglo and middle-class school. But Allison passed on North and opted instead to attend Phoenix Union, where Anglos were a minority. "White people were the minority at Phoenix Union because nobody wanted to send their kids there," she said. "It was predominantly Mexican and black with a few Asians and a few Indians." Allison welcomed the new demographic environment. "My freshman year I was finally around brown people," she noted, "and it was so wonderful. It was totally different from my elementary school. I felt valued and I felt empowered."<sup>41</sup>

Although forging friendships and associations with non-Indian students—white and nonwhite—must have helped Indian children adapt themselves to the urban school environment, it did not necessarily preclude them from acknowledging their identity as Indians. Allison, for instance, greatly appreciated the multiethnic nature of her city high school. Yet this appreciation did not come at the expense of her sense of ethnicity. Allison was disturbed when some of her Indian classmates chose to identify themselves as Mexican American rather than Indian. "It still angers me that you would want to hide something that I find to be an asset," she explained. "I like being an Indian. But a lot of people don't, I guess."<sup>42</sup>

Allison's mother helped her feel better about being Indian, demonstrating that not all urban Indian parents had been swayed, or at least completely swayed, by the assimilationist boarding-school legacies. On one hand, Allison felt that her mother was able to provide her with only a limited education on Indianness. "She liked it here in Phoenix," she said. "She liked it a lot." Allison's mother embraced many of the ways of her new Euro-American urban home and evidently did not feel a great concern to teach Lola and her siblings how to make traditional Blackfeet beadwork, clothing, or food, for instance. "No, she was happy with frozen foods," Allison asserted, chuckling. On the other hand, Allison says that, although her mother may not have sat her down to listen to traditional Blackfeet stories, she did teach her about some of the recent history of the tribe: about, for example, the massacres and diseases that the Blackfeet suffered at the hands of US soldiers at the close of the nineteenth century. Allison learned enough from such stories to know that she was not getting the complete versions of Indian–Euro-American interactions in her Phoenix public-school textbooks and classrooms.<sup>43</sup>

Allison's mother was certainly not alone among Phoenix Indian parents. Many others, whether they had experienced boarding schools firsthand or not, similarly tried to pass on a sense of Indian identity to their city children. Native Americans moved to Phoenix and other cities primarily for economic reasons, after all. They came for jobs because jobs were scarce on their reservations. Most did not come to lose their culture or to make their children lose their culture.<sup>44</sup> Even if assimilationist attitudes had seized hold of some, as earlier examples in this article attest to, they may not have wanted a total cultural loss. In any case, Delores Johnson and her husband were among those who, similar to Allison's mother, felt that Indian culture was something worth passing on to their children. When their son came home from school asking, "What am I?" and "Where are my feathers then?" they did not simply shrug their shoulders and give up on teaching him about their cultures. On the contrary, the moment galvanized them into action, for that child and for the eight who would follow. "After that," Johnson said, "we would talk more about who we were with the rest of the kids. . . . That was kind of like an eye opener for us."<sup>45</sup>

In Tricia Palmer's case, it was her grandmother who played an especially large role in her cultural education. This grounding must have helped sustain her when she was told by her white elementary-school classmates that she "was making them sick" because she was an Indian. Palmer's grandmother lived with her and her mother. "She spoke her language," she noted. "She taught me Omaha values, though I didn't know it at the time. She taught me how Omaha women should be." Palmer's grandmother passed away when Tricia was ten years old, and her mother dealt with her death in the traditional Omaha way. She took Tricia with her back to the Omaha Reservation in northeast Nebraska for a four-day, four-night funeral, which included a peyote ceremony. The ceremonies left a deep impact on Palmer but at the same time marked the passing of one of her most important cultural teachers.<sup>46</sup>

Martha Sadongei received cultural teachings from her family as well. "Mom was always teaching us our culture and telling us there was nothing

shameful about it,” she noted. Especially in their preschool years, Martha said that she and her siblings would listen to their parents tell stories from both the Tohono O’odham and Kiowa traditions. “She read to us every night,” Sadongei said. “We just loved to listen to her read to us. And so every night was a big treat, whether she was going to read us a story or tell us a story. Every night, it was that way.” Non-Indian traditions were also part of the teachings, for some of the stories Martha’s parents told were from the Bible. At any rate, even by the first grade, Sadongei’s education about her Indian identity was enough to prompt her to react when her teacher made her wear a Pilgrim’s hat for Thanksgiving. “I remember distinctly . . . being disgusted because I had to wear a Pilgrim woman’s hat,” Sadongei said. “There was just something maybe innate in me that said, you know, ‘This just is not right. I should not be wearing a Pilgrim woman’s hat.’” She continued:

