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An Ethnohistorical Study of the Dowagiac Chieftains

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AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DOWAGIAC CHIEFTAINS

by

Kathryn A. Bishop

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
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AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DOWAGIAC CHIEFTAINS

Kathryn A. Bishop, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 2017

This research uses ethnohistorical methods to examine the use of imagery appropriated from American Indian cultures by the Dowagiac Union Schools. High School yearbooks from 1899-2014, along with other artifacts, were identified as sources of information to describe students’ experiences. Applying Brayboy’s (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory, an off-shoot of Critical Race Theory, combined with the research of historical and theoretical scholars like Davis (2002), Pewewardy (2001), and Deloria, King, and Springwood (2001), a case is made for the removal of American Indian mascots used by educational institutions, including the Dowagiac Chieftains. Though over 1,750 occasions of American Indian-appropriated imagery were documented in the yearbooks, the goal of mascot removal is complicated by the relationship that the Dowagiac Union Schools holds with the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, based in Dowagiac. The Band and the school system came to an agreement in 1990 that allows the continued use of the Chieftains nickname, however there has been little oversight of the adherence to the resolution, and the commitment of the Dowagiac Union Schools has waned. This study hopes to reinvigorate the conversation between the two entities, as well as serve as an example for other schools that wish to examine their use of an American Indian mascot, and educators who want to interrupt the systems of oppression in their own educational institutions.
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INTRODUCTION

According to mascotdb.com (n.d), there are over 3,000 school nicknames and/or mascots that have an American Indian connotation in the United States and Canada. One of these is in Dowagiac, Michigan. The Dowagiac Union Schools use the nickname “Chieftains.” Located in the southwestern portion of Michigan, Dowagiac once was, and continues to be, home to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, n.d.). According to the 2015 American Community Survey, American Indian people account for 3.6% of the population in Dowagiac (Data Access and Dissemination Systems, 2010).

Since the Civil Rights Era of the 20th century, action has been taken to remove the use of American Indian mascots in the United States nationally (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). In Michigan, rural towns and universities have considered the effect of their American Indian mascots, and some have opted to retain their mascots, while others have opted to alter their mascots, or replace them all together. In 1989, at Central Michigan University, administration met with tribal leaders to ensure that the use of the “Chippewas” as a nickname was respectful (To Be a Chippewa, n.d.). Most, if not all of the associated pageantry was removed from use (Eckert, 2001). In 2005, in Marshall, Michigan, the student body decided to drop the use of the “Redskins” and replaced it with the “Redhawks” (Hullett, 2013). In 2017, in Paw Paw, Michigan, the school board opted to retain their use of the “Redskins” nickname permanently, unless state or federal funding is withheld because of it (Kaffer, 2017). These conversations are not without complication, and usually last for many years (Hullett, 2013).

The Dowagiac Chieftains mascot was chosen because of the unique perspective that emerges. Because of their communication with the area Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians,
they serve as an example to other schools that are considering their American Indian mascots. However, because of their complacency, they seem to need a reminder to reevaluate their use of an American Indian mascot. That said, context and history matter, and above all, the voices of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians tribal members should be heard.

The Dowagiac Chieftains mascot was also chosen as an example of how a mascot can seep into other parts of school and community life. Many of the examples provided are not related to athletics, and have strong impacts on the lives of the students and citizens of Dowagiac.

The Dowagiac Chieftains mascot was also chosen because of my personal experience, growing up in Dowagiac and attending Dowagiac Union Schools. I grew up sitting “Indian style,” having “pow wows” with my friends when we talked as a group, learning that American Indians in the area once lived in wigwams made out of birch tree bark, and joking about doing a “rain dance” anytime there was a draught in the summer. I cheered on the Chieftains when they made a touchdown, tapped my mouth with an open hand while vocalizing to represent the singing of all American Indians, and said, “How!” when imitating an American Indian greeting. While I have left Dowagiac, and moved on to have diverse experiences in life and education, I have empathy for the students of Dowagiac Union Schools. As an adult educator, I have come to realize that these ideas about American Indian people and culture and more were supported by the media I viewed, the social experiences I participated in, and the education that I received. I believe that to continue these practices now, including the use of American Indian mascots, is cultural appropriation, and perpetuates White supremacy. We must do better for the youth of today. As educators, we must work to interrupt harmful stereotyping that dehumanizes our students, we must closely monitor our language and actions for biases that have
been socialized into our practices, and we must always be thinking critically and taking action to battle oppression. By doing this, more inclusive and equitable educational experiences are created for our students, and racist systems of harm and hate are disrupted. Change takes time and commitment, but our students deserve to have an equitable experience that provides them with opportunities for their future.

A Note Regarding Language

In this research, language was chosen intentionally. The phrase “American Indian-appropriated” was used rather than “American Indian-inspired” in an effort to make clear that imagery and culture was not being honored, but rather stolen and misused. The word “generic” was used to describe depictions of American Indian people that did not represent a specific person, or even a specific culture, but a general idea of “Indianness.”

A Word on My Whiteness and This Research

Historians are the keepers of our collective truths and in writing the story of the United States, many experiences of people of color have gone unacknowledged (Swartz, 2007). History curricula in public schools is not inclusive (Journell, 2008). While some may mention a few notable icons, primarily during Black History Month, most often people of color are noted as victims of oppression who overcame great injustice. While those stories are relevant, they are exploitive rather than being celebrations of racial excellence, and they discuss injustice as a relic of our past.

During my own thirteen years of public schooling in White rural Michigan, I remember a handful of lessons that focused on the contributions of prominent African American people, and other lessons about the Native American people that once lived in the area, and still did, though that was not mentioned. I also remember reading fictional stories about the experiences of people
held in slavery, that I now know were written by White men. I did not learn about people of color who were scientists, mathematicians, artists, musicians, writers or business people. I did not learn about the frequent devaluing of African American, Native American and Latinx culture that is then appropriated by White people as their own. I did not learn about White supremacy or systemic racism. I also did not know that I was not learning these things.

My family has a strong regard for history. My father collects antiques, and is a historian focusing on a few regional topics. My mother is a genealogist and has studied our family’s personal histories back many generations. In college I worked at a local history museum.

Through these experiences I have learned that history happens globally and also personally. All historical realities have value, and that a choice to disregard is a choice to erase. People are given the opportunity to learn from mistakes, make effective change, and grow when reflecting on histories. When erasure happens, people and the societies that they live in do not grow in a positive and sustainable fashion. Erasure is damaging not only in our effort to effect change, but also on our collective moral psyche.

I am coming to understand my own privilege. I believe that anti-racism work is of utmost importance. I am aware of the complicated nature of my Whiteness and a focus on a group of people who have historically been oppressed by systems created by people of my race. I continue to carefully examine my own biases, look to experts in the communities of people of color and their broad body of work, and listen more than I speak. I think that it is because of this last point that I cautiously offer this work. My work is not meant to stand as an example of my own expertise, rather as an opportunity to center the experiences and work of those who have frequently gone unacknowledged and ignored. I am someone who is taking advantage of my White privilege in order to honor a history that, in large part, has been ignored in our societal
story. As a researcher, I have a responsibility to create social change (Siddle Walker, 1999). As a Critical Race Theorist who is White, I, like others before me, am aware and committed to the deconstruction of White supremacy (Bell, 1995).

**BACKGROUND**

**The Problem with American Indian Mascots**

Aside from animals, American Indians are the most commonly used mascot in the United States (Davis, 2002). This is problematic as a group of people are reduced to being less than human. No other group of people experiences this unique problem in mascot representation (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). Because sports arenas of all kinds are generally designed by and for White audiences, American Indian mascots are created as less than authentic caricatures by dominant White culture. The narrative given is often one of singular culture, that may seem like an honorific to some, but is problematic in its consequences (Davis, 2002). Many people, including scholar Pewewardy (2001), believe that the use of American Indian mascots and nicknames is discrimination. They are a symptom of the racism that has been used to oppress people in the United States since Europeans arrived five hundred years ago. Places of education and professional sports teams have been using imagery appropriated from American Indian cultures negatively for more than one hundred years.

**Stereotypes.** To more fully understand the problem with American Indian mascots and nicknames, one needs to understand the stereotypes that are depicted by the mascots (Davis, 2002). Two of the stereotypes that are depicted by mascots are the “bloodthirsty savage,” and the “noble savage” (Davis, 2002, p. 11). Others are the “drunken Native, dancing Native, and sexual Native” (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001, p. 8). These stereotypes reduce an American Indian
person to either being aggressive and brave, or a primitive, part of the natural world (Davis 2002), and create single, dehumanized stories and flattened understandings (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). These stereotypes depict American Indian people as part of the past, and not as contemporaries (Fisher, 2001). They create inaccurate and inappropriate understandings of a people’s culture, history, and modern day life (Davis, 2002; Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001; King & Springwood, 2001). They even create ideas about physical attributes of American Indian people, including large noses, high cheekbones, and a strong brow and jawline (Landreth, 2001). Complex identities and important, sometimes sacred, artifacts and rituals are reduced to clichés and props. Most American people have been so immersed in this understanding of American Indians through media, inaccurate histories, and childhood games for most of their lives, that they don’t understand these depictions as racist (Davis & Rau, 2001). However, these stereotypes perpetuate the deculturalization and dehumanization of American Indians (Pewewardy, 2001).

Institutions with sports teams rely on traditions like mascots and nicknames to bring together the community and create a commonality among them (Fisher, 2001). Fans report that when they have a positive expectation for the team’s performance, they will not only spend more money to support them, they also believe that the team and fans possess special traits, and that what the team and fans do is right, whether there is merit or not (Pewewardy, 2001). However, fans that believe that their truth is the absolute truth, over those who belong to the relevant culture, are perpetuating negative cultural images. While some might see the fight between one team’s Brave and another team’s Lion as playful, it is a symbol of violence (King & Springwood, 2001). Instead of creating opportunities for respect and empathy, these moments are harmful and injurious. While American Indian people have been and continue to be marginalized through actions of the US government and its agencies, as well as the church, they
are also marginalized through the language that is used to describe them and their experiences (Pewewardy, 2001).

Mascots that depict American Indians or their imagery have evolved over time to reflect each era’s romantic and racist understanding of American Indian people and culture (Pewewardy, 2001). However, what has not changed is that these mascots and nicknames are full of complexity, and conversations about them have often been fraught with conflict (King, 2001). No matter the intent of the institution, the effect is the same: American Indian mascots further marginalize American Indian people (Springwood & King, 2001).

**Romanticization of American Indian Mascots.** Due to the European and Euro-American conquest and colonization in the United States, White people have the power to create their own understanding of American Indians and their cultures (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). American Indian spirituality has been portrayed as unattainable to the average person, and American Indians are viewed as icons of the past. The Euro-American perception that American Indians were aggressive and violent does not take into account the violence, genocide and oppression that has been enacted upon them (Davis, 2002).

