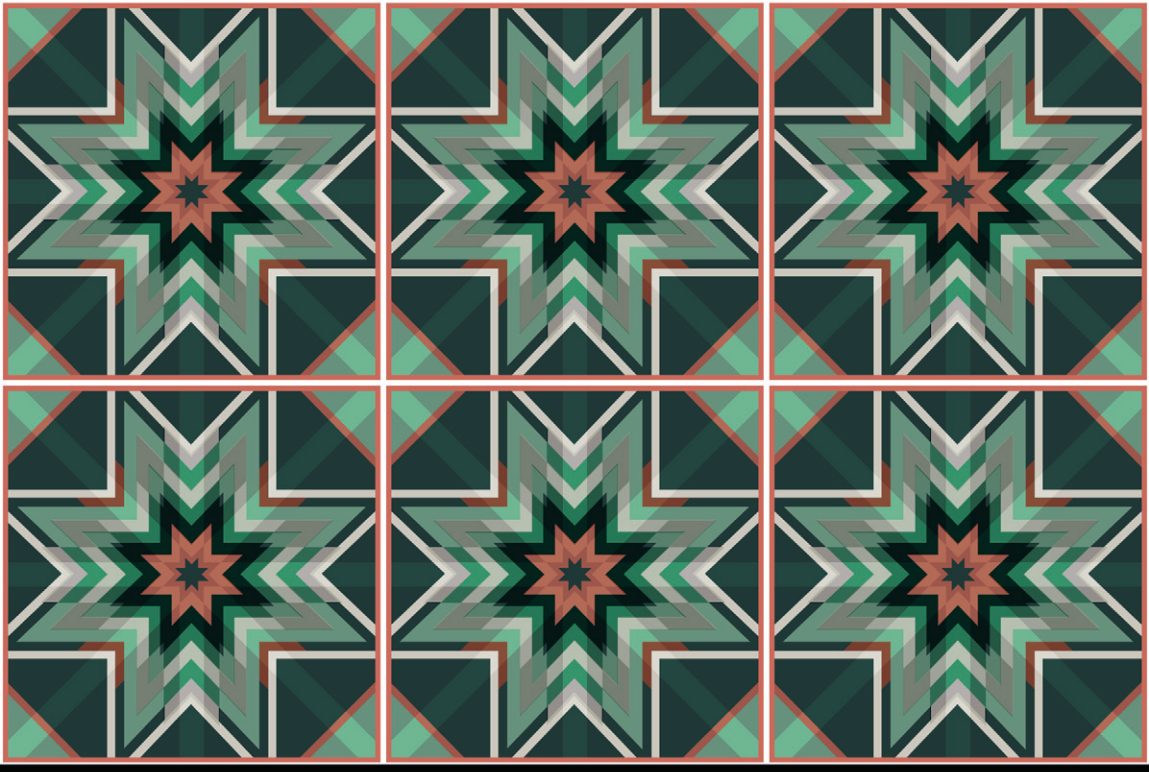
STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

# Native American Bilingual Education

## An Ethnography of Powerful Forces



Cheryl K. Crawley

# Native American Bilingual Education

# Studies in Educational Ethnography

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# Native American Bilingual Education: An Ethnography of Powerful Forces

BY

**CHERYL K. CRAWLEY, PhD**


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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to the children of the Crow Tribe: past, present, and future.*

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**Praise for *Native American Bilingual Education: An Ethnography of Powerful Forces***

'In the end, Crawley makes the reader want to meet those Crow. Her appreciation, respect, understanding, and love for that people come through clearly. That is the best compliment one can pay any ethnographer.'

–**Stanley Brandes**, University of California, Berkeley

'Scholarly and beautifully written, [this book] presents a unique perspective and case. The author writes about the Crow and the bilingual education program with deep insight, knowledge, and compassion, grounded in her experience directing the program for several years and her perspective more generally as an educational (school district) administrator. … It documents an important case of US Native American education and US bilingual education, that is not documented elsewhere.'

–**Nancy Hornberger**, Professor Emerita,
University of Pennsylvania, USA

'Dr Crawley is uniquely positioned to illuminate the battle that exists in public education for the rights of American Indian students and their families to have culture and language represented and affirmed by an educational system that is designed to eradicate American Indian culture and language. The purpose of the American system of education as it relates to American Indians has been one of assimilation. To that end, the perpetuation of Native languages continues to be a hard-fought battle. Dr Crawley's experiences in public education and lifelong relationships developed within the Crow community provided a lens into the complex relationships between the need to perpetuate Native language and the public-school mission to assimilate.'

–**Dr Sandra L. Boham**, President, Salish Kootenai College

'Dr Cheryl Crawley has been a noteworthy education leader for decades. Throughout her years of public service, she has become an expert in Native heritage language implementation in public schools. Importantly, she takes her cues from and works closely with American Indians and the Native language speakers themselves to develop her expertise. This book is necessary to ensure these stories about Native heritage languages in schools are expressed and championed. When I was Montana's state Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr Crawley was at the forefront of leading her district in our state's Indian Education

for All movement, which integrated accurate and truthful information about American Indians into all curricular areas. Her district was one that I held up as a model to follow on Indian education. I am happy to call Dr Crawley among the leaders I have learned from as she led a district that focused on equity, positive change, listening to community, and centering students in decision-making.'

**–Denise Juneau** (Mandan/Hidatsa/Blackfeet),
former Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction,
Seattle Public Schools Superintendent

'Cheryl always understood the dynamics in our diverse community and schools. I followed Cheryl's leadership from the Crow School bilingual program into central office administration, and I expect that this book will serve to help many more educators come to better understand the children they serve.'

–**Marlene WalkingBear**, Retired Federal Programs Director, Hardin, Crow Agency, and Fort Smith Public Schools, Member of the Crow Tribe

'As a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, I conducted a doctoral study of language maintenance on the Crow Reservation in the mid-1970s, just before Cheryl Crawley came on the scene. I recognized then that the Crow represented a special case of a Native American community that has sustained its socio-cultural identity to a remarkable degree. Drawing on her much longer engagement with the tribe, Dr. Crawley offers a very rich ethnographic account of life in Crow Country as background for a description of the exemplary bilingual education program that she implemented there. She is obviously an accomplished educational administrator and her passionate commitment to addressing the often intractable challenges in educating young Native American students is evident throughout the book.'

–**John Read**, Professor Emeritus, University of Auckland, New Zealand

**A note about the cover of this book:** A star quilt design was an art form common to both Native Americans and European immigrants in early Montana, and so it felt appropriate to utilize a star quilt design on the cover of this book.

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# Series Editor Preface

Birthed by Geoffrey Walford (from 2007 to 2012) in the Department of Educational Studies, St Hilda's College, Oxford University (UK), the series has traveled most recently from the Division of Educational Psychology, Research Methods, Education Policy, College of Education and Human Development, George Mason University (USA) (from 2012 to 2018) to the Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology, Measurement, and Evaluation (QUERIES), Department of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign.