My sister and I had that same memory of having to do those Pilgrim hats. . . . In our own 6-year-old thinking, we knew that this was just not right. It made us uncomfortable. But we did it. We hated it. . . . And as soon as we could, we took off those stupid little white construction paper hats.<sup>47</sup>

Michael Hughes’s mother helped give him a foundation for fending off challenges to his sense of identity. Aleene Hughes seemed to form her interest in her Indian culture in spite of her parents’ efforts to deemphasize it. It is even possible that it was, to some extent, her way of rebelling against them. She raised Michael to be a bit of a rebel as well, and he smiled to think of her parenting. “She gave me a lot of very mixed messages,” he said, grinning. “One of the mixed messages was: she wanted me to be part of society, to be successful, and go to school, and do all of that stuff; and then the other part was, she wanted me to fight against society. And there was never really any clear connection of how those two things lined up.”

Aleene Hughes found various ways to teach Michael and his sister about their Native heritage. Michael remembered her talking to him often about Indian history. She would, for instance, show him the books—he specifically remembers the book *Our Brother’s Keeper*, edited by Edgar Cahn—being published in the late 1960s that were seeking to revise the traditional Euro-American interpretation of Indian-white relations.<sup>48</sup> Aleene also took her son to hear some of the Indian activists who came to town to deliver guest lectures. He recalled in particular attending a speech delivered by Lehman Brightman, a Lakota who was the head of the American Indian Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Brightman acknowledged that there were many Anglo employees and teachers who were “good” and “sincere” but passionately called attention to general mistreatments of American Indians by Anglo bureaucrats and educators. “What they teach in this country is European history disguised as American history,” he said. “You don’t read anything in the history books about the Indians. You don’t read anything about the blacks.” Foreshadowing goals that Michael Hughes would later vigorously pursue himself, Brightman urged non-Indian educators to

hire more Indian teachers and to work more diligently to incorporate Native American culture into their curriculums. Echoing words that more and more American Indian leaders were saying louder and louder in the 1960s and 1970s, he told the crowd, "You've got a damn proud heritage and you ought to be damned proud of it."<sup>49</sup>

Hughes's mother, through her own example and by letting Michael listen to people like Brightman, also seems to have taught him that it was all right to speak out if you disagreed with someone or something, for example, a teacher or a textbook. Duly inspired, Hughes wrote a pointed comment in the pages of his high school history book, the one that relegated Indians to two measly sentences. The comment, he reported, was simply the word "Bullsh[\*\*]." As for his high school history teacher, Hughes described him as a "nice person," but a person who did not hesitate to bring his socially conservative views into the classroom. "He would talk about how people who were on welfare were lazy, and I would always raise my hand and I'd say 'Well, when I was a kid my dad left and we were on welfare, but now my mother is a social worker. So, I don't think that that applies in all cases.'" On another occasion, the teacher allowed Hughes to take part in a one-on-one classroom debate. His debate opponent was a classmate who Hughes described as a "real straight-arrow kind of guy," a person who "wore a little cross on a necklace" and drove a Rambler. "And we had this debate," he said.

I don't even remember what the topic was, but I let him lead off and he started talking about all the atrocities in history that had been committed by Hitler against the Jews and by Stalin against the people in Russia and all these really terrible things. And so I sat there listening to him, and then I said, "Yeah, I agree with you. That's a lot like what the United States Army did to the Indians in the 1800s. And so you're right, all these governments have just been horrible." It was just this crazy debate we had.

As the debate continued, and as Hughes continued to criticize the US government for its past and present actions, the teacher finally interjected. "He was just supposed to be listening, but he said, 'Well, wait a minute. If you don't like government, what do you propose?' And I said, 'Well, I think we ought to replace the government with scientists.'" I was just saying these outrageous things."<sup>50</sup>

Hughes's somewhat militant posture may have been influenced by his trip, as a teenager, to the 1969–71 Native American protest at Alcatraz Island. At least one of the other people interviewed for this project, Lola Allison, also visited Alcatraz while she was a high school student. The experiences of Hughes and Allison at Alcatraz demonstrate that, as powerful as schools and parents are, not everything a child learns comes from them. For Hughes, his decision to visit the famous site was rather spontaneous. "When I was about 14," he explained,

this doctor from the Indian Hospital who I was friends with came by my house at Christmas time and said, "I'm going to San Francisco.