The Euro-American romanticization of American Indians paints a picture of American Indians as the “good bad guy” (Landreth, 2001, p. 61). The understanding is that they were a people who fought valiantly, and were heroes in their eventual forfeiture of land, and willingness to become civilized under the direction of White people (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001; Landreth, 2001; LeBeau, 2001; Pewewardy, 2001). Those that died, did so honorably because of Manifest Destiny (LeBeau, 2001), and scalping in particular has been misappropriated to represent the aggressive nature of American Indians (Fisher, 2001). These misrepresentations ignore the fact that American Indians were engaging in warfare to protect their families and
homes, and were often not willing participants in their assimilation to White culture (Landreth, 2001). Euro-Americans use this understanding of successful assimilation to celebrate national identity and to promote patriotism, while actual histories are ignored, and modern day American Indians are dismissed as inauthentic (LeBeau, 2001). These myths perpetuate social hierarchy (Staurowsky, 2001).

Often fans of a team with an American Indian mascot or nickname will believe that theirs is authentic and honoring, while other teams’ are racist (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). However, the fans and institution cannot control how others represent their mascot in media or as opponents, and they are not realizing that the mascot was created for purposes of entertainment (Davis, 2002; Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). The false identities that are created become symbols used for buying and selling an image, rather than truly honoring an identity. They become icons of our country’s obsession with capitalism, as fans are committed to the brand associated with them (Staurowsky, 2001). Mascots engaging in war whoops, leading fans in a tomahawk chop, are used to excite and incite fans, in order to encourage the athletes to succeed in their domination (Landreth, 2001). When owners of local businesses see the success of the sports teams and the camaraderie that has been created in the community, they also often begin to use motifs appropriated from American Indian culture to show their connection to the community (King, 2001). However, American Indians would not include their sacred objects and rituals in a sporting event for entertainment purposes, to sell cars or health insurance, or encourage people to eat at a particular restaurant as it creates a mockery of their cultural identity (Pewewardy, 2001).

Yet schools and other institutions cling to their American Indian mascots. There is a supernatural belief that the wisdom and spirituality of American Indian people will somehow be
transferred to the team’s White fans, and they will become elite with the addition of these powers to their Whiteness (Fisher, 2001). This belief is informed by their social understanding of class, race, and power (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). Using White supremacy as their basis for understanding the world, they believe that by combining their superior intellect with the spirituality of the American Indian people, the White fans become the natural inheritors of the land (LeBeau, 2001). This mindset in which land, knowledge, and spirituality can be colonized is also a mindset of arrogance and complacency (Pewewardy, 2001.)

**Difficult Removal.** The insistence to maintain American Indian nicknames and mascots shows more about the non-American Indian people involved than the American Indian cultures and histories they claim to represent and honor (Springwood & King, 2001). When challenged to change an American Indian mascot, fans and administration often dig in their heels. Some respond with a desire to retain the mascot because of the traditions that have been created around the mascot (Davis, 2002). Some respond that they are not intending to cause harm, and that their intent is what is important. Many institutions fear that by changing the mascot, the relationship between students and alumni will be damaged and the school will experience an identity crisis (Fisher, 2001). Others insist that the name is being used to honor American Indian people and culture, however, crude logos, non-Native people in Redface, and chants do not honor American Indian people (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001), nor do they preserve the past (Landreth, 2001). Instead, Euro-Americans are honoring their own “conquering and taming” of American Indian people (Landreth, 2001, p. 60; Davis & Rau, 2001). Because of the intertwining of Euro-American identity and the understood American Indian identity, Euro-Americans feel that their own identities are challenged when American Indian mascots are challenged (Davis & Rau, 2001).
In 2002, Davis wrote that there was a small percentage of people working to remove American Indian mascots from sports teams in the United States. While there continues to be support for removal, most Americans are confused or angered by the racial undertones involved in the conversation about American Indian mascot use (Staurowsky, 2001). When the American Indian mascot is made in the image of a real, historical person, communities see the mascot as legitimate. A connection to the past is created, and whether the person whom the mascot represents actually existed or not, is inconsequential (Prochaska, 2001). A form of remembering the past, “imperialist nostalgia” (Prochaska, 2001, p. 165), exists in which people feel the need to honor a past they themselves have destroyed. Euro-Americans find it difficult to understand an existence of American Indian people before contact with White colonists, and believe that they have disappeared since first contact. Their adherence to false histories and traditions bind them together in a shared community. However, in doing this, they are exerting their power, and silencing others. By imagining an American Indian mascot that is on the same side as the Euro-American students, White people subconsciously rationalize that the historical trauma that was enacted has been forgiven. The cultural appropriation of today is directly connected to the colonization, forced migration, and genocide of the past.

**Creating Social Change.** American Indian people should have the power to state who they are and how they should be depicted (Davis, 2002). However, because American Indian people represent between one and two percent of the US population, and they have historically experienced systemic oppression, they are often discounted and not included in the conversation. Even though most pan-ethnic American Indian organizations have made statements against the use of American Indian mascots (Davis, 2002), the use of the mascots continues.
But some American Indian people and their allies are pushing back, and American Indian people are continuing efforts to reclaim their heritage (King, 2001). Stereotypes and colonial images have been addressed, and through the efforts of litigation, petition, and protest more mascots have been contested in recent years (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). American Indian organizations have largely focused their work on the most offensive moments and usages (Prochaska, 2001), and this had led some proponents of the mascots to believe that some American Indian mascots are more authentic than others, and that most opponents of American Indian mascots are people from outside the community that don’t understand, or are political activists who are working to create political conflict (Pewewardy, 2001). In effect, the experiences of the oppressed and their claims of appropriation are ignored and replaced with the dominant White ideals of honor and dignity (King, 2001).

Opponents of American Indian mascots often find it hard to get traction in the media. Sports journalism does not hold the same ideals of fair and just as news journalism (Rosenstein, 2001). Some news agencies even include the mascot logo as part of their own logo to show their commitment to the team, and therefore, the community. The writers are often proud fans of the local sports teams, and sometimes even act as event emcees for special events. When an American Indian mascot is challenged, it is unlikely that the sports media will publicize the conflict for fear of losing access to players, and the devotion of fans.

Yet some schools and institutions are hearing the cries for change. Minnesota has worked to remove American Indian mascots from their public schools (Davis, 2002). Other schools have made the decision to forbid play against teams with American Indian mascots (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). Collegiately, many universities have altered their mascots, while other colleges and universities have retired them all together. The Portland newspaper Oregonian has
opted not to print stories about teams with derogatory nicknames and mascots. Some schools have responded by softening renderings, dropping mascots but retaining names, or looking for American Indian support for authenticity (King, 2001).

As the conversation has continued, it has become more complicated. As argued, many American Indian people and organizations understand the American Indian mascots and nicknames to be racist. However, other American Indian people and organizations embrace them (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001). Just as American Indian cultures should not be boiled down to a singular experience represented in the mascots, their experiences of the mascots vary greatly (Springwood, 2001). Because of this conflict and diversity of opinion, people have been pitted against one another, and some have been understood as being more authentic than others. And with the approval of a handful of American Indian people, proponents of American Indian mascots feel justified to move forward with the continued use (King & Springwood, 2001; Springwood, 2001).

Existing as sovereign nations, bands must carefully negotiate the politics involved in the conversations (King & Springwood, 2001). These conversations have sometimes harkened back to the creation of treaties of the past in which only a few people are consulted under less than ideal circumstances. Alliances complicate the situation and the existence of power and how it affects the conversation must be considered (Springwood, 2001).

While some American Indian people support the use of American Indian mascots and have profited from them, there are still social forces at play (Davis, 2002). Due to their socialization through oppressive systems, some American Indian people experience internalized racial oppression (Pewewardy, 2001). It is not helpful to think of these people as having been duped, rather acknowledge that White supremacy affects us all (Springwood, 2001).
Even after removal of the mascots, the effects of the American Indian mascots persist. Cultural change is slow, and can take multiple decades (Davis & Rau, 2001). Traditions continue in large and small ways (Machamer, 2001). When a community is not allowed a clean break, and a mascot is softened and scaled back, the community cultural healing is even slower. Communities come to understand that the mascot or nickname in its new form are no longer harmful, though this is not true.

The Effects of American Indian Mascots on Youth. American Indian mascots have particularly harmful effects on American Indian youth. In 1999, the Society of Indian Psychologists called for an end to American Indian mascots because of the emotional harm enacted on young American Indian people (Springwood & King, 2001). American Indian youth experience images in which their elders are mocked and dehumanized, and they begin to understand that they are violent people (Harjo, 2001). Scholars and American Indian organizations argue that by continuing to use the mascots, negative self-concepts and self-esteem are developed. The racial stereotypes create feelings of shame and inferiority (Pewewardy, 2001). This can lead to alcoholism, suicide, depression, health problems, poverty, and other social problems (Davis, 2002; Springwood & King, 2001). This can also lead to lower academic achievement in schools (Pewewardy, 2001), as students feel uncomfortable, not committed to the learning environment, and unwilling to participate in an environment that harms them (Davis, 2002). The schools are responsible for enacting “racial harassment” (Davis & Rau, 2001, p. 235) by maintaining their racialized mascots and images.

American Indian mascots do not just affect American Indian students, they also affect non-American Indian students (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001; Pewewardy, 2001). Non-American Indian people begin to understand that American Indian people are aggressive, silly
and noble, but never as real or contemporary. They understand the stories of the past from the traditions that they see on the field rather than from the people whose ancestors lived it (Staurowsky, 2001). As early as preschool, children begin to understand stereotypes about race and culture, and attitudes toward oppressed minorities (Pewewardy, 2001). Even though accurate depictions exist, misinformation through media prevails. The celebration of American Indian mascots continues the spread of misinformation (King, 2001). As long as people continue to contribute to a capitalist system by supporting the mascots, young people will receive these demeaning images (Eckert, 2001).

Pewewardy said, “The issue of Native American mascots is an issue of educational equity” (2001, p. 257). He says that equity is important in creating educational excellence, and calls on teachers and other educators to be culturally responsive and create powerful teaching moments to combat the images that most young people receive. By doing this, educators will help to eliminate racism in schools, and students can unlearn stereotypes. Instead, by continuing to use American Indian mascots and nicknames for athletics, young people are learning “that sports culture is an acceptable use of racism” (Pewewardy, 2001, p. 270).

A Brief History of Dowagiac

It is impossible to tell the story of the Dowagiac Chieftains without first discussing the population of American Indians that occupied the area, and continue to do so, the creation of the town, and its major manufacturing industry.