Much like Walford's alignment with the series of Ethnography and Education conferences that began in the late 1970s, initially held at St Hilda's College, Oxford University, the current location in the Illinois system benefits from deep scholarly traditions in the humanities, social and natural sciences, and professional schools that aim to enrich the scope of the volume. The benefit of the Ethnography and Education conferences in the United Kingdom is its alignment to other European conferences, especially that focus on ethnographic investigations in education, such as the Oxford Ethnography Conference that continues to take place (now at New College, Oxford UK), European Conference of Educational Research, and the British Educational Research Association. In the United States, we too benefit from yearly conferences such as the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, the Ethnography of Education Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, and other conferences such as the Council on Anthropology and Education/American Anthropological Association and the American Educational Research Association and its special interest groups and divisions where ethnographic investigations are frequent in conference presentations and proceedings.

This present volume, *Native American Bilingual Education: An Ethnography of Powerful Forces*, weaves Cheryl Crawley's deep anthropological practice with her professional teaching and administrative career in a book that represents the intersection of politics, language, culture, power, and social inequality in the state of Montana, United States. *Native American Bilingual Education* continues the long tradition in *Studies in Educational Ethnography* which continues to present original research monographs or edited volumes based on ethnographic perspectives, theories, and methodologies to advance the development of theory, practice, policy, and praxis for improving schooling and education in neighborhood, community, and global contexts. This volume presents a unique ethnographic case from the author's experience as director of the bilingual education project during the 1980s, a more captivating and influencing story about the Crow

within the larger story of Native American and bilingual education in the United States.

Further details about the book series are available through the Emerald website or from the Series Editor.

Rodney Hopson
*Series Editor*

# Preface

## Research on Social and Educational Inequities in Multiracial, Multilingual Settings

The research that inspired this book began with an exploration of the enduring questions about social and educational inequities in multiracial and multilingual settings and how research-directed action might foster future improvements in the lives of minority children during their formative period in school.

It took me years of experience and study to develop my understanding of race in America. One result is this period piece on Native American bilingual education. It is an ethnography in the anthropology of education, bounded by the 33-year lifespan of the American Bilingual Education Act from 1968 to 2002.[1] The work is embedded in a larger view of political economy and discourse, and it is documented with details from the author's eight-year, on-site employment in the schools at the research site, 1978–1986. From a long tradition of linguistically trained anthropologists interested in American Indian issues, and utilizing the theoretical constructs, methods, and deep contextualization of the ethnography of communication, I drill through a case study of language-focused beliefs and politics at all levels from parents, students, and classrooms to school boards, the state legislature, and the US Congress in order to make sense of the many disparate forces in the milieu that surrounds bilingual education.

This book will explore the identity development of Indian children and the various correlations to socioeconomic mobility. It will also explore several decades of theories about language and education, including the linguistic research ignited by the racial events of the civil rights movement that demonstrated there was nothing inherently "deficit" about any kids' language or culture. They were just adapted to different lifestyles than their white, middle-class peers.

Application of principle findings from that body of research – plus a great deal of on-the-job innovation – was at the heart and core of the Crow bilingual program experience.

## Public Policy

This is also an informed study of the consequences of public policy. It describes in detail relevant anthropological and linguistic features of the social organization

and educational structures in a reservation setting and follows their changes over time. In the 1970s, change processes in American education were still being driven by the civil rights movement of the previous decade. Federal laws and regulations changed to implement integration and improve education for disenfranchised Americans – mostly African Americans but with some attention to Native Americans. The United Nations had declared its support for "mother tongue" education[2] and Congress was willing to appropriate federal money for the impertinent idea that children might better comprehend academic concepts through the language in which they were already most proficient while learning English taught as a second language. These circumstances allowed a Berkeley doctoral student of linguistic anthropology to be able to connect intellectually with staff in a nascent US Department of Education.

As this study came to conclusion and *No Child Left Behind* legislation emerged, the pendulum had swung, making it more difficult to implement independent solutions to complex education problems, given federal inconsistency when political majorities change. In their new efforts to assure fiscal accountability, federal regulations staff set limits on specific programs of instruction and evaluation tools that would be allowable expenditures. At times they appear to have a bias for "clinical" outcomes that simply do not exist in education.

## Ethnography in a Linguistic Anthropology Approach to the Study of Education

### *Ethnography*

In contrast to traditional educational psychology studies of education, an anthropological framework using ethnographic methods is vital to teasing apart the complicated issues of language and education. Episodes and decision points in classrooms and board rooms documented in this study would have been unlikely to be uncovered and addressed in standard classroom-focused, experimental group versus control group educational psychology approaches to the study of schooling. I argue that a complex set of factors, based largely in power relations and the *habitus*, or learned habits,[3] of daily interracial and education-bound practices combined to undermine the full academic promise of bilingual education for Crow-speaking youngsters. This could not have been studied with a limited experimental psychology treatment.

While at times auto-ethnographic, this book is also the culmination of years of classic ethnography – including note-taking, interviews, and participant observation. There is, nonetheless, an auto-ethnographic character to the work in that my "voice" and my commitment to change in the education institution were a substantive intrusion into the status quo. That commitment continues in my drive to share what I learned with others through this book.

I believe the study also reveals a strong core of pride and resistance to outside interference that has protected the Crow people for centuries and still allows them to carry on using their native language, culture, and traditions while negotiating

their own style of success throughout the monumental changes of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### *Native American Bilingual Education*

The work explores a niche that has rarely been the subject of studies of bilingual education in the United States, that is, Native American bilingual education. The great majority of American bilingual studies are focused on Hispanic languages and cultures. Exceptions to this have been the work of Teresa McCarty reporting widely from the Navajo Nation and Nancy Hornberger's research among native people of South America. Both of these leading academics have empowered the work of indigenous teachers and have participated in bilingual education programs in cultural situations that I found very comparable to the work I pursued in the northern plains environment and that is reported upon here (Fig. P.1).[4]

This research was conducted in a reservation-based, Native American community whose children study in schools located both on and just off the reservation. It is a historical ethnography of a multiyear endeavor to enrich the educational experience and life options of Crow Indian children through bilingual–bicultural instruction by promoting change in imbedded traditions of the Euro-American education institution to better meet the unique needs of a group of children who still spoke their native Crow language in twentieth-century America.

It utilizes 30 years of language change data that were collected under the auspices of the tribe and the local public school district – before, during, and after my work in those schools. It recounts a story of the development, implementation, and continuous revision of a program of bilingual education that began in the primary grades

Fig. P.1. Crow Lodge on the Little Big Horn River.

and spread across multiple communities on the reservation and grew to encompass some middle school and high school implementation. Its spread culminated with implementation among preschoolers with federal Head Start support.

### *Basic Understandings about Language*

Throughout this effort to implement successful bilingual education, I was often confronted with strong, emotional attitudes about the program that at times I thought represented misunderstandings of some basic principals of language. Human language is a universal. Thus, one might expect that everyone understands language the same way. This, I found, could not be further from reality. Destructive myths about language in general and specifically about bilingual education abound; and they are difficult to reverse. To that end, I have included some basic facts about language based upon years of study by linguists, brain scientists, and cognitive psychologists. For readers new to these concepts, read on; if you are already familiar, skip Fig. P.2 below.

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- Children's early language learning generally follows a regular and predictable pattern that is part of child development, unless there are serious extenuating circumstances such as brain injury. Language is a generative tool; in other words, having learned the basic rules by "osmosis" by being around speaking adults and others, any human child is soon capable of creating unique combinations of words that are understood by others and can communicate unique thoughts. It is not necessary to have heard everything and then mimic the language of others.

- Language development precedes the development of metacognition in the child, and metacognition, in turn, allows one to observe and study the structure of one's own language, or to compare two or more languages.

