

together with the Pawnee battalion, to Dull Knife's village and helped destroy it. Then to their anguish the defeated Northern Cheyennes were sent to new homes in Indian Territory. There they died in alarming numbers during the winter of 1877 to 1878. Finally, in September 1878, chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf fled northward with about three hundred desperate followers. After dividing in Nebraska, Little Wolf's adherents managed to elude the troops during the winter of 1878 to 1879. By late March 1879, largely because of the efforts of Miles' Cheyenne scouts under Two Moon, Little Wolf's band was forced to give up. The able-bodied men in the band were enlisted as army scouts. One of those Cheyenne scouts later told Grinnell: "My friend, I was a prisoner of war for four years, and all the time was fighting for the man [Miles] who had captured me."

That unknown Cheyenne scout accurately characterized his own status as well as that of hundreds of other Indian scouts, allies, and auxiliaries. They were prisoners of war pure and simple. Occasionally, soldiers in the frontier army acknowledged that disagreeable truth. Lieutenant Clark, himself a commander of Indian scouts, referred to the nearly five hundred Cheyennes located at or near Fort Keogh in the early 1880s as "prisoners of war." Most army officers preferred to view such Indian friendlies as willing volunteers who served the army of their own accord, by their free choice, and without compulsion or obligation. Such was by no means the case. Perhaps the army officers' prevailing illusion helps to explain why Sheridan declined to approve Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt's recommendation to enlist as scouts fifty or sixty Indian prisoners confined in the damp recesses of Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida.

In conclusion, it should be stated that Indian scouts, allies, and auxiliaries were unquestionably essential supplements of the frontier army in its struggles against hostile Indians in the late nineteenth century. Richard Irving Dodge was categorically correct when he declared that the army's Indians were "invaluable, indeed indispensable to success against Indians." Unfortunately for the frontier army, its commanders were slow to realize the vital importance of their Indian associates. Initially, proud military commanders thought that the dependence on large numbers of Indian allies would suggest that the army had grave deficiencies. Some commanders also considered the friendlies deficient in soldierly attributes, uncontrollable, and liable to commit atrocities. Furthermore, there were often genuine doubts about the true loyalties of the so-called friendlies. In the end, however, hard necessities compelled the frontier army to rely heavily upon Indian scouts, allies, and auxiliaries.

They performed beyond the army's highest expectations, routinely exceeding the achievements of white regular soldiers. Lieutenant Britton Davis, for instance, called attention to the deficiencies of regular troops that stood in stark contrast to the abilities of the Apache scouts who ran down Geronimo's renegades in their hideouts in Mexico's Sonoran mountains:

... we found that to wear the hostiles down with regular troops was impossible. Without Apache scouts they [the soldiers] could not follow the trails; nor had they the endurance to keep up with the scouts in these mountains where the scouts had been born and bred. They were only a hindrance to rapid movement where rapid movement was essential to success. As well match Londoners against the Alpine Swiss.

## "We Will Make It Our Own Place"

### *Agriculture and Adaptation at the Grand Ronde Reservation, 1856-1887*

TRACY NEAL LEAVELLE

"The Americans will never leave us alone. Let us not concern our hearts. . . . We will take [Grand Ronde]. . . . [W]e will make it our own place." These words represent a dramatic decision and transformative vision that emerged in the Native communities of western Oregon in the 1850s. A member of the Tualatin band of Kalapuyans, perhaps Peter Kinai, recalled them for linguist Albert S. Gatschet in 1877. Gatschet's informant related an episode in which the respected Tualatin elder Ki-a-kuis consulted the Tualatins during their treaty negotiations with Joel Palmer in 1855. Ki-a-kuis asked the other members of the band if they wanted to trade their land around Wappato Lake for a portion of the Grand Ronde Valley. Despite reluctance to abandon their native lands, they resolved to accept the new, hopefully more secure home and transform their lives. The year following the treaty council, the Tualatins and other Indians from throughout western Oregon commenced the long project to make Grand Ronde their own.

Between 1856, when the first Indians settled at the Grand Ronde Reservation, and 1887, when the Dawes Act initiated a comprehensive program of allotment, Grand Ronde residents formed a new cultural homeland. They created a reservation culture that looked ahead to a modern Indian future while also relying on the strength of past traditions. In the 1850s the Native peoples of western Oregon's interior valleys recognized that they lived in an age that would not allow them to follow easily in the paths of their ancestors. They traded their vast lands and a life of gathering and hunting for a valley haven and the opportunity to make new lives. In facing the chaos of beginning this endeavor and making the transition to reservation life, the Indians of Grand Ronde demonstrated creativity, flexibility, and initiative. They selectively adapted their culture to meet the physical, social, political, and emotional demands of their situation. They actively pursued an agricultural life and accepted Christianity, yet they also hesitated to send their children to life and accepted Christianity, yet they also hesitated to send their children to agency schools and continued to seek the advice and the healing powers of Indian doctors. Contrary to the commonly held view that hunter-gatherers resisted incorporation of agriculture into their lives, the Indians at Grand Ronde made agriculture the foundation for an independence that allowed them to mold a new Indian culture and identity that gave meaning to the reservation experience.