You want to come with me?” And I said, “Yeah, okay.” So I said to my mom, “I’m going to San Francisco with this doctor,” and she said, “Well, okay. Just be careful.” So we got in his Jeep and drove across the desert to San Francisco and stayed with some of his friends in town—he had gone to medical school over there. And we stayed with them for, I don’t know, three or four days. And during that time, that was when the occupation of Alcatraz was going on. And so we went down there and took the boat across the bay and got to the island and checked it out.<sup>51</sup>

Though they did not know each other at that point, Lola Allison and Michael Hughes may have been on Alcatraz at the same time. Allison had dropped out of her junior year at Phoenix Union High School to take part in the occupation, and she stayed there much longer than Hughes. “That was an education on another level,” she said.

I was there for thirteen months. . . . I was taught all this stuff, all this beautiful stuff about being an Indian that I had always felt, but that nobody had ever sat down and taught me: religion, artwork, mythology. . . . I learned Indian stories, and to me that was the most important part of being educated as an Indian kid. But I didn’t get that until I was sixteen, and I had to go search for it.

Allison did complete high school at Phoenix Union, something she attributed to her mother’s firm insistence on obtaining a solid education in the Euro-American system. “In our family, no one dropped out,” Allison asserted. “My mom called me and she said, ‘Lola, we don’t drop out in this family. You have to come back and graduate.’ And I just couldn’t let my mom down so I came back and graduated.” After graduating high school, Allison resumed her activist involvement, visiting places like Washington State to take part in “fish-ins” in the Pacific Northwest. “I went back on the road and went all over the country, east coast to west coast,” she said. “It was wonderful.”<sup>52</sup>

Martha Sadongei did not go to Alcatraz Island. When she entered North High School in 1972, Indian peers who seemed to be influenced by Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and the other events of those years had called her a “little white girl.” For a while, she and her sister tried to conform to their peers’ standards of Indianness, or at least to what they perceived their peers’ standards to be. The Sadongei sisters dressed “down” in jeans and sneakers, skipped classes, and received failing grades. Finally, though, at some point in that sophomore year, Martha Sadongei managed to assess her situation, and she remembered her mother’s goal—and her own childhood goal—of attending college. “I made the conscious decision to just stop that behavior, and accept that the rest are just going to have to deal with it,” she said. “You’re going to hear it,” she remembers thinking to herself, “but you’re going to be better off in the long run. It’s not that big a deal what they say anyway.”<sup>53</sup>

Yet her Indian peers’ views were still a big enough deal that Sadongei did try to find some way of reconciling her interest in succeeding academi-

cally with her concern for acceptance by those peers. As she reflected on it, she remarked, “I guess what helped though was that I was somehow able to balance out . . . my going to class [with] still being with them.” By getting involved in North High’s newly formed “Indian Club” and by simply gathering with other Indians at lunchtime, Sadongei felt she was able to strike this balance. In terms of lunch, Sadongei and the other students carved out a Native place in their urban school quite literally. She explained,

We would get together at lunch time. We would try to work schedules out so that we’d all either take the first or second lunch period, and have our designated picnic tables there, and that would be the meeting point. And we’d get there, and we’d have our markers, and things, and etch things into the table and write all over it and it got to a point where everybody just knew that this was the Indian table, and we all just gathered there mid-day, so to speak.

At lunch and in the Indian Club, Sadongei learned to “[joke] around with them and [tease] them and all that other stuff that Indian youth do when they get together.” Gradually, she said, she gained their approval. “But it was almost like it took a couple of years for them to accept me as being Indian. And after that I could go back to being the student and studying and even being the president of the Indian Club and all this sort of stuff and they sort of cut back on some of the slack. And so the last two years weren’t as hard as the first two. . . . But it was not easy making that first two years. [They] were really tough.”<sup>54</sup>