- Languages are used to communicate. They allow humans to communicate and share ideas and information with one another. Language is also a sign of identity that can announce, or communicate, to others the important group to which you belong. In other words, languages announce one's identity to others.

- All languages and dialects are equivalent in their ability to convey information.

- Just as a child's bones grow and develop, the brain also must grow and eventually close the soft spot on the top of a child's head with bone. Some developmental stages associated with these physical growth changes are believed to have an impact on children's learning. For example, learning a language is easier for most people prior to the critical stage and children of middle school age have a period of brain change where the opportunity to widely explore subject matter and learning options is optimal.

- Cognitive scientists learned from brain-injured soldiers during the Vietnam war that multiple languages are stored separately, but in the same general area in the brain such that a person who speaks two or more languages can receive a head injury that may damage the tissues where one language is stored without affecting any portion of another language stored in an adjacent region. This also sometimes happens as the result of a stroke event in the language area of the brain. This separate storage concept is important for parents to understand who otherwise fear that their child will confuse her languages if she learns and uses more than one.

Fig. P.2. Basic Understandings about Language.

- One's mother tongue is imbued with the experience of motherly love. Memories of those first sounds are stored in the brain's limbic system along with the emotion, taste and textures they engendered. Those memories are re-accessed at important times. One's mother tongue also is most likely to become the language of adult love. Couples who meet after growing up in differing cultures and languages tell how, in intimate moments, they will lovingly speak their own mother tongue to their partner—which whether fully understood or not, is nonetheless well-received by the partner who expresses love in a different mother tongue.

- Languages do die. It is a global process. When a population of speakers gets so small that the demise of individual speakers effectively reduces the pool of interlocutors, a language may be at serious risk. Written language can stem the process somewhat and leave a written record. Efforts to record speech are hampered by rapid changes in recording technology. A few years ago I tried to recover some videotaped classroom exchanges and found myself forced to visit a huge warehouse in Silicon Valley California where the owner tried to keep one of every recording device extant in an effort to help people like me re-capture their lives, i.e., important academic material.

Fig. P.2. (Continued)

For further reading on any of these topics, see any introductory linguistics text or for going deeper, consider these options.[5]

## The Author

When I accepted an unanticipated offer of employment in the school district in 1978, I never imagined I would become so deeply invested in this research and the work of education, that I would choose to continue a career in education administration for the next 40 years, eventually retiring from one of the largest school districts in Montana, and the one with the second largest concentration of Native American students.

I trained in anthropology, linguistics, and cognitive science at University of California, Berkeley, following a brief, but life-changing stint teaching high school social studies in a bilingual school in Southeast Asia. That experience sent me back to school looking for answers and enlightenment; for I had been provided a fourth grade book to use with my Asian students and a high school textbook for the English speakers in the same classes. As it was, those non-English-speaking Asian students were from wealthy, influential families, some of whom arrived at school in chauffeured cars; and many had a better grasp of world affairs than their English-language classmates. Thus, the content of the fourth grade textbook was an insult to their intelligence while I was demoralized because I was poorly prepared to communicate complex concepts without the use of language and I could not speak their language.

Recent retirement after 20 years as school district superintendent did not end my interest and engagement in such challenges. I have continued to work as an independent contractor in education leadership, engaging largely in Indian education – sometimes assisting in development of good pedagogy for native language instruction, and sometimes as a professional development coach mentoring

emerging Native American administrators embarking upon their careers as part of a burgeoning new movement in Montana's reservation schools. The federally grant–funded program to mint college–educated, Native American leaders in business, industry, and education is a product of the Obama administration. In Montana, it is being implemented through Montana State University, and in my estimation has been one of the most fruitful stimulations to education policy in recent memory.[6] Reservation schools are literally desperate for well-qualified administrative personnel with strong teaching backgrounds, who understand their communities and the children. Many of the program's enrollees are snatched up and employed in full-time administrative jobs while they are still engaged in the internship portion of their training. My role has been to mentor many of these new superintendents and principals with the kinds of practical, on-the-job, experience not readily available in college classrooms. Most of the issues we deal with are variants on the sorts of challenges and crises that I experienced in nonreservation school districts, and many others are unique to Indian schools. Social problems are the same, only exacerbated by greater poverty, health issues, substance abuse, and distance from services. Other problems arise due to the strange anomalies and lack of coordination in governance and the various justice systems that are to serve children. A grave problem is the systemic abuse, fraud, and incompetence inherent in the economic mechanisms by which the federal government compensates tribes for their natural resources "held in trust" by the federal government on behalf of Native American tribes. Such resources include grazing permits, mineral leases, and land sales, among others and could provide a reasonable revenue stream to tribes. See Cobell v. Salazar for greater insight into these problems that plague Indian reservations.[7]

I stayed in education because I thrive on complex challenges – especially when I believe I am working to accomplish something important in the lives of others. There is never a dull moment when trying to stay abreast of the creative activities of thousands of children and teenagers on a daily basis while managing facilities, transportation, food service, human resources, communication, instruction, and creative implementation of the many administrative changes regularly imposed on schools by local, state, and federal agencies.

Early on I found anthropology provided answers to some to the more vexing problems about racism, poverty, and social justice issues in America – including those deeply embedded in the institution of education. I came to believe in the possibility of creative, inclusive solutions to complex problems. I managed the immersion of hundreds of formerly institutionalized children with severe disabilities into the public schools in a capital city (of another state) when the legislature forced an abrupt closure of several institutions. In another district, I managed the site selection, bonding and construction of a new school that had eluded a divided community through a period of five superintendents and many years. I learned to manage education finance with all its federal, state, and local rules, regulations, and funding cycles during those early days on the Crow Reservation. And, during the era of organizational change when businesses were reinventing themselves in postrecession America, I embarked on my own self-designed, professional development plan volunteering – in my spare time – as an

examiner with the Baldrige National Quality Award Program,[8] and found that leading staff to identify the "customer" in education is a remarkable place to begin the transformation of any school.

I am gratified by the many and varied experiences I have enjoyed, or endured, that gave me the confidence to be able to assist new generations of education leaders. I can only hope I am able to pass on some of what took me years to learn in hopes that future educators will be prepared to implement a pedagogy that will benefit more children's lives.

## Practical Matters

### *Ethnic Terms*

A brief note on the terminology used throughout this work is in order. Most authors of professional work on Native Americans in the United States have shifted away from use of the term *Indian* and have replaced it with the less stigmatized *Native American* or *native peoples*. In this work, however, I will often use the term *Indian,* as the Crow people themselves use it in everyday conversation and in their official designations such as *The Crow Tribe of Indians*. I am also called upon frequently to clarify Indian and non-Indian participants in the events chronicled here. In most cases, I have chosen the term *white* (with a small ***w***) for simple clarification. This is not intended to conform to United States federal identification terms that roughly represent racial categories in the United States.

### *Bias*

Who is the customer? Who is served in public education? How best to negotiate the tensions among federal, state, and local education politics? These are the questions of our time. As an education administrator and researcher, I also spent six years of my career while a school district superintendent, devoting personal time in service as a senior examiner for the Baldrige National Quality Program which seeks to promote and reward businesses, health care, and educational organizations that successfully apply the principles of performance excellence culled from the best business research of our time. I came to this work after extensive study of the research on complex organizations and change theory and after years of personal effort to effect what I hoped would be positive changes in the schools serving Crow Indian children and others where I subsequently worked. Some bias with respect to these principles will undoubtedly appear in my discussion of the issues of the current research. Simple but profound shifts in attitudes and practices (our *habitus* in Bourdieuian "*theory of practice"* terms) hold promise for changing schooling practices from hegemonic Euro-American-culture dominated practices to ones of utility and empathy for the different linguistic, cultural, and philosophical heritages of American Indian students (among others).