Reservations have often been perceived as places of decline and dependence, as sites where Indian peoples confronted an incomplete assimilation within a larger society that abused or ignored them. Critics observe that economic development and Indian agriculture on most reservations have never been adequate. They note

Tracy Neal Leavelle, "We Will Make It Our Own Place: Agriculture and Adaptation at the Grand Ronde Reservation, 1856-1887," *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Fall 1998), 433-450. Reprinted by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. Copyright © 1999 by the University of Nebraska Press.

that residents often have been dependent on an inconsistent and unfeeling government for support. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reservation agents and Indian Office inspectors blamed persistent traditional cultural attitudes among their Indian wards for these failures. Furthermore, historians of the early reservation period have frequently portrayed the reservation experience as destructive, lamenting the loss of Native cultural traditions and the dearth of appropriate and meaningful replacements. The Navajos of the late nineteenth century, who maintained a relative independence through the expansion of stockraising, are a prominent exception to this pattern. Generally, however, it is easier to recall the dramatic decimation of California's Indian communities, Big Foot lying dead in the snow at Wounded Knee, the racist assumptions of assimilationist government programs, and the tragic loss of Native lands throughout the country. Although bleak images have a foundation in the difficult and challenging realities of reservation life during the last century and a half, Indians turned these prisons into homelands, important "places where a native identity could be maintained and passed on to new generations."

In recent years, historians of the reservation era increasingly have tried to counter the simplistic image of defeated and despondent Indians by emphasizing the adaptability of Indian communities. These scholars reject crude acculturation and persistence models as unrealistically static interpretive frameworks that reduce Native peoples to passive objects of government policies and victims of changing social and economic conditions. Highlighting the new strategies, symbols, and identities created and employed in making the transition to reservation life paints a more subtle, three-dimensional portrait that restores agency to Indian individuals and communities. The story of Grand Ronde offers a particularly vivid example of people drawing from a deep well of cultural creativity to assert some control over their destinies in a time of limited options and difficult choices.

On 19 January 1856, twenty Luckiamute Indians arrived in the Grand Ronde Valley, at the headwaters of the South Yamhill River, to settle on just over 60,000 acres of land reserved for the exclusive use of the Indians of western Oregon. Coming in a difficult winter season of dampness and cold, they found only unprepared and overwhelmed government agents to greet them and canvas tents for shelter. Two weeks later some three hundred Upper Umpquas and Yoncalla Kalapuyans ended their long trek to Grand Ronde from the river valleys of southern Oregon. At the end of March, 395 Rogue River Indians from numerous bands stumbled into the reservation after a month-long journey of over 250 miles. During the next several months, armed escorts drove hundreds more Indians to the reservation. The violence of the Rogue River Wars that flared in the interior and coastal valleys of southwestern Oregon between 1853 and 1856 had defeated many Indians. Others, like the Kalapuyan bands that held on to scattered plots of land in their native Willamette Valley, had to make way for the thousands of incoming immigrants who covered their rich lands. In June 1857, after many of the coastal Indians and most of the Rogue River Indians moved west to the recently formed Coast Reservation, a census listed the Indian population of Grand Ronde as close to twelve hundred.

The people who settled the reserve shared many cultural traits and traditions. The Indians of western Oregon were gathering and hunting peoples who relied

on a variety of food resources to meet subsistence needs. From the spring through the fall, families and bands lived in transitory camps. Women, children, and probably older men harvested food staples such as camas and wappato roots, acorns and berries, while men fished and hunted. In the winter months, bands settled in villages for annual ceremonies and a period of social visiting. The villages, consisting primarily of patrilineal extended families, formed the basic unit of political organization. Gradations in wealth and prestige between chiefs, commoners, and slaves marked social distinctions within the societies. Wealthy men and village leaders owned slaves and could have more than one wife. The Indians of western Oregon also shared similar beliefs in the guardian-spirit powers available to shamans and, sometimes, to other individuals. Exchange, intermarriage, and intermittent cooperation fostered connections between the many Indian groups of western Oregon.

The bands that arrived at Grand Ronde were culturally and socially familiar to each other, but variations in these broad cultural patterns and in historical experience gave each band a unique heritage. The mix of subsistence items, the content and form of religious beliefs and winter ceremonies, and the emphasis on wealth gradations varied from band to band. The many languages spoken by the Grand Ronde bands represented the most dramatic element of cultural diversity on the reservation. The settlers of Grand Ronde spoke many mutually unintelligible languages. The Kalapuyan bands alone spoke three different Kalapuyan languages. As for other bands, the Clackamas of the lower Willamette Valley spoke Upper Chinookan, the Upper Umpquas were Athapaskan, and the Cow Creeks and Rogue Rivers of southern Oregon utilized Takelmaian dialects. The Molalas of the western Cascades spoke yet another tongue, and people of mixed French and Indian ancestry often used Canadian French. In western Oregon and at Grand Ronde people relied on Chinook jargon, the lingua franca of the region, to cope with this linguistic diversity. Consequently, shared cultural practices and attitudes and the common reservation experience helped the Indians of Grand Ronde overcome the challenges of this diversity to forge an Indian identity rooted in the place and the history of their valley home.