History of the Potawatomi. Creation stories vary among the Potawatomi people (History, n.d.). Some believe that the Potawatomi people have always lived in the Great Lakes Region. Others believe that the three tribes organized as the Three Fires Confederacy, the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi, migrated to the area from the East coast. When the
Potawatomi people came to the area, they gave the area and the river its name (Bayles & Milner, 1996). The area was very well populated, with more than 25 Indian burial mounds found in the county (Vanderburg, 1982).

The Potawatomi people called the area and the river Ndowagayuk (Haines, 1994), meaning that the area and the river were good for foraging, and that there was an abundance of materials good for food, medicine, and garment making (Vanderburg, 1982; Arseneau & Thompson, 2005) (Figure 1).

![Map of Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Service Area](image)

*Figure 1. Map of Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Service Area (Mno-Bmadsen, 2017).*

Though few photos exist that document the Potawatomi people that lived in the area at the time, there were three different bands comprised of nearly 500 people living in a dozen villages in the area (Vanderburg, 1982) when the first Euro-Americans settled in the area in the early 19th century (Bayles & Milner, 1996).
In the 1800s, The United States government began to colonize the area through treaties, including the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 (McKinney, 1998). This treaty ceded much of the land between Detroit and Chicago, with the exception of about twenty-two square miles that were reserved for American Indian people living in the area. Because of the 1830 Indian Removal Act, American Indians were directed to relocate west of the Mississippi River (History, n.d.). In 1833, the Treaty of Chicago ensured the removal of the Potawatomi people from their homes. By 1837, most Potawatomi people were forced to leave. Some attempted to flee to northern Michigan and Canada, while others hid in mostly uninhabitable areas like swamps and dense forests. Those that left faced an incredible difficult journey. Ten percent of those on the perilous journey died. This federally forced migration came to be known as the Potawatomi Trail of Death as a result.

However, because of a successfully negotiated amendment to a second Treaty of Chicago in 1833 by Leopold Pokagon, a tribal leader, a small group of Neshnabek people were allowed to remain at their settlement in the area (Mumford, 2011). Pokagon promised the United States government that his people would abstain from alcohol and convert to Catholicism in order to stay. At the time, Pokagon and his people lived in what is now Niles, Michigan (History, n.d.). The terms of the amendment stated that the group was to move to the L’Arbre Croche area within five years. However, the 1836 Treaty of Washington between the Ottawa and Chippewa people and the United States government ceded much of the land. Pokagon and his people no longer had a place to move to. Using money gained from treaty negotiations, Pokagon purchased a piece of land in Silver Creek Township near Dowagiac, Michigan. Soon after this move, Brigadier General Hugh Brady attempted to force the Band to leave, however a written judgment from a Michigan Supreme Court justice allowed them to remain on their land.
In 1934, the Wheeler-Howard Act, or the Indian Reorganization Act, was passed by the United States government in order to provide tribes with resources to reestablish tribal governments (History, n.d.). However, limited funding was designated for the enforcement of this act, and only one Indian tribe in the lower peninsula of Michigan benefitted from the Act (the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe).

**Potawatomi Culture.** Some Potawatomi people say that at the beginning of creation, the sound of a rattle could be heard (Music, n.d.). Music was considered a form of prayer, and was played at the beginning of most important events, and to mark special moments in the lives of the people. Traditional art, like basket making, stone and wood carving, and pottery, used materials found in nature (Art, n.d.). Some of these items were made for everyday use, while others were made for celebration. Special clothing and items used in spiritual ceremonies used beading and quillwork. Dance was also used for social interaction, mediation, and celebration. The Potawatomi people’s native language was called Neshnabemowen, the language of the original people (Language, n.d.).

Groups of families made up clans (Art, n.d.). The clan worked together to raise children to adulthood to be contributing members of the tribe. Each clan had an important role in the community, and when each clan did its part, the tribal nation was strong. While one clan was responsible for security, mediation and medicine, another was responsible for managing natural resources. Other clans were tasked with being intellectual and spiritual leaders, and were responsible for long term projects.

The Potawatomi people followed the Seven Grandfather teachings of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility, and Family (Traditions, n.d.). Their traditions honor the Four Directions of East, South, North and West (Four Directions, n.d.). Each direction has
special meaning to the Potawatomi people. East is looked to for guidance and leadership, South is honored for physical strength and vigor, West teaches the Potawatomi people to consider their inner thoughts, and North is a place of wisdom. Tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass were used in prayer and ritual (*Medicines*, n.d.).

**European Colonization.** William Renestan was the first White settler to come to the area in 1830 (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). In 1840 the area’s first school created by Euro-American settlers opened its doors (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005), though there were just four residences in the area (Bayles & Milner, 1996). It was the first tax-based school to open west of Detroit. The school only lasted a few years, and was closed when parents objected to the curriculum, claiming it was teaching immoral behavior (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). Soon though, the high school reopened due to increased demand for education from residents.

When the Michigan Central Railroad Company came through the area in the mid-19th century, building a railroad to connect Detroit and Chicago, the name “Dowagia” was first written, and the area was officially named (Vanderburg, 1982). This happened despite the fact that the area that the Potawatomi people called Ndowagayuk was actually some fourteen miles away, closer to the area that is now called Niles (K. Malott, personal communication, October 4, 2017). In 1848, the village of Dowagiac was officially recognized and recorded (Bayles & Milner, 1996). Ten years later the town was incorporated (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). At the time of incorporation, there were many country schools in the area (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005), and in 1860, Dowagiac Union School was built, replacing an earlier high school that burned (Bayles & Milner, 1996).

**PD Beckwith, the Round Oak Stove Company, and Education in Dowagiac.** In 1825, Philo D. Beckwith was born in Eagle, New York (Bayles & Milner, 1996). After he married
Catherine Scott, the couple moved to Michigan, then Indiana, and finally settled in Dowagiac, Michigan in 1853. Beckwith was a farming equipment manufacturer by trade, and he made a name for himself in Dowagiac in 1854 when he forged a cannon for the town’s 4th of July celebration (Bayles & Milner, 1996). In 1867, Beckwith built his first stove to heat his foundry, and in 1869 he was granted his first patent for a Round Oak stove. In 1871, Beckwith officially started manufacturing and selling the stoves through the inception of the Round Oak Stove Company (Haines, 1994). Beckwith was a thoughtful and shrewd marketer, and placed his first two stoves in high traffic areas: the Niles Michigan Central Railroad Station and a Dowagiac barbershop. It was the first heater that was able to maintain a fire overnight, and it became a sought after stove.

Though many believed that the stove was named Round Oak because it was big enough to hold a full section of an oak tree (Bayles & Milner, 1996), and others believed that it was named this because of its round shape and the fact that oak was the wood most used in the area (Haines, 1994), it was actually named after an English company called Round Oak Works. The business had become well known for treating their employees well, and Beckwith wanted to emulate this practice. Beckwith became known and well-liked for this practice, and was elected Village President, and later became mayor.

Beckwith worked to not only keep his employees happy at work, but also to improve the city at large (Haines, 1994). He gave money to beautify the landscape with the addition of parks and trees. Round Oak sponsored city baseball teams well into the 1900s. Beckwith’s love of music, dancing, and theater, translated to his support of Round Oak’s band, called “Beardless Band” because of its young members, and they became popular in the region (Vanderburg, 1982). He built the Ladies Library, and gifted the building to them. He regularly supported
churches, lectures and concerts in the area. The company built an entertainment hall that housed many community events (Haines, 1994).

Beckwith also supported the schools in the area. He served as a school board member (Bayles & Milner, 1996), and gave financial support (Cook & Cook, 2001). His influence could be felt by each student as Round Oak stoves heated area schools (Haines, 1994). His daughter, Della Beckwith, attended Dowagiac Union School. Della’s son, Archie Gardner, also attended Dowagiac Union School while he lived with his grandfather (Vanderburg, 1982).

In 1889, PD Beckwith died (Haines, 1994; Bayles & Millner, 1996). In Round Oak - A good thing from Doe-Wah-Jack, local historian Haines (1994) quotes a Republican newspaper article written just after Beckwith’s death:

In the death of P.D. Beckwith, this city sustains a very serious loss which she keenly feels. He was her most prominent and public spirited citizen. His name was a synonym for energy and public enterprise. He was always at the front, ready to do whatever would redound in the city's benefit, regardless of the cost to him. His reputation had extended beyond the confines of his own county, and all over the States. It was known that Dowagiac possessed a prize and a marvel - a man who began with absolute poverty and by his own persistent industry had carved out a handsome fortune and yet he spent the wealth with a lavish hand wherever it would beautify or benefit this city. The possession of such a citizen made Dowagiac the envy of her sister cities. (p. 103)

After Beckwith’s death, Fred Lee, Beckwith’s son-in-law became president of PD Beckwith Estates, Round Oak Stove’s parent company (Bayles & Milner, 1996; Arseneau & Thompson, 2005).

By being highly involved in the area’s utilities, Round Oak continued to encourage growth and development in Dowagiac after Beckwith’s death. In 1890, telephones made their way to Dowagiac (Vanderburg, 1982). Though only a few lines were installed Dowagiac, the offices of Round Oak and Lee’s residence were among those wired. The Beckwith Estate took over the management of the city’s electrical plant in 1893, and Lee purchased the local gas company
(Cook & Cook, 2001). Lee Bank and Round Oak were closely related, with Lee Bank being Round Oak’s primary banking institution.

The Round Oak Stove Company became an integral part of Dowagiac’s success as a city. (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). It was the largest employer in the county, and employees benefitted from high pay, leave, and sick pay (Haines, 1994). It was so integrated into the culture of the town, that people even set their watches to Round Oak’s whistle that signaled various times of the day (Vanderburg, 1982.) At its height, twenty-five percent of the city’s population was employed by Round Oak, with close to fifty percent of the men in the city working for the company (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). Several generations of families worked for the company (Vanderburg, 1982). It became the largest stove manufacturer in the country, with “Round Oak,” “PD Beckwith,” and “Dowagiac” becoming household names (Haines, 1994). Round Oak Stoves were sold all over the world, and Dowagiac became known as the *Furnace City of America* (Vanderburg, 1982).

Continuing her father’s legacy of a commitment to local education, Kate (Beckwith) Le, initiated and personally financed Dowagiac’s kindergarten program (Haines, 1994). She paid the teachers, bought supplies, and was the President of the Kindergarten and Educational Association (Cook & Cook, 2001). After her death, Fred Lee gave $1,000 to the kindergarten program to honor his late wife (Haines, 1994).