Culture in different schools and different communities varies widely as I can attest from my three-state experience. In fact, part of the draw for me of the places

I have chosen to work has been to study the differences in the ways communities view their obligation to educate their young. As I recount this study of Indian bilingual education, I draw upon my intimate knowledge of education from the perspective of a central office administrator and superintendent. Given this perspective I compare

- The reservation community at 70% unemployment (using the methods by which unemployment was calculated in 1978) with
- A large, conservative, middle-class district of 34,000 students in 34 schools in Oregon; with
- A white, working-class community with a 65% free and reduced lunch count[9] for the total student body; and
- An elite commuter community north of San Francisco in an international vortex of research and cutting edge practices where the students' parents were engaged in careers at peak performance in their respective professions.

What I draw from this perspective is that the set of skills, practices, and arts we call *education* has grown exponentially over the last 40 years, and it has the potential to grow far more, and that politicians would do well to listen to educators.

### *Complexity*

I expect to be challenged for having tried to tackle too much in one place with this work. My defense is that this is the world of education. This is how complex it is. To analyze discrete educational phenomena in isolation is valuable and provides depth; but without adequate understanding of the scope and range of human behavior that coalesces in the education process, complete understanding cannot be reached. Accounts of educational practice by anthropologists are frequently tinged with disapproval. In the current work, I seek to present a fair and balanced reporting of what I witnessed. As a district superintendent of schools, I am in daily awe of the work of the teachers and administrators around me. Charlotte Danielson, who provided the profession with her well-conceived framework for appraising the performance of classroom teachers, says,

> The complexity of teaching is well-recognized. A classroom teacher makes over three thousand nontrivial decisions daily. It is useful to think of teaching as similar to, not one, but several, other professions, combining the skills of business management, human relations, and theater arts.[10]

## Scope and Organization

### *Central Question and Research Perspective*

The central question addressed in the study concerns a grand political and educational experiment to implement bilingual, bicultural education on the

reservation with the intent to improve the academic achievement of Crow Indian students enrolled in kindergarten through the intermediate grades of the local public school district. The perspective is that of a practicing linguistic anthropologist and school district administrator examining language-focused pedagogy and politics in the classroom, among parents and families, in staff rooms, the superintendent's cabinet, the board room, tribal council, state legislature, and as far away as the US Congress.

A generally accepted set of objectives of mass schooling in the history of the United States has been to impart the basic "Three Rs," that is, knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic; teach rudimentary social skills; prepare kids for the world of work; and instill the cultural norms, democratic values, myths, and creeds of American public life. The related objective of bilingual education, in the public sphere, is that students learn all the same core curriculum while simultaneously completing intensive instruction in the vocabulary, structure, and function of academic English, which, in turn, enables the students' further educational development. There are so many variables in these processes, that developing proficiency in English as a second language varies by individual and can take from two to nine years or longer. Meeting educational objectives may be even more labor-intensive if a child's learning has been interrupted due to familial or emotional reasons (sometimes due to negative experiences with school), or health, or environmental disaster, causing the child to miss integral subject matter along the way.

The research reported on here takes up the issue of uninformed and unrestrained hegemonic power in the education of Crow-speaking Indian students that has unequal influence within the various realms of power: political, religious (including traditional belief systems), or economic – what I have come to label the "powerful forces." This work captures the inequalities in Indian Country and demonstrates how the young people's use of their native Crow language indexes the shifting race and power forces in Indian Country.

### *Methods*

The methodology included participant observation, elder interviews, classroom discourse analysis, regional surveys, statistical analyses, and deep contextualization born of long-term research inspired by anthropologists like Foster and Spicer, and my mentors, Colson and Brandes.[11] The years of site work were augmented with archival research at the University of California Berkeley Bancroft Library investigating early twentieth century anthropologist, Robert Lowie's field notes and correspondence from his time among the Crow people. I made many return visits to the reservation; and I have maintained continuous contact with project participants – at times assisting them with professional development, as at a tribal language summit, and training specifically for teachers to use their native language that was conducted at several reservation schools under the auspices of state and tribal leadership. I gathered additional language use data that were available from Crow Agency and had been collected with relatively

consistent methodology, to a total of thirty-three years of language change data about Crow Indian students.

The ethnographic material takes into account contemporary scholarship and is informed by my ongoing "day job" in education leadership where I have engaged in continuous improvement efforts and established new standards and expectations for those of us working with children whose life experiences might differ from our own. I have been acknowledged for these endeavors by parents, educators, and organizations. Especially meaningful have been the personal gifts of gratitude from Native American parents, leaders, and coworkers. The sweet-grass braids, written words of encouragement, buffalo-hair and beadwork pins, my treasured breast-feather, and chiefly blanket presented to me in acknowledgment and gratitude over the years continue to guide me.

The study built on common methodologies but provides the unusual orientation of a school district administrator working from inside the executive offices of education – with access and entrée to the inner circle of decision-making and full exposure to the norms and counter-norms at play in policy-development discourse and practices. The work also demonstrates the use of multiple, cross-generational, triangulated research to create what approaches a holistic rendering of this reservation-based Native American education. Intimate interviews and classroom discourse analysis, as well as community-wide surveys, and participant observation in diverse settings, are followed by multivariate correlation and cluster analyses.

These methods, combined with narrative, are designed to contribute to understanding the interpersonal interactions that shape students' self-construction of unequal identity and the structural ideologies that enhance or undermine potential outcomes. More detail on the methods is to be found in the appendix.

## *Overview*

*Chapter 1*: describes the setting and my intrinsic interest in this endeavor, which is broad field and builds on relevant work from anthropology, linguistics, history, sociology, psychology, brain science, and education. Motives and processes of indigenous language shift are central to this book, as are the approaches to bilingual education and second language learning. Development of the Crow Agency model largely paralleled ESL theory and pedagogy of the time, but with significant adaptations for implementation in an unwritten, non-Indo-European language.[12] Contemporary brain science research was particularly helpful in dispelling common myths about bilingualism that were pervasive among parents and teachers.[13] Whipsaw changes in federal bilingual education law during its official 33-year lifespan are important to understanding some of the results.

The chapter also discusses the complexity of conducting comprehensive ethnography in a largely rural school district comprised of six schools, located in three communities, and enmeshed within multiple, structurally different, supra-ordinate entities – the United States of America, the State of Montana, and a non-Euro-American political organization known as The Crow Tribe of Indians.

*Chapter 2*: is devoted to expressing the beauty and the challenges of life on the reservation – as a sovereign Crow Nation – with its relationship to the powerful

nation that surrounds it. The chapter charts the highpoints of Crow history and the geographic, ecological, cultural, and familial settings in which Crow children's identity is formed. Special attention is paid to the powerful connection the Crow people have to their ancestral homeland including its significant implications for their native language retention.