Joel Palmer, who in 1853 became Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Oregon, directed the removal of Indians to the Grand Ronde Reservation. Palmer faced the difficult task of halting the conflicts between Indians and White settlers in the territory. He concluded that separating the antagonists represented the only hope for peace in the fertile valleys and resource-rich mountains of western Oregon. Moreover, he believed that separation and confinement on reservations offered Indians their only chance for survival as well as the opportunity to ascend to a better, more "civilized" life. Between 1853 and 1855, Palmer worked incessantly to negotiate treaties with the Indians of western Oregon that extinguished their title to the land and opened it for continued American settlement. He signed treaties with the Rogue River Indians, the Cow Creek band of Umpquas, the Umpquas and Yoncalla Kalapuyans, the many Kalapuyan bands of the Willamette Valley, and the Southern Molalas. The territory the Indians ceded included virtually all of Oregon between the main ridges of the Cascades and the Coast Range. On 30 June 1857, President James Buchanan signed an executive order making Grand Ronde the permanent home for these bands.

Reservation policy was well developed in the United States when the Grand Ronde agency opened. Policy makers believed reservations offered a reasonable solution to the problems then plaguing relations between Indians and Whites in the West. Confinement of the Indians reduced and regulated their contact with Whites. Reservation advocates thought a strict separation would reduce tensions and end deadly confrontations. Reservations, it seemed, were the only alternative to the otherwise inevitable extinction of the Indian race. Close containment and control of Indians had the additional benefit of making them available for programs of civilization designed to produce sedentary Christian agriculturalists on the pattern of the idealized yeoman farmer. In this view, reservations were the crucibles of "civilization" out of which new Indian communities and societies would emerge to become part of the expanding Republic.

Agriculture was at the very heart of this government policy of directed culture change well into the twentieth century. The government wanted hunting and gathering peoples like the Indians of western Oregon to give up their seasonal migrations and settle permanently to farm and raise stock on individual plots of land scattered across the reservations. The government expected men to conduct the agricultural labor while women managed the family's domestic economy. Reservation agents intended that Indians learn the value of private property and disciplined labor and hoped that communal ties to clan, band, and tribe would give way to a more individualistic ethos of personal improvement and economic advancement. While their parents worked in field and home, many children attended schools ostensibly designed to reinforce these lessons of modernity. They learned English, other academic basics, and sometimes the skills needed to run an agricultural operation. Teachers worked to suppress Indian languages and other expressions of Native culture and tried to instill in their students the accepted habits of White Christian America.

In the late nineteenth century, with the expansion of the allotment program and the growth of the boarding school movement, these efforts to transform Indians intensified. The ultimate goal was to assimilate them into American society as agricultural producers and citizens and bring about the final breakup of the reservations themselves. The Indian Office followed closely these various comprehensive and complementary policies at Grand Ronde.

In their first years on the reservation, the diverse bands that settled at Grand Ronde faced the numerous challenges of beginning and sustaining agricultural operations. Although preparations for opening the reservation in 1856 were simply inadequate for the large number of Indians who settled there, a much more serious issue for the long term turned out to be the land itself. When Superintendent James W. Nesmith made his 1858 annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he complained that "the soil [at Grand Ronde] is a cold, heavy clay, and unproductive. The position is elevated and exposed to violent sea breezes which, at certain seasons, have a deleterious effect upon the growing crops." Unpredictable weather and difficult soil conditions often conspired to reduce yields on Indian farms.

Although some individuals and bands had experimented with stock raising and perhaps with farming before going to Grand Ronde, most, if not all, needed instruction in agricultural techniques. The guidance they received, however, was inconsistent at best. Farmers hired to teach the Indians and to run the agency farm came

and went with alarming frequency. The salary was low, the work was difficult, and alternative opportunities were abundant in Oregon. Treaty stipulations that required the agent to employ farmers for the Indians ran out after five years for all bands except the Upper Umpquas, Yoncallas, and Southern Molalas. For these bands the provision for keeping a farmer ended after only ten years.

The lack of proper equipment and sufficient working stock also presented enormous obstacles to efficient subsistence production. In a deposition taken in an 1862 investigation into allegations of incompetence against the reservation agent, several band leaders expressed disappointment at not being supplied with the means to work their land satisfactorily. The grain the Indians managed to raise under these trying conditions often could not even be milled on the reservation. Despite the promises of reservation agents and the expectations of the superintendent, the grist mill was not completed until 1858, and for years thereafter it was constantly in disrepair.

By the late 1860s and early 1870s, however, many people began to enjoy some success in their agricultural endeavors. In September 1869, in response to rumors that they would be removed to make way for Whites, representatives of thirteen bands had a letter written to President Ulysses S. Grant to make "known some of [their] desires, hopes, and fears." In the missive, they told Grant, "We now know how to farm, how to build our houses and barns, how to cook and sew. . . . The land produces well. . . . We have built houses and barns and many of us have made rails and fenced our lands, believing that this was to be our home." Grand Ronde Agent Charles Lafollett predicted that the year's harvest, despite some problems with the weather, would support all but the elderly and the orphaned, who would need government support. He estimated that the Indians had at least eight hundred acres of wheat, five hundred acres of oats, and fifty acres of potatoes and other root vegetables under cultivation.