In 1895, a Round Oak advertising pamphlet called, *A Good Thing from Doe-Wah-Jack* was created (Haines, 1994). By 1900, Chief Doe-Wah-Jack, a fictionalized Potawatomi Indian, was introduced as a marketing strategy for Round Oak stoves (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). Chief Doe-Wah-Jack appeared on a large array of marketing materials including, matchbooks, spoons, plates, mugs, catalogs, calendars, trays, posters, postcards, trade cards, and fliers.
One theory about Chief Doe-Wah-Jack’s invention is that with the advent of the telephone, customers needed a phonetic spelling of Dowagiac so that they could connect more easily with Round Oak’s offices. Chief Doe-Wah-Jack offered this, while playing into the area’s American Indian roots.

Round Oak also capitalized on American Indian-appropriated imagery through text. For example, accompanying a series of six stickpins with images of American Indians is a card that says, “The government has taken the Indian off your “scent,” here he is, still on your trail for the Round Oak folks who make stoves, ranges and furnaces that are the best” (Haines, 1994, p. 157).

In 1900, an image of Chief Doe-Wah-Jack was first put in a place of honor, atop the Round Oak stove (Haines, 1994). Haines (1994) reports that the Republican called Chief Doe-Wah-Jack “the finest and most appropriate trade mark used by any of the stove fraternity” (p. 155). Though it is difficult to ascertain what journalists of the time understood about the appropriateness of a company owned by White businessmen using an image of an American Indian to sell stoves, it is clear that at least one journalist for the Republican thought of the region as prime for colonization prior to Euro-American settlement by describing it as “uninhabited save the Indian and the black bear” (Haines, 1994, p. 166). By 1903, a full figure Chief Doe-Wah-Jack finial appeared (Arseneau & Dixon, 2002) (Figure 2). This same year, Round Oak released the Chief Steel range, broadening the appliances that they offered (Haines, 1994). By 1906, a trademark was issued for Chief Doe-Wah-Jack (Haines, 1994), and Chief Doe-Wah-Jack was used as a character and logo broadly throughout Round Oak’s marketing until 1947 (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). The image of the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack character became as recognizable as the Indian on a nickel (Cook & Cook, 2001).
Figure 2. Chief Doe-Wah-Jack finial (Round Oak Stove Company, 1906).

Though Round Oak tried a few other marketing icons, including the four maidens and the Dutch Lad, they seldom appeared without the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack (Haines, 1994). In 1904, the Dutch Lad appeared in a series of story ads as the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack invited him to Dowagiac and gave him a tour of the factory. In the 1907-1908 calendar, both the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack and the Dutch Lad appear. However, Round Oak ran into a trademark issue with the Dutch Boy Paint, and were forbidden from continuing use of the Dutch Lad (Cook & Cook, 2001). Harry Mosher, Round Oak’s Vice President and General Manager maintained that it was the paint company that stole the Dutch Lad from Round Oak long after Round Oak was forced to stop use.
Fred Lee was very interested in American Indian culture and artifacts, and was able to support his interest through his personal fortune. In 1905, Lee purchased a log cabin, complete with a collection of artifacts, and had the entire cabin and collection moved to his property in Dowagiac from Eau Claire, Michigan (Cook & Cook, 2001).

By 1908, PD Beckwith Estates was doing over one million dollars in sales (Bayles & Milner, 1996). Businessmen from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek put in offers to move Round Oak’s production to their cities, but the company stayed put, dedicated to Dowagiac (Haines, 1994). By 1915, PD Beckwith Estates was contributing one-third of all the taxes paid in Cass County (Cook & Cook, 2001).

As Beckwith Estates continued to grow, so did its influence in the community. In 1904, a city baseball team named themselves the Doe-Wah-Jacks, as Round Oak marketing represented the city as much as it represented the stoves (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). Other businesses also began to capitalize by using American Indian-appropriated imagery. The Lee Bank’s checks included a drawing of the head of an American Indian in a full headdress (Cook & Cook, 2001). Dowagiac Manufacturing Company used the phonetic spelling D-Waugh-Jack in advertising, claiming that it was not in an effort to copy Round Oak’s Doe-Wah-Jack (Haines, 1994). The high school’s basketball team played their games at Round Oak Hall (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005), and school dances were held there also (The Chinaman, 1910). Beckwith Estates owned the baseball diamond where city baseball games were played. After PD Beckwith’s death, the Beckwith Theater was erected and called the “Finest Theater in America” (Haines, 1994, p. 126). This space was used broadly, and high school events like plays and commencement took place there (Vanderburg, 1982). The Beckwith Building was home to the Dowagiac Post Office and Dowagiac City Council Chambers, and many Round Oak administrators were also on city
council (Cook & Cook, 2001). The Beckwith Building also housed the Wigwam Restaurant which depicted American Indian-appropriated designs, used by local educators to teach about area American Indians. The Hotel Doe-Wah-Jack was opened in 1912, and operated for eight years (Arseneau & Thompson, 2005). In 1913, Round Oak gave Dowagiac High School’s domestic science department new ranges (Haines, 1994), and the 1914 yearbook included a page describing Round Oak’s history, along with a cheer that featured Round Oak. Fred Lee personally donated a house that became the city’s hospital.

The use of American Indian-appropriated imagery and text continued. Round Oak ads and paper materials mentioned totem poles (Haines, 1994), catalogs showed drawings of teepees, trade cards depicted feathers, headdresses, canoes, arrows, fires, and horses, in-store cardboard displays included a peace pipe and moccasins, and images of Chief Doe-Wah-Jack appeared on the Round Oak Concert Band’s bass drum (Arseneau & Thompson). Chief Doe-Wah-Jack appeared on ash trays, and appeared in story ads depicting the tale of his wedding trip (Haines, 1994). American Indian-appropriated imagery was not always appropriated from Potawatomi images. For instance, children were rewarded for helping to sell Round Oak stoves with what was described as an Ozark Indian outfit for boys, and a Cherokee Squaw suit for girls (Haines, 1994). Children could also play with a cut-out and stand-up set showing a teepee, brown skinned people in full headdresses, dancing around a fire, shooting arrows at buffalo, sitting with legs crossed in the lotus position, and rowing a canoe.

Round Oak’s products broadened and continued to include American Indian-appropriated names including the Chieftain Circulator and Warrior Circulator in the 1929-1930 catalog (Arseneau & Dixon, 2002), and the 1941 products Aztec Square, Ottawa Cabinet Range & Ottawa Square
Range, Osage Square & Osage Cabinet, Pocahontas, Cheyenne, Oneida, Delaware, Oneonta, Sioux, Papoose, Pueblo, Hiawatha, Miami, Seminole, and Huron (Haines, 1994).

In 1947, PD Beckwith Estates sold Round Oak to the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation due to dwindling leadership and financial difficulties (Bayles & Milner, 1996). In 1953, the Dowagiac foundry was closed, and the Round Oak name and stove building company was sold to Peerless Corporation in Indiana (Haines, 1994). Round Oak stoves were made in Indiana until 1967, when production ended. Though some aspects of Round Oak have disappeared from the area for good, the use of the phrase Doe-Wah-Jack and American Indian-appropriated imagery lives on through other businesses and governmental agency, especially the public school system.

**1990 Resolution**

In October of 1988, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights issued a report on the use of American Indian mascots and nicknames in Michigan educational institutions (LeBeau, 2001). It called for an immediate survey of American Indian mascots and nicknames, and recommended that schools discontinue their use because of the harmful racial stereotyping involved in using American Indian-appropriated imagery in educational spaces. If the schools continued their use of the mascots after one year, formal investigations were to occur as violations of the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act. At least four Michigan colleges, 60 high schools, and 33 junior and middle schools were challenged by this ruling (Kovanis, 1988). School administrators in the state were sensitive to the issue at hand, and also recognized how expensive it could be to change mascots. In response, an editorial was written in the Dowagiac News asking, “What would we be if not Chieftains?” (Eby, 1988). Eby conceded that while some American Indian mascots were offensive and demeaning, others, like the Dowagiac Chieftain, honored the heritage of the local indigenous people, and the Round Oak Stove Company’s Chief Doe-Wah-Jack. Eby (1988)
wrote, “Perhaps Native Americans here are proud of the Dowagiac Chieftains. Maybe the state formulated this report without asking for opinions around here” (p. 5).

In 1990, a resolution was announced between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and Dowagiac Union Schools. According to Judy Winchester, who was on the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Tribal Council at the time, the school board approached the tribe (personal communication, October 30, 2017) in March of 1990 (Crandall, 1990). Due to local and national conversations regarding the use of American Indian mascots at the time, the school system sought a relationship with the tribe to ensure that they were being “politically correct” (J. Winchester, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The school board and the tribe already had a good relationship, and the school board wanted to be sure to maintain that. Larry Crandall, the assistant superintendent of Dowagiac Union Schools at the time, was the tribe’s main contact.

There was no need for compromise, as the school board and the tribe had the same goals in mind (J. Winchester, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The main objectives were to preserve the “Dowagiac Chieftain” nickname, while honoring local Potawatomi heritage (Crandall, 1990). There was a desire to improve the public consciousness and increase awareness among both students and citizens of the area (Board of Education, 1990). Also, the school had never had an official logo, and many depictions had been used in the 62 years since the Chieftain name was chosen (Crandall, 1990). Both organizations wanted an accurate, single logo for use by the school.

A resolution was reached and announced to the community as a sign of mutual cooperation and respect for future generations (Crandall, 1990). The terms of the resolution follow:
1. Dowagiac Union Schools and the Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council will jointly develop appropriate policies and procedures which will govern the use of the Potawatomi Indian logo and "Chieftain" nickname.

2. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council and Dowagiac Union Schools will develop a regular series of Potawatomi Indian displays, art shows, and/or other appropriate programs and presentations for the benefit of the Dowagiac Union School's staff, students and the general public.

3. Dowagiac Union School's student handbooks will include information on the history and culture of the area Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

4. Dowagiac Union Schools will develop and infuse into its curriculum appropriate materials accurately depicting the history and culture of the Potawatomi Tribe of Indians.

5. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council and Dowagiac Union Schools will conduct a ceremony the first home football game of the 1990 season acknowledging the mutual efforts and spirit of cooperation between both organizations.

6. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council will provide Dowagiac Union Schools with a list of tribal speakers who will be available to speak at Dowagiac Union Schools on Potawatomi history, customs, culture, heritage, and treaties with the United States. The faculty will be encouraged to use these speakers whenever appropriate.

7. The Dowagiac Union Schools agree to replace all uses of the existing logo with the officially adopted logo by September 1, 1993. If both organizations agree that a serious financial and/or other emergencies exist, this deadline may be extended.

8. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council/Dowagiac Union Schools will apprise local and area vendors of the officially adopted logo and request their cooperation in our efforts.

9. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council/Dowagiac Union Schools will communicate with local and area media our desire to have them refrain from the use of inappropriate, demeaning headlines and slogans, etc.