The Crow people's story since contact with the invading Europeans has been one of repeated reaction and adjustment to incursions from the European foothold on the country. First, it was for animal furs and hides, then gold, then "free" rangeland for the new cattle barons. Wide swaths of land were laid bare for trails of immigrant wagon trains moving across Indian lands, taking in their wake all the vegetation and wildlife the Indian people depended upon for their livelihood. Next, it was firewood, water, and huge corridors to build trans-continental railroads; and finally, the establishment of diminished and delimited portions of land as reservations. Targets of more recent avarice have been coal, water, and hunting rights, but the Tribe has been in a better position to fight back utilizing whiteman's strategy of litigation – all the way to the US Supreme Court. At its base, the struggle has been between the sense of identity and esteem that comes from "family, god, and Crow country" versus the power of the United States "political–financial–industrial–educational" complex.

The chapter concludes with a brief history of Crow education – from traditional, extended-family enculturation to the advent of boarding schools, often engineered to reprogram children for assimilation while protecting the dominant society from the perceived dangers Indian progeny presented in the minds of European settlers and their political–military allies and protectors.

*Chapter 3*: This chapter discusses the role language plays in culture and identity and describes the structure of Crow and its high level of retention among tribal members. It also describes the challenges of developing effective bilingual instructional strategies for a previously unwritten language and implications for educational success. Competence in mathematics is a watershed issue. A central portion of the chapter is devoted to the complications for teachers and students struggling to generate meaning in mathematics instruction – difficulties that are exacerbated when complicated by yet a third language, the *language* of mathematics.

The chapter explores the inherent problems associated with teaching academic content in a setting where the many levels of administrative power implement competing policies. A decision to skirt the rules regarding the *transitional model* of bilingual education is explained while making the case for parallel language development in bilingual education.

*Chapter 4*: Congress enacted the federal Bilingual Education law in the era following the Civil Rights movement when governing bodies were challenged with finding new ways to address American poverty and inequality. The relationship between race and poverty had to be addressed. This chapter sets out some theoretical groundwork and explores some of the legal and social identity issues of the time. It then describes the development and implementation of a bilingual program set squarely in the midst of dissident voices of all kinds: parents, elders, school personnel, and governing boards – in other words, complex organizations

vying with dense networks of familial and community relations. Opinions differed, mistakes were made, many Indian parents were reluctant to get involved; but the elders were clear that they did not want to lose their language – or their land.

*Chapter 5:* This brief chapter introduces the milieu of "powerful forces" and applies complex organization change theory to Indian bilingual education.

*Chapter 6*: This chapter takes a close look at the Crow Agency model of bilingual education that was designed according to law as a *transitional* bilingual program – under which children were allowed to spend most of their time learning in the native language in kindergarten then transitioning throughout the elementary grades to a higher proportion of instruction utilizing the English language. Many parents wanted the children to retain the native language, and the bilingual program developed advanced Crow language and social studies curricula for grades four through eight.

*Chapter 7*: *Speak English, Talk Indian*, analogizes some basic findings of this research. To live and prosper in today's reservation economy, English and education are critical. But to participate in tribal activities and to stay wrapped and supported in family tradition, talking Crow is basic.

*Appendices:* include the bilingual program's *Policy on Collecting and Processing Crow Cultural Materials* and the author's approach to the research.

### *Preview of Findings and Conclusions*

Drawing conclusions is equally complex, and one that I came to characterize as "immeasurable success" and "unsuccessful measures." Project research findings explore, through ethnography, the issues of ethnic solidarity and internal variability and analyze objective data on the declining numbers of youth who continue to use the Crow language, as well as the subjective data on the Crow people's attitudes in the midst of great change. Awareness of the possibility, and protection against, the loss of the Crow language and Crow lands remained of the utmost importance to many tribal leaders and elders.

This work concludes that a complex set of factors based largely in the hegemonic power relations of interracial, intereconomic, and general intergroup practices – from local to national – combined to undermine the full academic promise of bilingual education for Crow-speaking youngsters. Such practices no doubt helped keep Crow Indian culture and mainstream American culture out of sync with one another – like cogs on asynchronous wheels – for over 150 years of contact; and yet, the pragmatic Crow response to hegemonic practices also appears to have contributed to keeping the Crow people strong, proud, rather isolated, and very much a factor to be reckoned with in the new century. Remarkably, a new generation – albeit still with pluralistic opinions and actions – but with greater local Indian community control and led by the tribal college is quietly undertaking dual language immersion instruction, and students have been emerging into substantive leadership roles among their people and beyond.

## Policy and Call to Action

The issues associated with minority languages and education have changed little over the last two decades; but policy-makers on school boards and in state legislatures often do not have a solid grasp of these issues. Some look to their constituents and local educators as experts. Others work from their gut and general knowledge – which is informed by their own experiences when they were in school. It remains a truism that many noneducators believe that virtually any adult could teach. I believe the core of this study helps significantly disprove such attitudes. There has been considerable consensus in the *Studies in Educational Ethnography* series that ethnography has the power to effect changes in policy. It is my profound desire that a comprehensive ethnography such as this study of *Native American Bilingual Education* may help inform educators and policy-makers at a deeper, more actionable level with potential to alter belief systems about language and its role in life and education; and, perhaps policy shifts may follow.

Finally, this work is a call to action for policy professionals and education administrators working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, to adopt continuous improvement efforts that engage in change management – not to force cultural change on the children – but to move school staff to better meet students' needs. Given war, poverty, genocide, and the mass movement of people around the globe, schools need to retool to meet the growing challenge – with training and new perspectives on the pedagogic needs of diverse students. All the dangers that led to the political demise of the Bilingual Education Act are still with us and are being resurrected in virulent form. Yet it is heartening to see that even with scarce resources many leaders are able to implement transformative policies. It is my sincere hope that this book may help concentrate attention on these matters.

Cheryl Crawley
Great Falls, Montana
March 2020

## Notes

1. The American Bilingual Education Act was an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed by the 90th US Congress and signed into law on January 2, 1968, by President Johnson. It was reauthorized periodically until 2002 when bilingual instruction was eliminated; the "English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act" instead became law; and funding was capped at half.
2. Bull 1955 and UNESCO 1953.
3. Bourdieu 1977: 78.
4. McCarty 2005, 2010; Hornberger 1987.
5. For further reading on these topics, consider picking up a used copy of Julia Falk's 1978, "Linguistics and Language: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Implications."

For critical period hypothesis and middle school transformation, see the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, 1989 "Turning Points." And, for sure, read, Zaretta Hammond's 2015, "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain."