#### A CHANGING CITY, CHANGING SCHOOLS, AND A CHANGING URBAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

The stories of Sadongei, Hughes, Allison, and the others occurred in a city that was changing between the years 1945 and 1975, and a brief acknowledgment of some of those changes is a necessary part of understanding this story. The city of Phoenix grew rapidly in these decades, and people not only moved to the city but also moved within it. As with other large cities in the United States, the population changes in Phoenix resulted in some reshufflings of the public school demographics, particularly in terms of ethnicity and economics. In other words, certain schools became whiter and richer, while other schools became “brownier” and poorer.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a time when the changes were especially rapid and especially dramatic. The PUHSS’s figures on school ethnic compositions from 1967 to 1976 display some of these shifts quite clearly. North High School’s student body, for example, changed from being 91 percent white in the 1967–68 school year, to being only 56 percent white in the 1975–76 school year. Nonwhite populations also made significant gains at East, Carl Hayden, and South Mountain high schools.<sup>55</sup>

Individuals such as Lola Allison and Martha Sadongei complement such statistics with illuminating eyewitness accounts. Emerson Elementary, the

school that Allison's mother had sent her to because most of the students were Anglo, was already quite different for her younger siblings, who were only a few grades behind her. "By the time my brother went there [from about 1964 to 1972], things had totally changed," she noted. "In that four-year period, it became almost all Hispanic."<sup>56</sup> The teachers did not adjust well to the abruptly altered ethnic composition, according to Allison. "There was this one teacher, Mrs. Wilson—she taught sixth grade—she was all right, but she was kind of tough on you. She demanded respect," she said. "So, by the time my brother got there, she couldn't handle it. They gave her a nervous breakdown. These teachers were just not equipped to handle minority kids, poor kids. . . . She had to go to the mental home." In Allison's view, the overall quality of education at Emerson began to deteriorate. She asserted that "by the time my two little brothers got there, the teachers had just given up. It had become the minority school that my mom had wanted to avoid. They were just basically pushing the kids through."<sup>57</sup> Martha Sadongei did not evidently experience as dramatic a demographic change at Longview Elementary, but she did notice a significant increase over the years in the number of American Indians attending the school. Whereas she could only recall there being one other Indian student in her class when she started at Longview in 1964, she indicated that there were about ten other Indians in her class by the time she finished the eighth grade in 1972.<sup>58</sup>

Also in the late 1960s, Phoenix public school officials finally began to understand that they needed to make a substantial effort to respond to the ethnic and socioeconomic shifts in their city. They slowly became more aware that concerns of non-Anglos needed to be recognized, mainly because African American and Mexican American students took steps to ensure that they could not be ignored. Increasingly, many school administrators at least gave voice to the need to improve the district's effectiveness in educating nonwhite students, and in some cases they even backed up their words with concrete changes in curriculums and faculty hires.<sup>59</sup> Educators generally continued to lag in recognizing American Indians, however.

This changed in 1973. In that year, partly inspired by the spirit of activism among Indians nationwide, and even partly inspired by the political activism of Phoenix's African American and Mexican American communities, the Indian community stepped up its efforts to improve its place in the city. Reforming the schools was a chief concern among these efforts. Adults formed organizations to coordinate this campaign, but Indian students also played prominent leadership roles. Among these leaders were several of the people who have been featured in this essay: Michael Hughes, Martha Sadongei, Lola Allison, and Diane Daychild. Convinced that their Indian identity was something to be proud of, that the schools were doing an inadequate job of helping them feel this way, and that being able to honor their Native heritage was linked to being able to succeed in school academically, these young urban Indians persistently lobbied for change. And they ultimately accomplished it. By December 1973, they had compelled the school board to commit to such reforms as improving the curriculum for Native American culture, striving to hire more Native faculty, and using available federal funds for urban Indian

children. From that point on, it would be harder for Phoenix educators to miss seeing the Indians in their schools. From that point on, “invisibility” would be less of a problem for the Native students.<sup>60</sup>

#### MAKING AN INDIAN PLACE IN URBAN SCHOOLS, 1945–75

Making an Indian place in urban schools was not easy, yet not impossible. Their educational experiences correlated in many ways with the more familiar histories of Indian education that have so far been produced: the studies centering on the boarding schools. Similar to the boarding schools of the early twentieth century, urban public schools of the late twentieth century exerted pressure on Indian students to assimilate. And, like many Indian students in boarding schools, many Indian students in city schools found ways of resisting assimilation and maintaining their identities. In other respects, though, the experiences differed. If boarding schools sought to assimilate Indian children in very direct ways, urban schools were somewhat less direct. If “Kill the Indian to save the man” was the notorious mantra of the boarding schools, “Indians? What Indians?” may have been the mantra for city classrooms. Just the simple fact that they were a tiny minority, in other words, provided its own sort of inherent assimilationist pressure. In boarding schools, or in on-reservation schools for that matter, this was not a factor. There, Indians did not have to be concerned, for example, with being “swallowed up by the Mexicans” to paraphrase Lola Allison.