10. The Potawatomi Pokagon Band Tribal Council agrees that Dowagiac Union Schools may continue to use "CHIEFTAINS" as its nickname.

Ron Mix, an artist and tribal member, was chosen by the Band to create an image that was authentic to the American Indian population of the area. The three feathers in the image represent the Three Fires Confederacy, made up of the Potawatomi (the keepers of the fire), Ottawa, and Chippewa (J. Winchester, personal communication, October 30, 2017). When Mix completed the drawing (Figure 3), it was given to the school board. Local artist Jerry Schlundt was commissioned to paint the image in the center of a large mural in the gymnasium of Dowagiac Union High School as the Senior class of 1991’s gift to the school (Schlundt Art &
Signs, 1990). Schlundt’s original rendering of the mural included his version of Mix’s drawing (Figure 4), but in the end, the mural was painted using the specifications of Mix’s image (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Ron Mix's 1990 painting of the Chieftain logo (Mix, 1990).

Figure 4. Jerry Schlundt's rendering of the mural (Schlundt, 1990).
Each school within the district was required to complete a form that listed any inappropriate images present in the building and on school property, including buses (Dowagiac Chieftain Logos, n.d.). The form was due back to the superintendent by November of 1989, showing that the school was working to make change prior to conversations with the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

Dowagiac Union Schools communicated with three area newspapers and one area radio station regarding the use of derogatory language (Crandall, 1990). Examples of inappropriate language included the use of “scalping” and “warpath.” With this communication also came the new logo and a brief history of the area Potawatomi, and Dowagiac Schools’ use of the “Chieftain” nickname. Though not specified in the resolution, it was also understood that the majorettes would no longer wear the full headdresses, and a generic drum beat would not be played at athletic events (B. Dayson, personal communication, October 17, 2017).

Objects relating to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians were displayed in a glass case at the high school and the local McDonald’s, and a list was created of people who could give presentations (J. Winchester, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The history of the changing of the logo was added in the school handbook, and the school also included the information on their website until just recently when the website underwent reconstruction and rebranding.
METHODOLOGY

Description of Method

This study utilizes an ethnohistorical research methodology. Though originally concerned with researching American Indian communities and their unfair treatment by the United States, particularly as it relates to the colonization of their land (Chaves, 2008; Dobyns, 1972; Fenton, 1966), it has evolved to include examinations of other cultures as well, large and small. Information about people, the ceremonies they participated in, and how they lived, and continue to live, their lives can be cultivated through the use of artifacts and literature found in museums and libraries, as well as through the voices of those with lived experience (Fenton, 1966). It is an interdisciplinary approach, combining ideas from anthropology and history that is used to not only learn about a culture from the past, but also to create solutions for current social problems (Dobyns, 1972).

Ethnohistorical research is qualitative in its exploration of culture, and is quantitative in that it is used to create an inventory of social occurrences (Dobyns, 1972). By examining a cumulation of data (Dobyns, 1972), historical narratives are created that detail not only a society’s way of being, but also its interactions with other groups (Chaves, 2008). An analysis of either a single experience at a given moment, or how experiences have changed over time are achieved. This form of methodology is not without its conflict. In recent years, some scholars have argued that the methodology inherently presents biased and racist depictions of American Indian cultures, and follows a colonialist mindset (Chaves, 2008). However, by applying the methodology to all kinds of cultural historical research, understanding one’s own biases, and working to continue to include the voices of those of the culture, this concern can be abated.
The Research

The micro-society that is examined in this research is the student population of Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School between the years of 1899 and 2014. Made up of mostly Euro-American students, the student body of the time also includes African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latinx students. The interactions between the traditions of the student body and the school’s administration, and the local Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians are examined.

Using 110 Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks from the author’s personal collection, the archives of the Dowagiac Area History Museum, and the historical collection at the Dowagiac District Library, the research seeks to answer the question, “How were American Indian people and their culture historically represented in Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks, specifically surrounding the use of “Chieftains” as a nickname?” Sub-questions included, “How were American Indian students represented in the Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks?” and, “In what ways have depictions of American Indian people and culture changed over the last 119 years?” Seeking answers, the yearbook pages were scanned for words and images that depicted American Indian people and/or cultural elements, both appropriated and representative. The athletics sections, the band and drama sections, and other relevant school clubs were closely examined. Specific last names in the individual and class photographs were also sought as representatives of the American Indian population in the area. These last names were known to the author as common last names in the Potawatomi population in Dowagiac. Lastly, the advertisements in the yearbooks were examined for examples of area businesses that also used American Indian-appropriated imagery in their slogans and logos. After notes of the words and images were collected, the data was transferred into a large grid to track
how often and when particular occurrences were exhibited in the yearbooks. This grid was then analyzed for patterns and consistencies.

The yearbooks ranged from year 1899 to 2014. Years 1900, 1902, 1911, 1986, 1988, and 2000 were not available. Years 1972, 1979, 1982, and 1987 were missing pages. They were missing between two to four pages, with the exception of 1987 which was missing ten pages.

In addition to the yearbooks, other Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School artifacts in the archives of the Dowagiac Area History Museum were reviewed, including eight issues of a student publication called *The Doe-Wah-Jack*, and a few other items that were relevant to the research. The *Potawatomie* folder in the Dowagiac District Library’s vertical file was also examined.

Communication was established with the superintendent of the Dowagiac Union Schools, and during a subsequent meeting, he shared newspaper articles and artifacts relevant to the research. Communication was also established with the historian for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and after a meeting and through snowball sampling, an email connection was made with four other members and/or employees of the tribe. These participants were asked to share their accounts of events relevant to the research. A language specialist, a tribal elder council member and tribal council member, a cultural specialist, and the tribe’s communications director were participants. Information learned from these participants was used to contextualize data found in the artifacts.

**Limitations**

In addition to not having full access to the published yearbooks of Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School, other limitations were discovered. While the yearbooks were usually developed through the work of a group of students with a faculty advisor, the
groups appeared to be fairly homogenous in their racial, ethnic and social makeup. The students were also all upperclassmen at the high school. While perhaps more mature than the other students in the school, they still lacked a level of maturity that might have helped them to be more aware of inclusivity. The experiences depicted in the yearbooks were primarily from this group’s perspective, and though effort appeared to have been made to include others’ perspectives and experiences in some cases, the yearbooks were not full depictions of the events of each year. It also appears that the faculty advisors took little initiative to encourage this kind of action, particularly in the yearbooks prior to 1990.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory was born out of a critical examination of the impact of race in the US legal system (Howard, 2010). Formally developed in the 1980s, its intellectual lineage reaches back to the early 1700s through the work of educators, philosophers and activists like Phyllis Wheatley, Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. DuBois (Sleeter, 2011). Critical Race Theory centers race and the inequalities that people of color experience due to systems of White supremacy and privilege, and looks to dismantle these systems. It understands that racism is “endemic” (Howard, 2010, p. 109), an “everyday affair” (Sizemore, 2004, p. 535), and historically rooted in culture (Su, 2007). As the theory has developed over time, it has become clear to academic researchers and theorists that the study of education using Critical Race Theory is necessary in order to address the underachievement of African American, Latinx, Native American, and certain Asian American students (Howard, 2010).
While recognizing the value of multiculturalism in the classroom as a way to more fully recognize, honor, and connect with the students in a classroom, Critical Race Theory reaches beyond the inclusion of multiculturalist curricula (Howard, 2010) and liberal ideas of equality (Su, 2007), and requires educators to be more critical of the experiences that their students are having every day in, and out of, their classrooms (Howard, 2010). It assumes that, as the legal and cultural systems in the US have historically been created and sustained through White supremacy (Parker, 1998), so have the educational systems (Howard, 2010). Critical Race Theory also extends beyond multiculturalism by not being solely concerned with the process, but also the end result (Su, 2007).

In order to dismantle racism and racist systems described above, Critical Race Theory centers the voices of people of color through the use of counternarratives (Howard, 2010). These histories, retold by the voices of people of color, are given credibility by and through their examination of racial inequality. By centering these stories of privilege and injustice, a greater understanding of historical truth is gained. These counternarratives are worthy and true beyond the limitations of academic formality (Su, 2007), and should be sought from all people of color involved in an educational setting, including parents, students, former students, teachers, administrators, and community members. Together, with a new shared understanding of the historical and present day realities, education reform can be made more effectively so that the needs of students can be more accurately met.

Critical Race Theory rejects ideas of color-blindness and race neutrality (Howard, 2010). Color-blindness, while existing widely across culture, is distinctly pervasive within US education systems (Su, 2007). It holds that racism is intentional and committed by individual people, and allows for communities in power to only respond when individual racist macroaggressions
appear, while ignoring microaggressions, racist systemic structures, or problematic long-standing ways of being. These structures, policies, procedures and traditions are often supported through color-blind rhetoric that perpetuates institutional racism. Color-blindness allows for issues to be ignored, and Critical Race Theory pushes back on the actions of White people who only support or tolerate the advancements of minority groups when it benefits them (Sizemore, 2004).

Examinations of how White supremacy has included stolen land and people in its capitalist systems, and the ability by White people to not only take land and people, but also appropriate culture while teaching false narratives and historically inaccurate stories of the same people, is scrutinized by Critical Race Theory (Sleeter, 2011). This property and status, as well as the responsibility for them, has been inherited by today’s privileged White community through racialized systems.

Though initially Critical Race Theorists were only concerned with the Black and White binary (Peralta, 2013), Critical Race Theory has evolved to include topics of intersectionality (Howard, 2010), as well as theoretical off-shoots to more fully include people of color who are not African American, and their experiences (Sleeter, 2011). It intends to bridge the gaps between and among people of color by making apparent overlapping and shared interests, in order to come together to affect change (Su, 2007). Examinations of how race interacts with gender, language of origin, class, immigration status, sexuality and other identity markers throughout education and other systems have begun to appear (Sleeter, 2011).

**Tribal Critical Race Theory.** Emerging from Critical Race Theory is Tribal Critical Race Theory, also known as TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005). While TribalCrit recognizes the commonalities it holds with Critical Race Theory, it also recognizes the need for specific differences when discussing the needs of American Indian people. Both theories value the need
for scholars to listen to the voices and narratives of people of color to address the racism present in societal institutions, though Critical Race Theory does not address the American Indian experience of colonization. It also does not address the balance that American Indian people must find between being political and racialized.