To supplement the products of farming, the Indians continued many of their traditional subsistence practices. Women and children gathered berries, dug camas and wappato roots, and collected edible seeds and plants, all important items in the pre-reservation diet. The men hunted and fished in the area, taking deer, elk, and small game from the forests and trout and salmon from the mountain streams. In 1862 an agent had allowed the Indians to begin making seasonal fishing excursions to the Salmon River near the coast, and in 1865 they constructed a road to the fishery and made further improvements at the site.

Indians at Grand Ronde complemented such subsistence activities with wage labor in a new seasonal cycle. During the summer months, after the crops were in the ground, hundreds of people obtained passes from the agent and left Grand Ronde for the Willamette Valley to work for White farmers. Men chopped wood and worked in the fields as laborers, an important opportunity to learn and polish agricultural skills while earning cash. Labor was in such short supply in Oregon that they reportedly received fair wages for their work. For their part, women cooked, did laundry and housework, and gathered Native food items. Women also sold handwoven baskets to Whites, made with traditional materials in the patterns and forms their White customers desired.

The money the men and women earned was crucial not only in the short term to help make ends meet from year to year, but also in reaching the long-term goal of

Many of the Indians at the agency also wanted individual allotments. The focus on the disaster that occurred with implementation of the General Allotment or Dawes Act—the widespread alienation of Indian lands and a decline in Indian farming—has obscured the history of allotment prior to 1887. Concentration on the generally poor outcome of the Dawes Act itself has resulted in neglect of Indian perspectives on allotment before and after the destructive act. The loss of Indian land in the twentieth century was as dramatic at Grand Ronde as elsewhere, but these terrible consequences lay beyond the horizon during the reservation's first three decades. For many people at Grand Ronde, allotment appeared to offer stability and some guarantees for their future in a reservation agricultural community. Allotment also seemed to promise eventual acceptance as full citizens of the state and nation.

The treaties with the Kalapuyans and the Umpquas provided for the survey and allotment of reservation land, to be done at the discretion of the U.S. president, in plots from 20 to 120 acres in size. As early in 1860, Agent John F. Miller had assigned small portions of land to individuals in an effort to encourage farming, but the allotment of the reservation as called for in the treaties had yet to begin. In response to the delays, people on the reservation consistently agitated for the full procedure to be carried out. In 1862, in the deposition given in the investigation of the Grand Ronde agent, Tom and John Chamberlin of the Rogue Rivers, Quakata of the Molalas, Peter of the Yamhill, and Ki-a-kuts of the Tualatin band expressed a desire among their people for creating individual allotments. Yet, in 1869, the agent noted that several bands still farmed communally fenced lands. In their letter of the same year to President Grant, Grand Ronde leaders complained, "We have been here a long time and do not know where our lands are, therefore we can not improve them. If our lands had been surveyed . . . we would have known that they were . . . and sow at his pleasure, we would by this time been able to support ourselves."

Government officials, also anxious to implement an allotment program at Grand Ronde, believed it would encourage improvement of lands, further the agricultural program, and move the Indians ever closer to American citizenship. By September 1871, the surveys had finally been completed and only awaited the proper approvals from Washington. A year later, the allotting of lands to individuals commenced under the direction of Agent Peter B. Simmott. The superintendent

of Indian Affairs for Oregon. T. B. Odeneal, was present, and he observed that the Indians were pleased with the program. He further noted that many people would have to build new houses and that most would need to fence their lots. While up to that time their houses had generally been built in clusters according to band, they would in the future be more widely scattered across the valley.

The following year, in 1873, Simnott reported that the Indians had been so busy constructing houses and barns, putting up fences, and making other improvements that fewer people than usual left the reservation for the now traditional summer work. He gushed, "It is conceded by all who are conversant with Indian affairs who have visited this agency, that the Indians are far in advance of any other tribes of the Pacific coast." Other observers made similar assertions. Perhaps Simnott was trying to boost his reputation with such a statement, but he had only been on the job for a year and a half and so could not take much of the credit. In any case, the Indians at Grand Ronde had received their allotments and were building what was for them a new kind of community based on the family farm.

Residents also formed other institutions to guide reservation society and to support the transition to a new way of life. In 1869 the leaders who sent the letter to President Grant wrote that the people at Grand Ronde "respect the laws of the whites, as well as our own." In the early 1870s, with the support of the reservation agent, elected leaders of the bands began meeting annually in a legislature, where they gradually put these laws into writing. The preamble to the 1873 legislative record stated that "the laws . . . were enacted for the Government of the Indians," to preserve order, to maintain the laws, and to qualify them for the position which they will have to fill as Citizens of the State of Oregon before many years."

Once they were functioning as a legislative body, the representatives indeed began to make laws that met the needs of their community and that respected their own traditions and standards as well as those of the surrounding White society. They passed laws regulating estate issues and divorce, setting the fines for property crimes, assault, rape, and adultery, and banning the possession of liquor on the reservation. They also instituted an Indian court to hear complaints and to punish those who violated reservation law. The court met the first Monday of every month and on each Saturday for cases demanding immediate action. The court directed jury trials that included prosecuting attorneys, witnesses, a sheriff, and a clerk, and presiding justice. Justices also made administrative rulings and approved contracts between reservation residents.