6. Swearingen, Marshall. ILEAD – Indian Leadership Education and Development Project. http://www.montana.edu/news/16526/msu-program-to-recruit-educate-american-indian-school-leaders-receives-1-3-million. Retrieved 13 Oct 2019. Professors William Ruff and Joanne Erickson were instrumental in securing this grant which has been highly effective.
7. Cobell v. Salazar, 2009. The following quote is from The Washington Post, Oct 17, 2011, reporting on tribal treasurer, Elouise Cobell's, death in 2011, two years after the decision was handed down on the class action lawsuit against the US Government. Federal Judge Royce C. Lamberth, who oversaw the lawsuit, described the Interior Department in a 2005 court memorandum as a "dinosaur — the morally and culturally oblivious hand-me-down of a disgracefully racist and imperialist government that should have been buried a century ago, the last pathetic outpost of the indifference and anglocentrism we thought we had left behind." … After 220 days of trial, 80 court decisions, and 10 interlocutory appeals, the case was settled when the Interior Department agreed to the $3.4 billion deal in 2009.
8. The Baldrige National Quality Award Program is a presidential award program administered within the US Department of Commerce. It was recently renamed the "Baldrige Performance Excellence Program." I was pleased to participate in the work to adapt the language and principles of business and industry to be more applicable to K-12 education institutions striving to become more effective. It provided me with excellent professional development garnered during nights and weekends and spring breaks for training in D.C. while working full-time as a superintendent.
9. Free or reduced priced lunches are provided in schools for students whose families live below and up to 150 percent of poverty.
10. Danielson 1996: 9.
11. Although long-term anthropological research is often conducted by senior anthropologists who are able to return to the interests of their field sites year after year, it is not common. The depth that is achieved by those who do is significant. Examples of the work of some who were especially inspiring to me can be found in George Foster's 1965, Foster et al. 1979, regular returns to Tzintzuntzan, Mexico; Edward and Rosamond Spicer's 1992 work in the Southwest; Stanley Brandes' 1988, 2006 reimmersions in Spain and Mexico; or Elizabeth Colson's 1958, 1980, 1988 with the Tonga in Zambia, Africa.
12. Cummins 1976, 1979; Krashen 1987, 1988; and Paradis 1978. Much of the work of James Cummins and Stephen Krashen was completed in later years and continued to align with our programmatic thinking.
13. Of particular interest are the works of Albert and Obler 1978 and Michel Paradis 1985, 1987.

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I am indebted to the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, for awarding me the Robert H. Lowie fellowship. This work is in part a tribute to the legacy he left from his years among the Crow people in the early part of the twentieth century as well as his contribution to creating one of the finest departments of anthropology in the United States.

Thank you to all the staff of the Bilingual Materials Development Center at Crow Agency each of whom contributed heroically to the effort to record the Crow language and stories and provide access for all Crow students to the cultural integrity that the language preserves. I also want to share my great admiration for all the Crow teachers who made the risky commitment to do something none had done before – that is, to freely use the Crow language in the classroom and imbue it with its legitimate importance as a tool in the comprehensive education of Crow children.

Former Crow Agency bilingual teacher and current state legislator, Sharon Stewart-Peregoy, continues the fight in the Montana State Legislature for action and funding in support of native languages. Bilingual educators Marlene Walking Bear, Jennifer BirdinGround Flatlip, and Birdena Real Bird, among others, continued careers in education leading to tribal and school district leadership that promoted sound education policy for native students. Mary Helen Medicine Horse's diligent work cataloging the Crow language in several editions of the Crow dictionary has been a labor of love.

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Thank you to the Great Falls Public Library for managing my many "inter-library loan" requests as I worked to finish this book far from an academic library. Thank you to the Montana Office of Public Instruction for computer analysis of the boxes of data from the reservation-wide survey of 1980. I am deeply indebted to the state Indian Education Department specialists Lynn Hinch, Mike Jetty, Mandy Smoker-Broadus, and to Montana State Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau for her memorable comment, "Oh, you're THAT Cheryl Crawley!" and Indian Education Specialist Natalee Hawks for, "You're pretty much a legend around here," upon my return to Montana in 2007. Your eternal encouragement and occasional refuge have been far more valuable than you will ever imagine. No words can express my gratitude to my husband and my daughter.

Chapter 1

# A Study in the Anthropology of Education

> **Language is a way of life. I do not wish to regard language merely as a mechanically functional tool, but as a way of life which is a path… The language of a person is a road from inside himself to the outside.**
> –Simon J Ortiz, Acoma Pueblo. In *The Man to send Rain Clouds*[1]

## Roots of Inquiry

My interest in this story of American Indian education has some unlikely roots stemming from a family outing to visit the old log cabin built by my grandparents two years after their arrival in Montana at the end of the 1800s. Those first two years my grandmother survived the Montana winter living in a tent with two very small children.

The day of our outing, in 1950, several aunts, an uncle, and my parents and I all piled into an old pickup truck and a car and drove south from the ranch, on Fly Creek east of Billings, across the northwest corner of the Crow Reservation past the home of Chief Plenty Coups in the little town of Pryor, then on through the Pryor Gap in the mountains – named for the Lewis and Clark explorer, not for the Indians who were there centuries earlier. Eventually our route dropped down onto an old river plain just north of the Wyoming state line, where a little group of immigrants had attempted to make a living in the 1890s. They clustered around the small store and post office of Bowler, Montana.

### *Water Wars, Law Enforcement, and Power Relations*

The stories from those log cabin days include the tale of these northern European farmers building a rock dam on Sage Creek to back up a little irrigation water. The creek, itself, while small and occasionally dry, continues south into the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming. Livestock ranchers downriver took exception to their diversion and dynamited the dam one Sunday morning with a blast that my uncle recalled vividly half a century later.

This early event in the western water wars was ruled upon in a US Supreme Court decision written by Oliver Wendell Holmes.[2] The decision established part of the doctrine of interstate water rights "among white men" on this landscape for

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centuries to come. The fact that Indian water rights were excluded from that decision as "irrelevant" became a recurring theme in much of my later thinking about Native Americans, American education, and American inequality.

My own deeply imprinted, psychic memory from that family outing is of the Crow Indian police descending on our picnic lunch to root out possible contraband alcohol. The reservation was "dry"[3] by law. I have no recollection of the police finding even so much as a beer bottle in our party; but this first-ever impression of being accosted by law enforcement etched a vivid memory in my mind. Realization that the event was a dramatic inversion of the usual Indian and white power relations came later. Yet this event clearly foreshadowed my desire to understand the hegemonic power relations that operate in Indian country.

Since the invasion of their lands by immigrant outsiders, Indian people have been massacred, moved by forced march, left to starve, defrauded by the government, imprisoned, and dehumanized into ever smaller, concentrated areas called "reservations." Their unbelievable resilience and tenacity to persevere through these conditions is at the core of this piece of ethnographic history of education on the Crow Indian Reservation.

The research that culminated in this book began with the search for answers to my enduring questions about social and educational inequities and why and how these things happened to people. As life experiences drew me deeper and deeper into education, my questions grew broader and expanded to encompass language, education, and inequality.

## Thematic Currents

### *Identity, Mobility, Language, and Education*

Identity development is a discursive process that works throughout maturation and builds upon feedback from those around us. Next to skin color, language may be the most popular index to generalizations about people's social standing or social identity. People use linguistic diacritica to announce their impression of their own status in the social hierarchy, and they recognize the imputed status of others based partly on dialects and languages. However, language is very malleable and is one of the first things to change in the case of individual social mobility – sometimes consciously and intentionally, sometimes not. Cant and jargon are verbal memes that are often used as tools to create or maintain boundaries around special interest groups, and dialect differences can map the social strata of a society or a community.[4]

Research questions ignited by racial events of the civil rights movement soon began to be addressed by sociolinguists. These scholars and others produced important research that overcame the racial, deficit, and dysfunctional family hypotheses of earlier decades.[5] The linguists' findings came to be known as the "difference model," and demonstrated that there was nothing inherently "deficit" about any kids' language or culture. They were just adapted to different lifestyles than their white, middle-class peers.

Cultural systems are tightly connected to their language. Creation stories, folk tales, and ritual activities are often maintained and supported through mnemonic devices and linguistic memory. Latin used in church services in English-speaking countries is an example that sometimes the aura around the language is more important than the literal meaning of the words.