Policies in the United States regarding American Indian people continue to be rooted in White supremacy and a desire for material gain, particularly land (Brayboy, 2005). By removing communities of people from land they were deeply connected to, the United States government stole and colonized areas using the excuse of Manifest Destiny. Policies focusing on assimilating American Indian people into White culture through religion, language and identity prevail and reinforce White supremacist ideas that Euro-Americans are morally and intellectually superior. However, American Indian people continue to work toward tribal sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination and self-identification, especially as it relates to the definitions of culture, knowledge, and power. In accordance, TribalCrit rejects the ideals of assimilation, particularly in educational settings. Understanding the lived realities, needs and wants, traditions, and beliefs simultaneously show the varied differences among American Indian individuals and groups, as well as their adaptability.

White people have felt the need to define an authentic American Indian experience since first contact (Brayboy, 2005). Euro-Americans’ interest in defining identity through blood quantum and power structures are acts of a colonizing government (Brayboy, 2005; Deloria, King & Springwood, 2005). Images have been replaced and stories have been retold from the White perspective to the point that even American Indian people sometimes have a difficult experience of understanding historical and cultural truth (Brayboy, 2005). The US government
has the power to identify which tribes are authentic through federal recognition, rather than through the tribe’s own self-determination.

With sovereignty comes the need for government-to-government interactions between tribes and the United States (Brayboy, 2005). While creating political systems of decision making, tribal leaders also must make decisions based in racialized systems of power. This requires a complicated balance. Depending on context, finding the balance is sometimes not as straightforward as one would hope.

TribalCrit contends that stories and narratives of American Indian people are legitimate and important sources of data, and that they make up the theory (Brayboy, 2005). These stories are informative. By truly hearing the stories and attributing value to them, they become powerful.

Viewing the ideas of culture, knowledge and power through an American Indian lens, TribalCrit defines these in relation to the ability to be adaptable and move forward with change (Brayboy, 2005). Cultural knowledge and academic knowledge complement one another to achieve successful resistance to White supremacy. Strategically combining the three concepts generates dynamic power that is historically influenced. This power is found in the ability to define one’s self. “Culture is the base for knowledge that ultimately leads to power” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 436).

TribalCrit calls explicitly for scholars to work toward social change (Brayboy, 2005). It calls for a focus on cooperation rather than competition, and an honoring of differences within a group. Scholars using TribalCrit should work to deconstruct structural inequalities and assimilatory processes, following the lead of the American Indian communities.
The Use of Redface in this Research. Though the first portrayal of Redface was performed in the Yiddish playlet *Tsvishn Indianer* in 1895 (Friedberg, 2001), some scholars indicate that Euro-Americans have been “playing Indian” (Tahmahkera, 2008, p. 324) since the Revolutionary Era by appropriating American Indian culture and using it for means of entertainment. Like Blackface, Redface was used in minstrel shows to create caricatures of non-White people for the entertainment of Euro-American people (Padgett, n.d.).

The image of the American Indian and its singular culture has largely been taught to the American public through cinema (Landreth, 2001). Images of brown skinned people wearing full feathered headdresses, buckskin, beads and braids, living in teepees, and speaking in broken English were made famous by Hollywood, beginning with silent movies in the early 1900s (Antelyes, 2009), through popular Western movies and sitcoms in the 1950s (Tahmahkera, 2008), and continuing into the contemporary movies of today. The drunken, lazy and angry American Indian was depicted on screens across the nation (King & Springwood, 2001). These roles were most often played by Euro-American actors, while American Indian actors were cast in roles as extras (Brightwell, 2008). In the 1970s, the American Indian Movement began protesting movies that were misrepresenting American Indian people and appropriating American Indian culture.

In this research the term “Redface” is used to describe a White person who impersonates an American Indian person of any tribe. This impersonation can be achieved through painting of the skin, or dressing in clothes, using language or performing movements that are understood to be related to or appropriated from American Indian culture. As Lane (2008) describes, to impersonate someone of another race, the body is understood as an “empty vessel available for
White occupation” (p. 1730). This colonization of American Indian bodies perpetuates White supremacy.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Appropriated Imagery from American Indian Cultures: 1899-1989**

Dowagiac High School’s athletic teams have not always been called the Chieftains. In fact, it wasn’t until 1905 that there was a mention of American Indian people in a yearbook. This mention did not refer to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians that lived in the area, instead it referred to a broader understanding of the colonization that took place when Euro-American settlers arrived. In a student written essay on national growth, the author mentions “Indians” and “the Red-man,” and that William Penn thought that “even they had rights” (*Wise and Otherwise*, 1905, Essay on National Growth). However, this is not to indicate that there was empathy toward American Indian people. American Indian people had been considered something to be feared, as the author also wrote that the colonies unionized because of “the common danger of Indians” (*Wise and Otherwise*, 1905, Essay on National Growth). William Penn appears again in the 1909 yearbook. He is quoted as saying that the United States government bought “the land of the real owners, the Indians, in fair bargain” (*The Billiken*, 1909, The Valedictory).

In the 1906 yearbook, *Haps and Mishaps*, American Indian-appropriated imagery appeared in the Class Prophecy section in which a senior class member wrote predictions about classmates. This particular prophecy referred to the Junior class as a “band of Indians with Heap Big Chief Myers at their head” (*Haps and Mishaps*, 1906, Class Prophecy).

The 1907 yearbook was entitled *The Pow-Wow* and included many references to Euro-American understandings of the American Indian experience. The Class of 1907 had chosen the
color pink as their color because it was a color that “gave strength to the Indian Brave” (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class Poem). Their class yell was made up of nonsensical syllables meant to imitate an understood singular American Indian language:

He-yi! He-yi! He-yi!
Waga, Waga, Waga.
Hi-ya! Hi-ya! Hi-ya!
Wala, Wala, Wala.
Pow-wow, ki-yi,
U-la-leven,
Heap Big Seniors,
1907 (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class Yell).

The 1907 Class History told a fictionalized story through a play. The setting is described as “Curtain rises and the Indians are seated around an Indian Camp which is equipped with Indian paraphernalia. After a moment of intense silence, the chief rises and speaks in low, sonorous tones” (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class History). The play refers to “The Great Spirit” as a singular American Indian religious figure, and tribes of braves that live in wigwams. It tells of the Hurons who let out a war cry before battle until they buried the hatchet, and lived in peace and joy. It also tells of a tribe of Indian braves that live near the river called Doe-Wah-Jack, referring to themselves. “This tribe had decided to give up their old customs and had entered the high school to become civilized” (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class History). In describing their entrance into the building, they wrote about moving “in regular Indian file” (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class History). The Class History also describes Pokagon: “Oh, yes, Pokagon, a quiet little village, nearly rivaled Chicago in its gaiety, caused by a powwow one evening which was held at Nina’s wigwam. The next powwow was held at Lulu’s …” (*The Pow-Wow*, 1907, Class History). At the end of the Class History is an image of a sash, beaded with the words “DHS ‘07.”
The 1916 yearbook was the first to be called *The Wahoo*. The cover shows the silhouette of an American Indian wearing three feathers in his hair (Figure 6). This image appears again on the cover of the 1917 yearbook, *Dee Aitch Ess*, but with more texture and detail.

![The Wahoo cover](image)

*Figure 6. 1916 Dowagiac High School yearbook cover (Wahoo).*

In 1954, the editors used the following paragraph to describe the students’ understanding of their place in history following the American Indians:

> Years ago the Indian realized that communications enrich man's life. In order to preserve his race, he knew that he must teach his mannerisms to the younger generations. Today we students of Central High are a part of the younger generation who are still being taught by our elders so that we in turn can preserve our way of life by passing it on to the next. No longer do we see the lone Indian on the hill sending communications by waving his blanket over a smoking fire. We students, however, do see all around us many reminders of the heritage left to us by the Indian. (*Wahoo*, Table of Contents)

Throughout these ninety years, there are many depictions of what Euro-American students thought American Indian people looked like. Drawings were most frequently of men, while women were most frequently photographed in Redface (as majorettes in the band). The people in these photographs and drawings were almost always wearing a headdress. In fact, an American Indian man or a student in Redface was shown wearing a full headdress 232 times over the 87 yearbooks examined during this timeframe. The next most common style of
headdress showed just one feather (33 times), then two feathers (22 times), three feathers (five times), and four feathers (two times). Beading and beads appeared six times throughout the span. A loincloth and/or buckskin appeared or was worn in 102 drawings or photos, while face paint appeared five times. Hair was shown in braids on 11 occasions, and moccasins were worn six times. Depictions of American Indian people with large noses appeared thirty times.

Euro-American understanding of American Indian culture was not only understood through depictions of American Indians, but also through depictions of rituals, activities, and tools. Constructed images of American Indians or people in Redface dancing appeared in 1920, 1925, 1954, and 1985. Depictions of American Indians or people in Redface sitting in the lotus position, or “Indian style,” appeared six times, with arms crossed in front of their chest eight times. Peace pipes appeared in 1915, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1959, 1974, and 1979. Swastikas, called “whirling logs” in the Navajo tradition (ICMN, 2013), appeared five times in the 1925 yearbook and once in the 1954 yearbook. Depictions of fire and/or smoke appeared in 1925, 1928, 1931, 1932, 1954, 1974, and 1975. Birch trees appeared in 1928, stretched animal skins appeared in 1925 and 1928, and arrowheads appeared in 1921, 1924, and 1925. Bows and arrows appeared nine times, lances appeared two times, and a tomahawk or an ax appeared 11 times. Teepees appeared 10 times, blankets appeared nine times, a horse appeared two times, and a canoe appeared once. Feathers that were not worn appeared five times. Prayer, pots, a flute, a drum, a papoose, and a necklace with teeth all appeared once.

**Athletics.** Prior to 1915, though there were images appropriated from American Indian cultures depicted, the athletics teams were only referred to in Dowagiac High School yearbooks by the town name or the school colors, Orange and Black. However, in the 1913 *Doe-Wah-Jack: Football* issue, the football team was twice referred to as the Dowagiac Warriors (this
publication will be explained in detail below). It wasn’t until 1915, that the football team was referred to by a name with an American Indian connotation in a yearbook. It was in this yearbook that they were referred to as the Dowagiac Indians. Though not used in the 1916 yearbook, the Indians name did briefly appear in a paragraph describing the football team in the 1917 yearbook.

In 1918, the football players were called “meat eaters” as a description of their size and ruthlessness (Doe-Wah-Jack, Athletics). However, there was no appropriation or representation of American Indian cultures again until 1925. The entirety of the 1925 yearbook was themed in American Indian-appropriated imagery, and the page introducing the Athletic section, like the other sections, had a drawing of an American Indian, this one riding a horse. In the paragraph describing the football team, the team was referred to as “Dowagiac’s warriors” (Wahoo, 1925, Athletics). The Warrior name again appeared in 1927 when students played against an alumni team.