The legislature tried as well to promote agriculture on the reservation. In 1873 it voted to hold an annual reservation fair each September "for the encouragement of the people of Grand Ronde Indian Reservation in farming, stock raising and general improvement." Four years later, the legislature set up a fund in the treasury to make short term loans to reservation residents. Some of the fund was held in wheat and oats, ten bushels of which could be borrowed on the promise of returning twelve bushels to the treasury after harvest. Another law passed in the same session set the rules for use of a threshing machine, which anyone could utilize for a percentage of the crop. The machine increased the community's independence by reducing the need to hire the equipment and time of outsiders to process the harvest. Grand Ronde Indians also operated four reapers of their own.

By the late 1870s and early 1880s, the agricultural community at Grand Ronde was maturing. The development of a largely self-sustaining community was necessary because treaty support ended for the Rogue River bands after sixteen years and for the other bands after twenty. Future appropriations would come only at the discretion of a budget-conscious Congress. In 1877 Agent Simnott reported that the Indians met 90 percent of their subsistence needs through agricultural pursuits, with the remaining 10 percent coming from fishing, hunting, and gathering. According to Simnott, the government issued no rations. The following year he estimated that the Indians obtained 95 percent of their provisions through farming and again he issued no rations. He reported that farmers had 3,000 acres under cultivation on the reservation and that they owned over 600 horses, 28 mules, 339 head of cattle, and over 400 sheep.

Reservation residents enjoyed displaying this wealth. The Reverend R. W. Summers, who visited the agency on the Fourth of July, 1877, described a bounteous feast and celebration the Indians held. Groups of people entered the festival grounds in processions, wearing "their most gorgeous garments." They invited Summers "to view the tables neatly spread with spotless linen and a lavish display of china & dainties." They informed him that the tables would look even better once the cakes and pies were laid out. A boy of fourteen mounted a wagon and recited the Declaration of Independence before the crowd. Someone then gave a speech that was in some ways an Indian declaration of independence. The orator pointed to the orderly community they had built at Grand Ronde and said they loved their homes and wished to live and die there. They had given up their former possessions for this place and would not, he said, be taken from their homes and moved to some other location to make way for greedy Whites. Like other Indian communities in the United States, the people of Grand Ronde employed the Fourth of July holiday and festivities for their own purposes. In the context of the great American festival, Grand Ronde residents celebrated connections to their new homeland, recognized progress, and looked ahead to the future.

Inspectors from the Indian Office in Washington, on their tours of Western reserves in the early 1880s, noted the transformation of the previous twenty-five years. One commented in 1880 that Grand Ronde was "the first Indian agency yet visited by [him] where *all of the Indians* live in houses, understand the English language and engage with reasonable diligence in civilized pursuits. The first one where all are able to support themselves and want to become citizens." An inspector reported in 1882 that Indians marketed a grain surplus in the nearby towns of Sheridan and Dallas.

Many reservation residents believed, however, that they could still improve their situation considerably. Some were anxious to obtain larger allotments so they could expand their operations, and concern over the permanence of the allotments that they already held continued to irritate them. Agent Simnott admitted in 1879 that the allotments in several were not legally binding on the government. Although he argued that the government had a moral obligation to protect the possessions of the Indians, he concluded that, "if their removal becomes absolutely necessary," they should be compensated for their improvements. Regardless of any promises of compensation, the idea that they could be moved from their new homes without their consent disturbed the Grand Ronde Indians. In 1877 the orator

at the Fourth of July festival called on the government to honor its commitment. Ten years later the Indians met with an inspector from the Indian Office and expressed their continuing fears that they would lose their farms.

Agriculture and the possession of land formed the foundation for building a viable and sustainable community at Grand Ronde, but the Indians asserted themselves in other areas as well. While schools were central to the civilizing mission the Office of Indian Affairs promoted, the Indians at Grand Ronde were skeptical consumers of the educational opportunities offered on the reservation. Government officials viewed schools as the most valuable tool for effecting the long-term transformation of Indian cultures that was the ultimate goal of reservation policy. Officials considered adults difficult to change because they often continued to manifest an interest in familiar Native traditions. Children became the focus of the educational project. Agents and teachers especially favored boarding schools in which children would be delivered from the "pernicious" influences of home and family. At boarding schools Indian students could receive a total education that included, in addition to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, intensive practice in the agricultural and domestic arts, as well as the moral instruction deemed so important by those who perceived little of value in Native cultures.

Authorities opened a school within a year of beginning operations at the agency, but the teachers experienced continual frustration. John Ostrander reported that when he took charge of the school in August 1856, there were eighty students who attended irregularly. He complained that "they seemed to think it our sole business to minister to their wants, and that they were doing us a favor by attending school." Further problems erupted in 1857. According to Ostrander, an Indian medicine woman blamed him for a disease infecting the Indians. "The doctress," he explained, "said she distinctly saw the sickness that afflicted the tribes issue from the trumpet which I sounded to announce the hour of school, and settle like a mist upon the camp; and should I continue to sound it, in a few days all the Indians would be in their graves—the camp desolate." He quickly stopped using the trumpet, but over the years, as instructors came and went and schools opened and closed, agency teachers continued to complain about the mixed reception they and their institutions received on the reservation. The Indians of the Grand Ronde community shared with other Indians throughout the United States an ambivalent attitude toward the government's educational project.