Being a tiny minority presented opportunities as well as challenges. The accelerating increase in Indian contacts with non-Indian cultures is one of the big stories of Indian history in the twentieth century. This increase happened for reservation Indians, certainly, but one could say that it happened even more quickly and extensively for urban Indians and, especially, for their children. They likely had more African American, Mexican American, and Anglo friends than their reservation counterparts, for example. They may have been exposed to Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, and Cream a bit earlier than them, too. And, they had a front-row seat to watch and to learn from the 1960s political movements of urban African Americans and urban Mexican Americans.

With tens of thousands of Indian children attending urban schools rather than boarding schools in the twentieth century, these sorts of differences are worthy of our notice. And yet, the two schooling experiences were also linked, as the interviewees in this essay indicated. Some boarding school graduates were among those who moved to cities, and it affected how many of them approached their children’s education, sometimes in profound ways.

Through it all, most urban Indian children managed to stay Indian, something that Martha Sadongei’s particular journey helps illustrate. Her mother and father had prepared her well for her first day in the “crowded,” “noisy,” urban classroom, with its “echoing little hallways.” She had survived the Pilgrim hat episode to the point that, as an adult, she and her sister were able to look back at it and chuckle. Joedd Miller had been right about her. She “made it in life” even when metaphorical “tanks,” be they teachers or other Indian students, did make the path difficult. Martha Sadongei ultimately

brought her urban Indian educational experiences full circle. In 1980, fresh from her graduation from college, she returned to the echoing little hallways of Longview. This time, she was the teacher. When November arrived, her students were ready to learn about the story of Thanksgiving. But Sadongei did not have the children don Pilgrim and Indian costumes. Instead, she taught them in detail about the histories and cultures of the indigenous peoples of New England. And the students and their parents loved it.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the city schools had made Sadongei different in some ways from Indian children who had attended boarding schools or reservation schools, just as the city schools made all children different. But, Sadongei had also turned around and made the city a little different herself; again, just as all children did. Her story, then, is not just an urban American Indian story. It is also an American story.

### Acknowledgments

The author wishes especially to thank the Indian and non-Indian people of Phoenix who generously and patiently helped teach him about their personal experiences with the public schools. I appreciate the comments of both readers and thank them for their careful consideration of this article.

### NOTES

I learned of the interviewees for this article in a variety of ways. Some I had heard speak at community meetings of Phoenix urban Indians, and I contacted them to see if they would be willing to help with this project. Some volunteered after I announced my project at a meeting of a Phoenix urban Indian elders group. With regards to Michael Hughes, I had his name from old 1970s newspapers articles and asked around to find out if he was still in town. In some cases, after an interview the interviewees mentioned other people they thought I should speak with regarding this topic. Before starting any interview I explained the project as clearly as I could and answered any questions the interviewee might have had about it or about me. I then asked for the interviewee's written permission to go forward with the interview, tape-record it (they could elect not to have it taped), use their name (I gave them the option to use a pseudonym), and have the tapes and transcripts deposited in the Labriola National American Indian Data Center of Arizona State University. I also asked for permission to convey their stories through my classroom teaching and published writing. I have copies of these permissions forms in my possession, and they are also present at the Labriola Center.

1. Martha Sadongei, interview by author, 20 July 2001 (hereafter Sadongei interview), tapes and transcripts in Labriola National American Indian Data Center, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ (hereafter Labriola).

2. Although a full treatment of the history of the experiences of non-Anglo-Saxon Protestant children in urban public schools is beyond the scope of this brief article, my thoughts on the matter have been informed by, e.g., Selma Cantor Berrol, "Immigrant Children at School, 1880–1940: A Child's Eye View," in *Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850–1950*, ed. Elliott West and Paula Petrik

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974). Readers who wish to probe the topic of urban public-school education and assimilation further might begin by consulting these sources.