Stereotyping and negative reactions to various indicators of social stratification do not stop with the ether world. They are also carried into school classrooms where students rank one another, and where teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward nonstandard English may present significant hurdles for some of their students.

Such issues reemerged from the research and became subthemes that are explored throughout the work. One such theme is about the ubiquitous human activity of "ranking" things that operates between and among individuals, groups, and even nations. In academic work, it has come to be labeled *hegemony*.[6] A complementary theme is one inherent in the sociopolitical judgments about oralcy and literacy that seem to pop up at moments of tribal discord and underlie many teacher attitudes. A third inescapable current in Native America is the slow but consistent shift toward the English language and away from general use of the native tongue – especially by the young. The question has been, what can or should be done about it. People are divided.

### *Hegemony*

What are the power relationships in the community? Or, "on what, or on whose, authority do things get done around here?" As I noted at the outset with the story of the Indian police accosting our family picnic, that experience left a salient, lifelong memory for me. In 1950, near the time of our incident, there were still frequently signs in the windows of public establishments in reservation border towns warning: "No dogs or Indians" welcome here. Indians had virtually no power to defend against such things. Despite the fact that their movements were already restricted to the reservation boundaries, they were not allowed to travel from one section of that reservation to another to visit family or to conduct business, without a special permit that could only be issued by the white government's superintendent of the reservation. Thus, on a hierarchy of restrictions, a police officer – even a member of the Indian police – had a lot of power; but not enough to have authority off the reservation. And, of course, that is still the case today.

Thus, for members of a newly authorized tribal police to accost a white family was daring for them and unusual for us. Moreover, the fact that I was not yet nine years old at the time suggests how young we are when the elements of these social mores are imprinted as warning signs in our brains. Negative interaction – especially with authority figures – imprints itself first in the amygdala and the limbic system, then ultimately in the hippocampus, in the effort to leave a brain-based, warning system that is intended to keep us safe from current or future harm. Hammond[7] explains the social and physical process she calls an "amygdala hijack," by which the body reacts to a stimulus such as the policeman with an

adrenalin rush (or more accurately, a cortisol release) that "blocks rational thinking and reduces the capacity of the working memory" to function properly. This can happen on the street, in the classroom, or as in our case, during a picnic lunch interrupted by several, very serious, Indian police officers.

The simplest definition of hegemony is that influence or authority that one group has over another. As a writer and a teacher working with English language learners, I resist using terms, borrowed from classical languages – in this case, Greek – that are not commonly used nor readily understood without higher education. However, the term *hegemony* is becoming more widely used as it sums up the pervasive, implicit power that constitutes "white privilege" that white Americans have by virtue of the color of their skin and socioeconomic culture that give them a significant advantage over other people in the nation. It is not restricted to the United States, but formulates itself somewhat differently in different nation-states. Antonio Gramsci,[8] an Italian member-of-parliament and social philosopher imprisoned in fascist Italy, suggested in his writings that hegemony formulates itself as "common sense" and the "way things are done." Moreover, he would say, cultural hegemony is originated within and reproduces itself by the dominant class through the institutions that form the national superstructure. Paolo Freire,[9] another twentieth century hegemony theorist, applied the concepts to education. What I came to understand is how literally the people in our systems and institutions – the economy, social welfare, criminal justice, and yes, even in education – believe they are "doing the right thing," but, often only because "this is the way it has always been done." Not because it is technically the "right thing." Despite years of college and targeted professional development training, many teachers go on to deliver instruction to their students in very much the same way their teachers taught them when they were in school many years earlier. It is extremely difficult to break that pattern – just as it is difficult to break a parenting pattern – and, thus, many instead simply replicate it.

### *Oral and Literate Traditions*

Another theme that weaves its way throughout this analysis of Indian bilingual education is the difference in the way oral traditions support the social compact compared with literate traditions. The Crow people passed along their history, mores, stories, and happenings utilizing a face-to-face, oral tradition. They conducted their tribal meetings in the oral tradition. This differs in significant ways from the literate tradition of Euro-American education and governance. The people are in a time of tremendous transition. The oral sessions used to take place within the family in the form of story-telling around the hearth in the winter. Now with all the other activities, such sessions rarely, if ever, take place. Crow was not a written language until an anthropological linguist named Robert Lowie arrived on the reservation in 1907 and began collecting Crow word lists as part of the Boasian effort to document the languages of Native America before they disappeared. Even then, no one but Lowie and perhaps a few of his colleagues ever seem to have used the phonetic symbols written to capture the sounds of the Crow language in any kind of written, communicative message.[10]

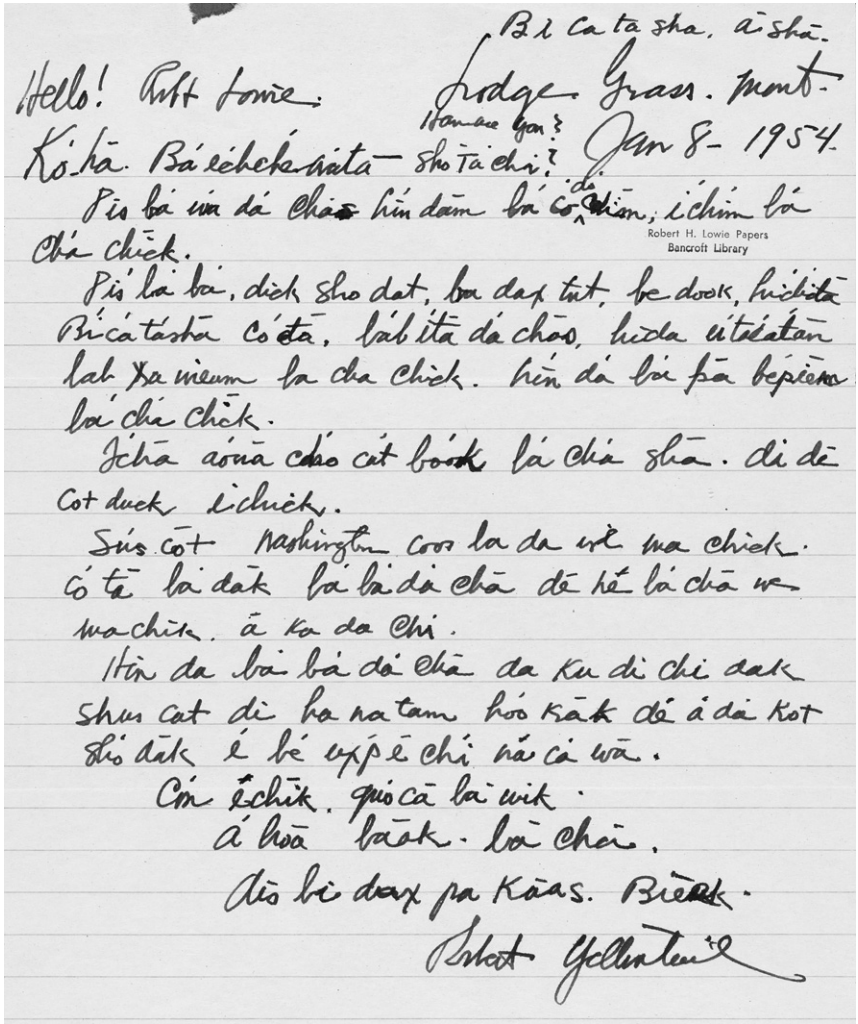


Fig. 1.1. Letter Written in Crow from Robert Yellowtail to Robert Lowie, 1954. *Source:* Robert H. Lowie Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