In 1874, with religious denominations ascendant in the implementation of Indian policy in the United States, Catholic nuns from a succession of orders took charge of the reservation boarding school, also known as the manual labor school. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary arrived in 1874 and worked until 1880, when their order recalled them. Sisters from St. Benedict's convent in Minnnesota followed with less than a year of service. In 1882 the boarding school came under the direction of the Mount Angel Benedictine Sisters of Oregon.

Agent Simnott, a Catholic himself, claimed the sisters soon had the school in a prosperous condition. Yet, according to his own statistics, the school was never even close to capacity. In 1879, for example, he recorded a school-age population at Grand Ronde of 180. The boarding school could accommodate fifty students and the day school thirty-five, but only thirty students attended school one month or

more during the year, and average attendance was limited to twenty-five. The day school was not even open.

Agents and educators could only convince the Indians at Grand Ronde to send their children to agency schools when it served personal, family, or community interests. Statements at a council held in 1860 to determine whether the Indians preferred the current teacher or wished to bring a Catholic priest to the reservation revealed some of the things they considered important. Of the fourteen Indian leaders present for the conference, six stated they preferred a priest, but five men wanted neither the teacher nor a priest. Louis Nipissing, an Umpqua leader, refused to send his children to school because the Indians had not first been consulted on their needs and desires, but he was interested in securing the services of a priest. Joseph Sanagrati, a leader of a Kalapuyan band and one of the five opposed to maintaining a teacher, suggested, "In place of throwing away our money for schools as we have had, I would rather have the money used for the completion of the Grist Mill." Subsistence concerns and autonomy were simply higher priorities than having their children educated and indoctrinated in government schools.

However, some parents did send their children to school, indicating that they perceived benefits in doing so. Building the reservation community made certain skills quite valuable. Learning to speak, read, and write English and mastering basic math would have been important for the negotiation of the practical matters and bureaucratic challenges of running a farm and living on a reservation. The people who obtained these skills could then act as cultural brokers, as mediators between Indian and White worlds. In the manual labor school boys had the additional opportunity to learn agricultural skills in the school garden. Female students concentrated on the domestic arts. Parents probably sent their children to the schools long enough to learn these valuable skills, but otherwise expected them to contribute to the maintenance of the household. Some parents may also have used the boarding school, where children at least received some clothing and regular meals, as a survival strategy during lean months and years.

In their encounters with Christianity, the Indians at Grand Ronde also displayed skepticism. While many people eventually embraced it to one degree or another, Native traditions continued to hold an important place in reservation lives, and new indigenous religious movements offered further alternatives for spiritual renewal and community life. In 1860 Catholic priest Adrian J. Croquet arrived from Belgium to open a mission at Grand Ronde and stayed for the next thirty-eight years, working tirelessly to build and sustain a Christian Indian community. While itinerant Catholic and Protestant missionaries and interactions with settlers and Indian agents of various denominations exposed the Indians to Christianity, Croquet's arrival marked the beginning of a more intensive encounter with the Christian faith. Croquet, for his part, believed he was engaging in a struggle with two dangerous spiritual foes, the Protestants on the one hand and unbelief and spiritual delusion on the other, with the very souls of Grand Ronde's Indians hanging in the balance. Writing to a friend he said, "Now is the time to take possession of the missions, as the Protestants are on the alert and they may get a foothold before we do. . . . May the Black Robes come, therefore, to preserve the tawny children of the forest from the poison of error that is sure to be spread among them."

Croquet's modest mission station at Grand Ronde clearly attracted many people, but the initial burst of enthusiasm seemed to fade over the next few years. An analysis of Croquet's sacramental register, in which he listed each baptism, marriage, confirmation, and burial, shows that he baptized ninety people at Grand Ronde in his first year and ninety-four in his second. Most were children under the age of sixteen. However, at least twenty-three in the first year and another twenty-three in the second year were people who were near death and received virtually no religious instruction prior to the rite. In the third, fourth, and fifth years, the majority of baptisms were of this type, and the total number of baptisms fell dramatically. Croquet baptized only about 20–25 percent of reservation residents in the first five years of the mission.

In October 1862, Croquet dedicated the first church at Grand Ronde. St. Michael the Archangel. A year later he reported that fifty to sixty people attended Sunday services each week, but he deplored the apparent lack of enthusiasm for his project. By 1866, when he still was not making the progress he hoped for, Croquet complained that a "Catholic missionary has no longer the influence with these Indians that he would have upon still savage tribes; they have come and yet come too much in contact with men who, if not hostile, are at least indifferent to the Catholic religion; and they seem to have contracted a fair dose of these men's religious indifference."

Eventually, however, Croquet's presence and considerable patience seemed to have a major impact. A report for the Board of Indian Commissioners from 1873 indicated that a substantial majority of Indians had become members of the Catholic Church, and attendance at Sunday services had jumped to an average of 250. The arrival of Catholic nuns in 1874 to manage the manual labor school provided another intimate point of contact between the Indians and the Catholic religion. In 1883 the Indians, with assistance from the Catholic Church, constructed a new house of worship for the community. Agent Sinnott felt confident that the church, after over twenty years of labor, was flourishing and that Catholicism had largely supplanted Native beliefs and practices in daily life at Grand Ronde.