3. The list of boarding-school studies is now long, which is a positive and necessary development. One recent article appeared in this journal: Margaret Connell-Szasz, "I Knew How to Be Moderate, and I Knew How to Obey': The Commonality of American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1750s–1920s," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 29, no. 4 (2005). Urban schools have received far less treatment by historians, but some have begun to delve into them. See, e.g., Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination, since 1928* (1974; 3rd ed., rev., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); James LaGrand, *Indian Metropolis: Native Americans in Chicago, 1945–1965* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

4. For 1970, the US Census counted 436,992 Indians as "rural" and 355,738 as "urban." I.e., 44.9 percent of Indians in the United States were urban. Certainly, one must be careful when using census data. E.g., census takers tended to undercount minorities, and urban Indians were particularly hard to track because many frequently moved back and forth between cities and reservations. Also, some urban Indians lived in towns *on reservations*; the census defined any place with a population more than 2,500 as "urban." Still, even granting that the census count is not 100 percent precise, it is a reasonable approximation, and that approximation is quite striking. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 1, *United States Summary*, sec. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), 262.

5. By the year 2000, Phoenix's urban Indian population (26,696) trailed only that of New York City and Los Angeles. Stella U. Ogunwole, "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000," Census 2000 Brief, February 2002, 8, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-15.pdf> (accessed 1 August 2006). Phoenix's Indian community has received some attention from historians and other scholars. See, e.g., Paivi Hoikkala, "Feminists or Reformers? American Indian Women and Political Activism in Phoenix, 1965–1980," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, no. 4 (1998), 163–85; as well as her dissertation: "Native American Women and Community Work in Phoenix, 1965–1980" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1995); Joyotpaul Chaudhuri, *Urban Indians of Arizona: Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974); Edward Liebow, "A Sense of Place: Urban Indians and the History of Pan-Tribal Institutions in Phoenix, Arizona" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1986); Edward Liebow, "Urban Indian Institutions in Phoenix: Transformation from Headquarters City to Community," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 18 (Winter 1991), 1–27; Robert Trennert, "Phoenix and the Indians: 1867–1930," in *Phoenix in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Community History*, ed. G. Wesley Johnson Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Steve Amerman, "Making a Native Place in Urban Schools: Native Americans and Education in Phoenix, 1941–1984" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2002).

6. Scholars in disciplines beyond history have also offered studies of urban Indian schools. See, e.g., John Kehoe and Frank Echols, "Improving Achievement and Other Outcomes among Urban Native Students," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*

14, no. 1 (1994): 61–75. This article is one of many that take a rather quantitative approach to the topic. To those studies, my essay adds a more qualitative, and more historically focused, exploration. Part of that qualitative character comes from the fact that it uses a small number of in-depth interviews rather than a large number of short surveys. As far as the use and critical analysis of in-depth interviews by historians for historical studies, it is a research method that has gained increasing stature and attention. This is especially true for the field of American Indian history. See, e.g., Devon A. Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); James LaGrand, “Whose Voices Count? Oral Sources and Twentieth-Century American Indian History,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1997).

7. Population figures are noted in Liebow, “Sense of Place.” Liebow based his numbers on the US Census. Not only was Phoenix’s Indian population large, it was also diverse. Although the largest numbers were members of Arizona tribes, many non-Arizona tribes were also represented, from Choctaw to Lakota, and from Mohawk to Tlingit. Chaudhuri, *Urban Indians of Arizona*, 63; Mary Rose Christy, “American Urban Indians: A Political Enigma, A Case Study: The Relationship between Phoenix Urban Indians and Phoenix City Government” (MA thesis, Arizona State University, 1979), 158–59.

8. The PUHSS minutes are housed in the Phoenix Union High School District (in the latter part of the 1970s, the “Phoenix Union High School *System*” officially changed its name to “Phoenix Union High School *District*”) Administration Building, 4502 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012 (hereafter PUHSS school board minutes). PUHSS newsletters for the years 1959 to 1964 also seldom mentioned American Indian students. The PUHSS newsletters are housed in the folder “Phoenix-schools-PUHSD-newsletter,” Arizona Room, Phoenix Public Library, Phoenix, AZ. The story is much the same in terms of elementary schools in Phoenix. A review of the minutes of the school board meetings of the Osborn Elementary School District, a district with a historically high concentration of Indian students, for 1953–73 shows a similar lack of attention to Indian pupils. The Osborn School District minutes are housed in the district administration building, 1226 West Osborn Road, Phoenix, AZ, 85013.

The PUHSS was large in the post-WWII era, and—like the city itself—it only grew larger. It grew from 9,000 students and four schools in 1950 to 28,433 students and ten schools in 1970. See PUHSS Annual Reports, 1960–61, 1969–70, and 1971–72, housed in PUHSD Administration Building, 4502 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012 (hereafter PUHSS Annual Reports). The elementary schools mentioned in this essay—Longview, Washington, and Emerson—were all located near the central part of the city, an area where Indians had tended to cluster in these years.