Beginning in 1928, and continuing through this period, Dowagiac’s athletic teams were referred to as the Chieftains, or Chiefs. However, this did not stop student writers from using other names to describe the teams in the yearbooks. Indians was used six times between 1932 and 1945, and Braves was used three times between 1938 and 1967. The name Papooses was used in the 1932 yearbook, Red-Skin was used in the 1938 yearbook, and Warriors was used in 1944 and 1958.

The uniforms for the 1927 track team depict the head of a generic American Indian in profile, wearing a full headdress. In 1938 a tennis player was shown wearing a shirt that says “Doe-Wah-Jack Chieftains” that again depicted a generic American Indian head in profile wearing a full headdress. In 1958, the basketball team wore jerseys that again showed a different
image of a generic American Indian head in profile wearing a full headdress (Figure 7). In 1978, the wrestling team appeared in singlets and the girls’ track team appeared in uniforms with a generic American Indian head in profile wearing a full headdress. The wrestling singlets remained until 1984, while the track uniforms remained throughout this period. In 1979, a coach was shown wearing a baseball cap with an imagined American Indian on it, and the wrestling team was shown wearing both the singlets described earlier, and warm up jackets with different images of imagined American Indians on them (Figure 8). In 1984, the wrestling team switched to wearing only the warm up jackets with the image on them. Football helmets in 1987 depicted a generic American Indian in profile with two feathers on a headdress, and two single feathers alongside. That same year the golf team began to wear shirts that included a generic American Indian head in profile in a full headdress. These were worn for the remainder of this time span. In 1989, the football coaching staff was photographed wearing shirts with the image from the helmets a few years before, but it appears that the design on the helmets had changed.

Figure 7. 1958 Boys Basketball Team (Wahoo).
Mentions of “scalping” an opponent first appeared in 1935, and appeared in the athletic sections of 13 yearbooks between then and 1963. Chieftains were also described as being “on the war path” (Wahoo, 1936, “Reel” News; Wahoo, 1937, Football), and out to defeat “pale faces” (Wahoo, 1936, “Reel” news). In the 1938 yearbook, the athletes were described as “seeing red” against their opponents, and when they lost, “the braves retreated to their home teepees” (Wahoo, p. 42). In 1956, the sports teams were encouraged to “put the Indian sign on them” (Wahoo, p. 44), meaning to cast a spell on their opponents. In 1962, a Chieftain win was described as a “massacre” (Wahoo, p. 44). Athletes were described as “whooping it up” when they were successful (Wahoo, 1978, p. 65; Wahoo, 1982, p. 74). In 1989, a basketball caption described a play as a Chief “attack!” (Wahoo, p. 66).

Depictions of other appropriated segments of American Indian cultures also appeared throughout the yearbooks. For instance, the 1932 photo of the baseball team showed their bats set up in a cone shape, like that of a fire or a teepee. The 1966 yearbook showed that the center of the basketball court had an image of an generic American Indian head in profile with a full headdress (Figure 9). This can be seen in yearbook photographs through 1987. In 1967, on the wall of the gym, was a cartoon image of an American Indian that appeared to be running or dancing. This can be seen in the background of sports photos for three years. In 1969, another painting of a generic American Indian head in profile, wearing a full headdress, was added to the
wall. This remained until 1977. In 1974, a sign appeared on the gym wall that read “Keep your moccasins off of our reservation floor” (Wahoo, p. 9). This sign could be seen hanging on the wall in the backgrounds of photographs through 1989. The sign seems to indicate that street shoes should not be worn on the gymnasium floor. In 1979, a student was seen wearing a letterman’s jacket. The “D” patch that is on his jacket shows the profile of a generic American Indian in the center. Also in 1979, a round banner appeared on the wall of the gym depicting a generic American Indian head in profile wearing a full headdress. This banner could be seen hanging on the wall in yearbook photographs until 1987.

In 1957, the cheerleaders began to use a prop called “Chieftain Charlie” (Figure 10). “Chieftain Charlie” appeared in images with the cheerleaders for nine of the next 11 years. The prop had a head, and an oblong body, with two feet sticking out on the bottom. The head had two feathers on the top, face paint, a large nose and large ears. In many of the images the cheerleaders were performing their duties with “Chieftain Charlie” placed in the center of their group, and in 1965 there was a description of his use, “Our famous potbellied Chieftain Charlie
was usually seen being carried around by the cheerleaders by his enormous nose. His presence at the games added color and spirit” (Wahoo, 1965, p. 151). It appeared that it was even possible to purchase Christmas cards with “Chieftain Charlie” on them in 1959.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Figure 10. The 1958 Varsity Cheerleaders with “Chieftain Charlie” (Wahoo).*


At a pep assembly in 1945, students performed a skit in which they rowed paper canoes with American Indian-appropriated symbols on the side (Figure 11). In 1958, a group of boys danced at another pep assembly. This time dressed in Redface with a single feather in their hair and long skirts, the group is described in the caption as “witty” (Wahoo, 1958, p. 30). In 1964, the cheerleaders appeared in Redface in a photograph from a pep assembly. The caption for this photograph said, “The royalty and the Indians? No, it is the cheerleaders in their usual pep assembly antics” (Wahoo, 1964, p. 45). In 1965, a group of students appeared in Redface again. This caption read, “The 'CHIEFS' invade Friday afternoon's Pep Assembly” (Wahoo, 1965, p. 14).
Another group, the Chiefettes, was initiated in 1973, and provided entertainment during halftime shows until 1978. In 1979, the group became the Pom Pom Girls. The Pom Pom girls, like the cheerleaders, sometimes wore uniforms that depicted an American Indian. In 1980, the group’s photo showed one student sitting on the ground on her knees, with her arms crossed in front of her chest.

Student editors included photographs of fans wearing jackets, tee shirts, and sweatshirts with images of imagined American Indians on them. This first appeared in 1979, and photographs of students wearing these items can be seen through 1989. Other items were also available for fans, including a drinking glass with a generic American Indian head in profile in full headdress. This appeared in a photograph on the desk of one of the school secretaries in 1981.

A number of students of Potawatomi lineage played sports for the Dowagiac Chieftains. Frank Topash played for the 1915 football team. In 1940, Dick and Harold Winchester played for both the football and baseball teams, and Francis Winchester played basketball. In 1945, Joe Winchester had a number of sporting accomplishments, and was mentioned by the nickname, “Chief” (Wahoo, p. 29). In 1949, Jim Topash was commended for his performance in a
basketball game, “The graceful Indian performed more like a ‘Globetrotter’ than a high school boy” (Wahoo, p. 37). In 1967, John Winchester played on the tennis team, and Mike Winchester was a member of the Varsity Club. In 1971, Steve Winchester played on the tennis team. In 1972, Scott Winchester won an All Sports Award. In 1975, Judy Winchester played on the Varsity Basketball team, and ran on the Track team. In 1976, Judy continued to play basketball and also joined the cheerleading squad.

**Homecoming.** Homecoming, a time for student fans to cheer on their team, was often celebrated in the yearbooks. This was also a time when a lot of American Indian-appropriated imagery appeared. The first example of this appeared in 1963. A photograph was captioned as, “Our Chieftains whoop it up at snake dance prior to homecoming game” (Wahoo, 1963, p. 64). The snake dance, a tradition for many years at Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School, appeared to be a train of people holding hands and snaking their way through the city to the football field. It does not appear to have any similarities to the snake dance of the Hopi people, beyond its name. That same year, there was a photograph of a homecoming banner that read, “Seniors want ‘em Niles scalps,” and another banner that included a student’s drawing of a generic American Indian in profile. The next year, homecoming banners included a drawing of a generic American Indian person with a large grin saying, “Grin, we’re gonna win,” and another of a frowning generic American Indian person. A 1965 banner showed a generic American Indian person holding an ax, and a 1966 banner read, “Chiefs are stronger than dirt” and depicted a generic American Indian person standing over a knight (the opponent) who had an ax and arrows in his body. Another 1966 banner read, “Take the fite (sic) out of the knights,” and showed a generic American Indian person holding a bloody tomahawk. In 1967, a generic American Indian person was shown wearing buckskin and holding a lance. In 1968, a banner
showed a generic American Indian person riding a horse, and another read, “Pale Face in Tin Can Never Win” (again the opponents were the Knights). In 1969, a banner showed a drawing of a generic American Indian person with a large nose and a full headdress, and another showed a drawing of a generic American Indian person wearing a single feather in their hair. A generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress again appeared on a banner in 1973. A banner in 1979 read, “Chiefs smoke ‘em,” with a drawing of a peace pipe and two feathers. A 1980 banner showed a drawing of a generic American Indian person wearing a loincloth and displaying very large muscles. The only banner from the 1981 homecoming that depicted American Indian-appropriated imagery or an American Indian person, this one wearing buckskin and a loincloth and swinging an ax, won the banner contest that year. In 1982, a generic American Indian person was drawn on a banner in the style of a superhero. In 1985, a hand holding a tomahawk was shown on a banner, and two 1989 banners showed a generic American Indian person.

Sometimes American Indian-appropriated imagery was attributed directly to the football players, like in 1967, when a banner showed a drawing of a football player wearing a full headdress and face paint. In 1968, a football player was again drawn wearing a full headdress.

Homecoming floats showed three dimensional depictions of generic American Indians. Most often, the floats were built from materials, but sometimes people rode the floats dressed in Redface. In 1967, one class built a teepee for their float, and three young people, dressed in Redface sat on the float, wrapped in blankets. Also that year, a float entitled, “Huskies last stand,” showed a hill with arrows stuck in it and blood streaming down the sides. It appears that a person in Redface, wearing a full headdress, walked alongside the float, but it is unclear. Another float from 1967, included at least two students in Redface. Beneath the photograph is a
caption saying, “Big chief John rides Sophomore float assisted by squaw Carol and brave Phil” (Wahoo, 1967, p. 180) (Figure 12). The “John” that is mentioned appears to be John Winchester, a student of Potawatomi lineage, though it is unclear if he is dressed in traditional regalia. In 1973, the Girls Athletic Association had a homecoming float. The students that were on this float were in Redface, wearing a single feather in their hair. Another float from 1973, followed a theme not appropriated from American Indian imagery, but still included two drawn feathers on its sign. In 1974, students built a float with the large head of a generic American Indian person, smoking a peace pipe (Figure 13). A teepee was again built in 1975. This float also included a faux fire, with a pot over it. In 1976, a depiction of a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress again appeared. Though a 1977 float seemed to have a locomotive theme, a generic American Indian head appeared on the side of the train where a business logo might go. An image of a generic American Indian head as a logo again appeared on a 1978 float on the side of a giant can of shaving cream. Floats in 1978 and 1979 showed a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. In 1984, a generic American Indian head was shown on a giant Scrabble tile for a board games-themed float, and another was shown on a drawing of a deck of cards on another sign.