Yet Sinnott's successor, J. B. McClane, complained that two large dance houses were hidden in the hills above the valley. Indians from Grand Ronde and from other reservations held ceremonies in them lasting several days. McClane said they had even constructed a boarding house to shelter the participants. These ceremonies may have been related to the revitalization movements that attracted followers at Grand Ronde and at the adjacent Siletz reservation beginning in the 1870s. People from Grand Ronde learned the Ghost Dance in northern California in 1871. This prophetic movement probably influenced the Earth Lodge cult, which first came to the reservation in 1873 and was known locally as the Warm House Dance. Agent McClane, like others before him, tried to prohibit the Indians from participating in these rites and confronted the Indian doctors in an attempt to discredit them. McClane recognized what some people had known for a long time: There was a mix of belief and practice among the Indians, many of whom found meaning and value in traditions both new and old.

In the mid-1870s Reverend Summers conversed with Father Croquet on this subject and recorded that most of the Indians had finally accepted baptism, but that



many, especially the older men and women, "mingled with the old religion the comforting assurances of [Catholicism]." Summers also spoke to an Indian man who described the dances and ceremonies held every autumn by men on the reservation at a lodge secluded in the forest. Another resident named two Indian doctors who continued to practice on the reservation. Agency physicians had no trouble drawing patients to Western healing traditions, but Native doctors and traditional healing practices offered an alternative and a supplement that many people found appropriate and useful. Traditional healing arts and Native ceremonialism persisted at least through the first decade of the twentieth century at Grand Ronde.

Living in a reservation community that was both Indian and "modern," the Indians of Grand Ronde carefully evaluated their choices in a search for utility and meaning. Summers visited a house of mourning in the mid-1870s where "a little girl, great grandchild of an ancient patriarch named To-ot-ly, lay on her little white bier, with candles at the head and foot, but dressed in a full suit of native garments[,] not an atom of civilization . . . about her." He asked the mother why the child was dressed in Native clothing, when all the Indians now wore American attire. She reportedly replied, "while they lived on earth it did not matter. They no longer followed their own customs, therefore why cling to their own dress?" She explained that "after death it was different. If her child went to the other world in white people's clothing, they would think she was white, and put her in the pale faces' heaven, and she did not want her little child there. She wanted her to go to the Indian's heaven where she would be with her own people and be happy." This woman could live outwardly as her White neighbors in the Willamette Valley, but, within her, she still nurtured a distinctly Indian self-identity that explained her place in the world, infused her experiences with meaning, and guided her on a path into the future, even beyond death.

By 1887, on the eve of the new government allotment program outlined in the Dawes Act, the people of Grand Ronde had constructed a prosperous community based on an agricultural life. They received very little direct government support and, therefore, had to be largely self-reliant. The lack of government assistance was not the only incentive to develop this quality. The Indians of Grand Ronde, by working within the limitations of the reservation environment to create a sustainable community, cultivated the ability to make institutions work for their interests. They thus achieved a measure of independence.

The process of building such a community encouraged the emergence of a common identity grounded in reservation experiences. Allotment scattered families across the valley on independent homesteads and stretched traditional band affiliations. In 1878, the Indian legislature switched from representation by band to a system based on the division of the valley into three legislative precincts with three representatives each. Intern marriage between bands fostered bonds of kinship, as they had prior to the reservation period, and community celebrations promoted social exchange. Declining use of tribal languages and the general adoption of Chinook jargon as the community's symbolic Indian language further supported a new identity. Moreover, an increasing proportion of residents had been born and raised on the reservation and knew no other way of life. Band affiliation may still have retained importance for some people, but there was a growing sense that they

were from this place, that it was part of them. The reservation experience transformed the people of many bands into Grand Ronde Indians.

Not everyone responded with the same enthusiasm to the challenges of erecting an agricultural community at Grand Ronde, nor did they achieve the same results. Some people aspired to wealth and prestige and reached for positions of leadership within the community. Social distinctions, important in the pre-reservation period, were significant at Grand Ronde as well. A wealthy and respected man, for instance, could no longer take several wives nor purchase slaves at Grand Ronde, but he could be elected to the legislature or preside over the court. Replacing the aged at the bottom of the economic ladder were a number of people, primarily the aged and the orphaned, who depended on the government or the charity of neighbors to survive. For these impoverished people, the weakening of traditional band ties and an increase in individualism would not have been welcome developments. A few people, like a small band of Rogue River Indians led by John Chamberlin in 1862, became dissatisfied with reservation life and so missed their native lands that they sought, unsuccessfully, to resettle them. Not even memories of the violence and bloodshed of the 1850s or the presence of numerous White homesteaders kept them from trying to return to their homeland. Some people left the reservation for years to live and work in the farms, villages, and towns of western Oregon.

The people who stayed created a viable community for a new and different world. In the mid-1850s the Native peoples of western Oregon's interior valleys, pressured by American settlers and government agents, faced a chaotic and restrictive situation, but they still had choices. They decided to exchange the troubles of their homelands for the challenges of a long experiment in personal transformation and cultural adaptation. Once settled at the agency, individuals and groups made choices that tended to enhance self-determination and increase independence.