9. *Arizona Republic*, 28 March 1968.

10. Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860–1992* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 2; Liebow, “Sense of Place.” In terms of specific numbers, Luckingham lists 81,239 Mexican Americans and Liebow lists 7,947 American Indians.

11. Lola Allison, interview by author, 5 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Allison interview).

12. Sadongei interview.

13. Photographs of “Maverick Day” appear in the very first Central High School yearbook in 1959 and continue into the late 1970s (by then, it had been renamed “Rodeo Days”). Captions are from the 1961 and 1970 Central High School yearbooks, both housed in the school library, Central High School, 4525 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012 (hereafter CHS yearbook).

14. The Indian population of Central High School is listed in PUHSS Annual Reports, 1970–71.

15. Diane Daychild, interview by author, 19 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Daychild interview, 19 June 2001).

16. Michael Hughes, interview by author, 8 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Hughes interview, 8 June 2001). Lola Allison, in her interview, also maintained that she was taught nothing about Indian history and culture in her elementary school.

17. PUHSS school board minutes, 2 September 1965.

18. Jeannette Henry, *Textbooks and the American Indian* (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1970), 65.

19. Madeline Ferrin Paré with the collaboration of Bert M. Fireman, *Arizona Pageant: A Short History of the 48th State* (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965), 24, 49, 128–29. In the mid-1970s, Indians formed a state textbook evaluation committee, and one of the books it critiqued was this one. And one of the committee members was Michael Hughes. *Indian Arizona News* (Phoenix), August 1979, in Labriola.

Although high schools would have used *Arizona Pageant*, many elementary schools would have used the junior edition of the book, which was published a few years later: Madeline Ferrin Paré and Bert M. Fireman, *Arizona Adventure: A History for Boys and Girls* (Tempe: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1972).

20. Tricia Palmer (pseudonym), interview by author, 1 September 2000, tape and transcript in author’s possession (hereafter Palmer interview).

21. Ibid.

22. Michael Hughes, interview by author, 26 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Hughes interview, 26 June 2001).

23. Allison interview.

24. Diane Daychild, interview by author, 7 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Daychild interview, 7 June 2001). Although I have highlighted some of the more negative views of Phoenix teachers here, I should note that many of the interviewees also had quite positive memories of other teachers. Mary Astor, e.g., asserted the following: “All the teachers were real nice. They all encouraged me.” And, Michael Hughes described one of his elementary school teachers, a person he says he will “never forget,” as an “angel woman, a wonderful, nice teacher.” Mary Astor (Laguna/O’odham), interview by author, 21 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Astor interview, 21 June 2001); Hughes interview, 26 June 2001.

25. In keeping with the broader scope that this article hints at, Indians were by no means the only ethnic group to be subjected to intensive assimilationist pressure in public schools. Again, consider some of the sources mentioned in n. 2.

Illuminating the similarities, as well as the significant differences, between the experiences of immigrants in urban public schools and Indians in off-reservation federal boarding schools would be an interesting study. One salient difference, for instance, would seem to be that, whereas immigrant children at least returned to their

parents and ethnic neighborhoods at the end of each school day, Indian children in boarding schools did not. Many, of course, did not even see their parents or reservations for several years. Another noteworthy contrast would be that, whereas immigrants ultimately chose to move to the United States, Indians had the United States move to them, a movement that Indians ultimately did not get to choose.

26. Hughes interview, 26 June 2001.

27. Daychild interviews, 7 June 2001 and 19 June 2001.

28. Daychild interview, 7 June 2001.

29. Delores Johnson, interview by author, 27 June 2001, Labriola (hereafter Johnson interview).

30. Ibid.

31. Allison interview.

32. Certainly, defining *Indianness* is incredibly complex. In this brief article, I have not attempted to articulate an absolute, set definition of Indianness. Doing so seems especially problematic given the fact that I am not Indian. Instead, I have tried to give readers some glimpses of how some Indian people in Phoenix, between about 1945 and 1975, defined Indianness in their own ways. Martha Sadongei's experiences are just one of several examples of how Phoenix Indians could sometimes disagree on the definition.