The first example I could find of a Crow person using written Crow was in a 1954 letter, handwritten – his letters were usually typed – by the Crow Indian superintendent of the Reservation, to his friend, Berkeley anthropologist Robert Lowie. Lowie and the superintendent, Robert Yellowtail, became friends following the deaths of Lowie's earlier turn-of-the-century informants. Yellowtail very much enjoyed Lowie's work and took it upon himself to learn Lowie's writing system. He wrote the 1954 letter in Crow and then followed up on several

occasions asking Lowie if he had managed to translate and read it. This was clearly a novel experience for both men. It was evident from other documents in the Lowie archives that he had difficulty understanding Superintendent Yellowtail's message. He has carefully notated a translation, morpheme by morpheme, by penciling it in above the Crow, but does not appear to have ever completed the task, and it is lost to history if he fully understood his friend's message in written Crow (Fig. 1.1).[11]

### *Language Shift*

A third thematic current in this work is that of linguistic shift and the possibility of the loss of the Crow language. This thought weighs especially heavily on the Crow elders. For them their lives and struggles were interwoven with the land and the language and the traditions embodied therein. The shift they see taking shape as more and more young people resist responding in the Crow language, when they are addressed in Crow by their elders, is of grave concern to them.[12]

## Introduction

### *Powerful Forces*

In the spring of 1976, distinguished linguist Dr. G. "Hu" Matthews, recently arrived in Montana following an appointment in Linguistics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented a paper entitled *Bilingual Education at Crow Agency* at a conference at the University of Illinois. His paper was subsequently published in the journal of Studies in Language Learning. This in itself is unremarkable. What was startling, however, was the foreshadowing of the power of the conflicts surrounding the education of Crow-speaking children that Dr. Matthews alluded to in the abstract he chose to submit for publication with the journal article. It read in part,

> This paper contains a description of several components of the bilingual education program at Crow Agency, Montana as it was about a year and a half ago. This description actually concentrates on the research that has been done, and has yet to be done, which is necessary for the production of classroom teaching materials in the Crow language. It also conjectures a set of principles concerning the order in which children learn to use linguistic clues …
>
> This paper does not mention the fact that the program no longer has a functioning bilingual lab, carries on no background research, produces practically no classroom materials, carries on much reduced teacher training and testing efforts, and there is no Crow reading program; *nor does this paper discuss the reasons for this* [emphasis added].[13]

I assumed Dr. Matthews' role as the new director of the bilingual program for the Hardin School District in 1978 and stepped with lighthearted optimism into the quagmire of powerful forces that is bilingual education. Given all that I have since learned, this book will discuss with gusto the many reasons for the calamity to which G. H. Matthews merely alludes. For at that particular time, differences between the objectives of the staff of the bilingual program and the administration of the school district had become so severely strained that the program had been shut down and staff was dispersed leaving behind several angry holes kicked in the door of what was to become my new office.

A contemporaneous investigator on the scene, a young man from New Zealand who was unassociated with the school district, completed a Ph.D. dissertation entitled *A Sociolinguistic Study of Crow Language Maintenance* in which he concluded that given the

> …high level of language maintenance [among the Crow], the adjustment that is needed [in the schools] is the use of Crow as a medium of instruction or, in other words, some form of bilingual education.[14]

Read's dissertation, which was completed and submitted to the education faculty at the University of New Mexico in the year I arrived on the scene, drew a popular conclusion – for bilingual education had been a proposed remedy for the difficulties of language minority students in the United States for many years.

Matthews, Read, and I, I suppose, were all drawn to Crow Country by the lure of working on behalf of people who spoke a language so totally unrelated to any of the well-known, often-studied, Indo-European languages, such as French, German, Spanish, and others across the Eurasian continent; and, I believe, I can speak for all of us when I say we were all interested in being of service to the Crow people. Read conducted the sociolinguistic survey of children who were speakers of Crow. Matthews worked to train staff on the grammar of Crow and helped develop materials for the teachers and their students, and I fell into the job of directing the nascent bilingual education program while I worked to better understand the workings of language and cultural differences as they interrelate with issues of inequality and education. And, in short, this book undertakes to communicate what I learned. For as the data will show, there were disparate and powerful forces at odds with one another at every level of every structure and organization connected in any way to the children and their language at the heart of this drama. Among the Crow people themselves, there was serious tension between the preservation of the Crow language and culture on the one hand and the desire for Indian youth to have the opportunity to be successfully integrated into a contemporary world with broad options for academic and economic success. Were those to be mutually exclusive?

### *Life in the Horizon*

At the time of the outset of this research, there was a recurring theme around the reservation, expressed primarily by some Crow men, that they were trapped or

immobilized, caught somewhere or stuck in something. One young Crow artist represented it visually by repeatedly penning small drawings of Indian men dressed in buckskins and eagle feather headdresses, sitting with feet and legs encased in blocks of cracked concrete. Were these honorific figures stuck in a sort of concrete of an idealized past of their own making? Or, were the concrete blocks representative of a hegemony of powers that continued to keep them subjugated?

Another man, whose thinking took expression via poetic metaphor, referred to it as being "caught in the horizon."[15] His work suggested that the Indian people were caught in a liminal state between sky and earth; between this world and another world; between what is, and dreams of what has been or what could be. His symbolism suggests not only displacement but also beauty, calm, and protection through which one may remain or reside at the horizon, that distant place where the sky and the earth meet. In Euro-American science and logic, the horizon is like the rainbow, a place where, when one sets out to go here, it forever changes its location and one never arrives. In Crow cosmology and myth, that some might successfully translocate into the space we call the horizon could be accepted.

The 1970s and 1980s were tough times in Indian Country. The post-Vietnam economic decline in the nation hit rural areas especially hard. Many Montana family farms were lost, and when times were hard on white families, they were even harder on Native American families. Young men returning from military service found it difficult to provide for their families. Employment opportunities dried up as government-funded programs were reduced and eliminated. Statistics from the time show high unemployment combined with a dip in birthrate among the Crow Indians. Fewer children may be brought into the world when people are uncertain about what kind of life the children will experience and how the family will afford to feed them.

### *The Concept of Place*

The concept of *place* became an integral theme throughout this work as I sought to understand the significance of their land to the Crow elders and the draw of the reservation and its impact on the life options of the children of the Crow people. Members of the non-Indian culture still advocate for integration and assimilation of Native Americans – a position that I found was also held by many members of my own extended Montana family. Federal government social engineering had been at work relocating Crow people to the big, coastal cities, pushing this concept. The works of others also helped formulate an understanding of the importance of the reservation and its *sense of place* in the lifeways of the Crow people. Edward Spicer's[16] deep grasp of the Southwest was invaluable, but also Rebecca Solnit's[17] analysis of the Indian "ethnoscapes" of the Nevada desert and Yosemite Valley; the famed environmental works of Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner[18]; and Keith Basso's[19] studies of the importance of place in Apache metaphor. It was Gruenewald's[20] merger of these varied, but profoundly human experiences of the land with the work of education, that led me to accept a critical, central role of this "sense of place" in conceptualizing the future of Indian education.