As the Grand Ronde case illustrates, culture can be both conservative and elastic when people confront disorder and the unknown. While culture structures experience and provides the means to interpret it, it also serves as a rich resource for adapting to changing circumstances and unfamiliar environments. The process of selective adaptation at Grand Ronde included both innovation and cultural continuity. On the surface, the Grand Ronde Indians gave up their traditional system of gathering and hunting for the cultivation of wheat, oats, and potatoes. Yet they developed a new yearly cycle that included Native foods as well as an annual migration to the Willamette Valley. They molded institutions, even those that government agents imposed on them, to serve their needs. In many cases, the reservation program of directed culture change only reinforced decisions the Indians had already made themselves. The government and its agents often lagged behind the Indians in response, timing, and vision, actually limiting the ability of the Indians to make desired adjustments to reservation life. In any case, by 1887, the Indians of Grand Ronde had developed a way of life animated and defined as much by their own standards and goals as by the policies and decisions of government agents. Although experiences at Grand Ronde forever altered the Indian societies of western Oregon, Indians also shaped the nature of those changes and maintained a Native identity.

While the Grand Ronde Indians fashioned an agricultural community that generally impressed observers, Indians at other agencies in Oregon and throughout the West frequently struggled without the same success to adapt to reservation life and

to meet their needs through agricultural development. A combination of factors, many of which were absent at other Indian reservations, created the conditions that allowed the Grand Ronde Indians to achieve many of their goals. Most importantly, they had arable land. The soil at the agency, while not ideal, could be productive when cultivated with patience and skill. Abundant rainfall in most years made large irrigation works unnecessary. The valley floor contained enough land to support the community during good years. The Grand Ronde Indians managed to retain the land on which they built their dreams until the twentieth century, when they finally faced the loss of land that savaged so many other Indian communities as well. The Indians at Grand Ronde also took advantage of the opportunity to learn agricultural skills alongside White farmers in the Willamette Valley. The cash they earned for their labor purchased needed supplies and implements that the government failed to provide. . . .

... Federal allotment policy and pressures from Whites who desired access to rich Grand Ronde land produced severe difficulties in the twentieth century. The loss of land eventually eroded the foundation for independence the people had forged, requiring further adaptations. The Grand Ronde community endures to this day, however, having survived the loss of land and even termination. The story of this reservation community should not be examined as if everything were leading inevitably to these future troubles. In making the transition to reservation life, the people of Grand Ronde created a community strong enough to weather the coming challenges.

When the Grand Ronde resident shared his memories of the 1855 treaty council with the visiting linguist, he explained that his people, the Tualatins, had determined to accept the Grand Ronde Valley in exchange for their native lands. He recalled that the people decided, "[W]e will make it our own place." After thirty years in their reservation home, the inevitable delays and setbacks balanced by numerous accomplishments, the Indians of Grand Ronde had, indeed, made it their own place.

## ❖ FURTHER READING

- Jean Afton et al., *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combat* (1997)
- Keith Basso, ed., *Western Apache Raiding and Warfare* (1971)
- Robert Begait and Clarence Woodcock, eds., *In the Name of the Salish and Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Indian Reservation* (1996)
- Donald Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes* (1963)
- Tiana Bighorse, *Bighorse the Warrior* (1990)
- Martha Royce Blaine, *Pawnee Passage: 1870–1875* (1990)
- William Chalfant, *Cheyennes at Dark Water Creek: The Last Fight of the Red River War* (1997)
- Angie Debo, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place* (1976)
- Raymond DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather* (1984)
- Thomas Dunlay, *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries* (1982)
- John Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwest Plains* (1958)
- Jerome A. Greene, ed., *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux War, 1876–1877* (1994)
- Bruce A. Hampton, *Children of Grace: The Nez Perce War of 1877* (1994)

- Richard G. Hardorff, ed., *Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight: New Sources of Indian Military History* (1997)
- Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (1965)
- Thomas W. Kavanagh, *Comanche Political History: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706–1875* (1996)
- Robert W. Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux* (1997)
- William Haas Moore, *Chiefs, Agents, and Soldiers: Conflict on the Navajo Frontier, 1868–1882* (1994)
- Peter Nabokov, *Two Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior with the U.S. Army* (1967)
- Eli R. Paul, ed., *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* (1997)
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., *The Nebraska Indian Wars Reader, 1865–1877* (1998)
- Peter John Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830–1870*, 2 vols. (1969)
- Charles E. Rankin, ed., *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (1996)
- David Roberts, *Once They Moved Like the Wind: Cochise, Geronimo, and the Apache Wars* (1993)
- Charles M. Robinson III, *A Good Year To Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War* (1995)
- Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (1973)
- Henry E. Stamm, IV, *People of the Wind River: The Eastern Shoshones, 1825–1900* (1999)
- Edwin R. Sweeney, *Cochise: Chiricahua Apache Chief* (1991)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Mangas Coloradas: Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches* (1998)
- Gerald Thompson, *The Army and the Navajo: The Bosque Redondo Reservation Experiment, 1863–1868* (1976)
- Robert W. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (1984)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (1993)
- James Welch and Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (1994)
- Gene Weltfish, *Pawnee Life and Culture* (1965)
- David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (1994)