33. Sadongei interview.

34. Ibid.

35. Joedd Miller, interview by author, 26 June 2001, Labriola. The church was Central Presbyterian Church in downtown Phoenix, across from the Phoenix Indian School, a federal off-reservation boarding school.

36. Sadongei interview.

37. Ibid.; Astor interview, 21 June 2001.

38. Hughes interviews, 8 June 2001 and 26 June 2001.

39. Allison interview.

40. Daychild interviews, 7 June 2001 and 19 June 2001.

41. Allison interview. In the 1967–68 school year, North High School was 91 percent Anglo. PUHSS Annual Reports, 1970–71. Unfortunately district records do not record the ethnic composition of Phoenix Union High School for that year, but its status as a “minority school” is noted by Allison and in Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 216. By the 1970–71 school year, the district did have records on Phoenix Union's students: 1.9 percent were Native, 57.4 percent were Mexican American, 33.9 percent were African American, 0.8 percent were Asian American, and 4.9 percent were Anglo. PUHSS Annual Reports, 1970–71. For tables that use these reports and others to chart ethnic breakdowns for the district as a whole and for individual schools, from 1967 to 1976, see Amerman, “Making a Native Place in Urban Schools,” 187–92.

42. Allison interview.

43. Ibid.

44. For more on the factors that induced Indians to move to Phoenix, see Amerman, “Making a Native Place in Urban Schools,” 37–60. The chapter builds upon original research as well as the work of others, such as the aforementioned Hoikkala, “Feminists or Reformers?”; Chaudhuri, *Urban Indians of Arizona*; Liebow, “Sense of Place” and “Urban Indian Institutions in Phoenix.”

45. Johnson interview.

46. Palmer interview.

47. Sadongei interview.

48. Hughes interview, 26 June 2001; Edgar Cahn, ed., *Our Brother's Keeper: The Indian Within White America* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1969).

49. Hughes interview, 26 June 2001; newspaper article on Lehman Brightman's speech, newspaper not indicated, n.d., in box 1, folder 32, Michael Hughes's files. Although the original documents in the "Hughes files" are in Hughes's possession (in his Phoenix, AZ home), Hughes permitted the author to make copies of the particular files mentioned in this article. The box and folder numbers refer to the author's own cataloging method. Hughes may eventually donate his papers to an archive.

For an excerpt from one of Lehman Brightman's speeches, see Joseph H. Cash and Herbert T. Hoover, eds., *To Be an Indian: An Oral History* (1971; repr., St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995).

50. Hughes interview, 8 June 2001.

51. Hughes interview, 26 June 2001. In 1969, the *Arizona Republic* did an article on the doctor who gave Michael Hughes a ride. It portrayed the twenty-seven-year-old pediatrician, Peter Magnus, as something of a "countercultural" figure, as someone for whom an impulsive trip to Alcatraz might not be terribly unexpected. Dr. Magnus, the reporter noted, had "a beard, peace button, dogs named Salome and Rance (short for *rancid*), and some highly nonestablishmentarian ideas about medicine and society." He was dedicated to improving psychological counseling facilities for American Indians, asserting that "Indians especially need such facilities because their situation and the type of education they receive often combine to produce an attitude of hopelessness." *Arizona Republic*, 24 March 1969.

52. Allison interview.

53. Ibid.

54. Sadongei interview

55. PUHSS Annual Reports, 1970–71 and 1975–76. For tables that use these reports and others to chart ethnic breakdowns for the district as a whole and for individual schools, from 1967 to 1976, see Amerman, "Making a Native Place in Urban Schools," 187–92. For a general survey of economic and ethnic shifts in downtown Phoenix in the 1960s and 1970s, see Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 177–220, esp. 196–98, 217.

56. Allison may have meant the four- or five-year period from when she graduated from Emerson, in about 1967, to when her younger brother, David, graduated in about 1972.

57. Allison interview.

58. Sadongei interview.

59. For a fuller examination of the history of ethnicity, race, and class in Phoenix's schools, see Amerman, "Making a Native Place in Urban Schools," 117–51. See also Luckingham, *Phoenix* and *Minorities in Phoenix*.

60. PUHSS school-board meeting minutes, 20 December 1973. For an extended discussion of this 1973 Indian campaign to reform the Phoenix schools, see Stephen Kent Amerman, "'Let's Get in and Fight!' American Indian Political Activism in an Urban Public School System, 1973," *American Indian Quarterly* 27 (Summer and Fall 2003): 607–38.

61. Sadongei interview.