![Figure 12. 1967 Homecoming float (Wahoo).](image)
Leading up to homecoming, classes would decorate a Spirit Wall in the school’s gymnasium and/or cafeteria. In 1968, a photograph of the Spirit Wall showed a sign that read, “Skin ‘em Rose.” In 1974, a banner on the Spirit Wall showed a drawing of a teepee with a fire outside. Also outside of the teepee was a sign that read, “No peddlers, no salesmen, no Irish!” Two other signs from that year showed a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. In 1976, paper was used to create a large generic American Indian person on the wall, using the clock as his face. The caption of the photograph read, “A huge chieftain drew all the attention on the Seniors’ Spirit Wall” (Wahoo, 1976, p. 156). In 1977, a photo of a student painting a sign for the wall showed her in the act of painting braids and a large nose to depict a generic American Indian person.

**Performing Arts.** Over the span of the 87 yearbooks examined during this period, there were 92 photographs showing at least one person in Redface. Of those 92, 80 were in connection with the band. The first occurrence of an image of someone wearing Redface was included in the 1918 yearbook. The person appeared twice in the yearbook, once on his own (Figure 14), and once leading the marching band across a bridge. He appears to be wearing a full headdress, faux buckskin, fur, and carrying a drum major’s baton. In 1921, another person appeared wearing this outfit, though he was standing in the yard and not with the band or holding the baton, so it is unclear if he was related to the band.
Between 1930 and 1969, the band often used a bass drum that depicted a generic American Indian. Prior to 1957, the image on the drum showed just the head of a generic American Indian person. In 1954 the cheerleaders used this drum during a pep assembly. The drum sat on the floor, and the group danced around the drum in an appropriated style of an American Indian dance (Figure 15). After 1957, the image on the drum changed to a cartoon version of a generic American Indian playing his own bass drum (Figure 16). In 1973, this image also appeared on a student’s tee shirt. In 1956 and 1958, The Rhythmaires, a small band that played at special events, used the drum that the full band was using. Later the pep band also used the drum. The drum was not the only instrument to display a generic American Indian person. In
1958, the bugles appeared with banners hanging from them, depicting a generic American Indian person.

*Figure 15.* 1954 Cheerleaders dancing around band drum (*Wahoo*).

*Figure 16.* 1957 band bass drum (*Wahoo*).
Around this same time, in 1956, the name of the band changed to include the nickname used by the athletic department. The band became the Dowagiac Chieftain Marching Band the same year that they were selected to attend the Orange Bowl in Miami. That year’s marching band’s performance included making formations on the field in the shape of a teepee. The Dowagiac Chieftain Marching Band name was used throughout this time period. The Chieftain theme extended to the band room walls as well. In 1980, a photograph showed a painting of a generic American Indian head in profile with a full headdress. This can be seen in the backgrounds of photographs through 1984.

Aside from the early images, a person in Redface associated with the band did not appear again until 1953. In that year, the first image of majorettes dressed in Redface appeared in the group band photo. The majorettes, wearing a full headdress, midriff top and loincloth, were prominent features of the band throughout the remainder of this time period (Figure 17). In 1954, the head majorette was referred to as “Our Indian Princess” (Wahoo, p. 17). In 1956, in addition to the three majorettes in full headdress, five other girls appeared wearing headdresses with single feathers. These girls were called The Chieftainettes in a 1957 photo. In the 1958 yearbook, accompanying a photo of the Chieftainettes, they were described as “A fine group as important to Dowagiac spirit as are the bugles, drums, and cymbals” (Wahoo, p. 46). The majorettes were sometimes photographed sitting in the lotus position, or “Indian style,” and/or with their arms crossed in front of their chests. In 1961, the majorettes and their headdresses were described. “The majorettes with their authentic Indian costumes add much to the band. Their Headdresses of eagle feathers are hand made by an honest-to-goodness Indian” (Wahoo, 1961, p. 43). The authenticity of their headdresses was again mentioned in the 1962 yearbook. Occasionally, the
majorettes appeared in photographs without their headdresses. Majorettes appeared in Redface in all of the remaining yearbooks of this time period.

![Figure 17. 1954 band majorettes in Redface (Wahoo).](image)

In addition to appearing during halftime of the football games, the Dowagiac Chieftain Marching Band also appeared in a number of local parades. There are 17 photographs of the band and the majorettes performing in Redface in a parade between 1962 and 1989. This tradition of having majorettes dressed in Redface extended to the junior high band as well, according to a photograph in the 1966 Wahoo.

In 1972, a young child appeared in the group band photo. This child is also dressed in Redface. This child also appeared in the 1973 yearbook without the band, and is identified there as the Chieftain mascot (Figure 18). This was one of only two times during this time period that there is a physical embodiment identified as the Chieftain mascot. The other appeared in 1975, and was a young girl dressed as a cheerleader.
In 1969, the Dowagiac Chieftain Marching Band got new uniforms. These uniforms displayed a patch on the chest of a generic American Indian head in profile with a full headdress. Until 1985, the members of the band can be seen wearing the same uniforms. By 1987, the uniforms had changed so that they no longer had the image on the front of the uniforms, however a photograph in the 1989 yearbook showed that those members of the band that wore capes had an image of a generic American Indian on them.
In 1970 and 1971 Karen Winchester, a student of Potawatomi lineage, played for the band.

Dowagiac High School also has a long tradition of including Euro-American appropriation of American Indians and their culture through stage performances. In 1914, the Girls Orchestra played a song called, “Old John Brown Had a Little Indian.” In 1918, students appeared on stage in Redface for *Pocohontas: A Comic Operetta*. Close to ninety students participated in a farcical comedy that involved misrepresentation and appropriation of American Indian culture for entertainment. In 1925, the Glee Club participated in *The Pioneer’s Papoose*. The cast of characters included names such as, Chief Tomahawk and Prince Whiteface. This performance was listed under students’ activities until 1928, though probably referring to this one performance rather than repeated performances. In 1940, the Glee Club presented *The Childhood of Hiawatha* that included students in grade school as well. Dick and Harold Winchester, brothers of Potawatomi lineage, were part of the art club that created the sets and props for this production. The 1946 yearbook refers to “The Big Indian Pow-Wow” occurring in the auditorium, but it is not clear who participated in this event.

Occasionally the drama club would put on a play that included people in Redface. In 1978, during a production of *Bats in the Belfry*, a trick-or-treater appeared dressed as a generic American Indian. That same year, during a production of *Annie Get Your Gun*, a student dressed in Redface and identified as Indian Boy said, “I’m an Indian, too!” (*Wahoo*, 1978, p. 168). In 1981, the drama club performed *Li’l Abner*. This performance, too, showed students in Redface. Rhonda Wesaw, a student of Potawatomi lineage, was a member of the drama club, and did make-up for this production. In a 1989 performance of *If A Man Answers*, a student in Redface is also onstage. Though not related to a play being performed, a caption under a 1954 photograph
read, “Juniors don war paint” (Wahoo, p. 25), when describing the process of putting on stage makeup.

**Student Activities.** From clubs to specific experiences of students, American Indian-appropriated imagery was apparent in the lives of students at Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School. The school’s newspapers, in particular, followed the theme. From 1914-1916, the Doe-Wah-Jack was listed as a school publication. In 1923, the Junior class started their own paper, The Iagoo. To describe the title, they wrote, “Running true to form, we selected an old Indian name, The Iagoo, meaning, ‘Great booster and story teller’” (Wahoo, 1923, The Iagoo). This publication was also mentioned in the 1924 and 1925 yearbooks, and several students participated. In 1936, a Student Council publication called The Chieftain was mentioned. Later, in 1941, The Chieftain was described as being a booklet that describes the school and its policies. Another Junior class newspaper, Smoke Signals, was mentioned in 1942, 1944, and 1945. The Freshman paper was called the Pow Wow in 1946. In 1958, the newspaper, Warrior, made an appearance. In 1961 and 1962, the newspaper was called Chieftain. In 1964, the Smoke Signal (now in the singular) newspaper was resurrected. This remained as the name for the newspaper through 1970. In 1971, the Tribal Tribune became the name of the newspaper. The next year, the name of the newspaper changed again, this time to Bows & Arrows. This title was used until at least 1981. Bows & Arrows purchased advertising space during some of these years, and their advertisements included images of arrows and feathers. In 1984, a new newspaper was started, The Chieftain Monitor. This name was used throughout the rest of this time period.

The 1928 yearbook mentioned the Wahoo Wisk as an event that was held. This event appears to have been a fundraiser for the yearbook, named the Wahoo. That year’s Senior Census
page also used American Indian-appropriated words to create headings for the page. The terms Braves and Squaws, Symbols, Paint and Feathers, Medicine, and Happy Hunting Grounds were used to categorize the students and information about them. Also mentioned that year was a reference to potential hazing by the upperclassmen, or an athletic competition between the two groups. It described the “Freshies getting scalped” by the upperclassmen, who were then called “savage brutes” (Wahoo, 1928, Daily Bubbles). In 1936, the teachers were mentioned as “going native” (Wahoo, Flashing to you the highlights). In 1940, a photograph in a collage showed a number of students in Redface (Figure 19). The caption says, “Chief Lonesome Polecat’ and Wahoo-ians” (Wahoo, 1940, p.9). The 1954 yearbook entitled the index as the “Indian file” (Wahoo, p. 62), and boasted that it carried an “Indian theme” (Wahoo, p. 39) throughout. After graduation in 1967, the graduates were described as letting out a “battle cry” (Wahoo, p. 108). In 1968, two students appeared in a photograph in Redface. Between them was a drum, and a patch on one of their jackets read, “Chieftain Chanters.” In 1975, under a photo of a student in a contorted position, the caption said, “Mike Kusa tests out the new Chieftain war dance” (Wahoo, p. 72) (Figure 20). In 1978, a photograph that could have been taken in the library showed another large painting of a generic American Indian on the wall. A banner that hung on the wall behind the podium of a 1987 awards ceremony showed a drawing of a generic American Indian person. The feathers on their headdress appear to be actual feathers that were glued onto the banner. This banner appeared in 1989 as well.
Figure 19. 1940 Chief Lonesome Polecat and Wahoo-ians (Wahoo).

Figure 20. 1975 student identified as dancing a "war dance" (Wahoo).

In 1944, the Junior prom followed a “Hiawatha” theme. The description in the yearbook said that the students, “danced amid tom toms and teepees … to … ‘Indian Summer’” (Wahoo, 1944, Jr. Prom). Phil Winchester, a student of Potawatomi lineage, was a member of the decorating committee. It was written that, “his art ability is an asset to the J-Prom committee” (Wahoo, 1944, p. 17).

The 1967 yearbook comes with a bit of mystery. In one photo, a poster can be seen on a blackboard. The poster read, "I am a Potawatomi Band Booster. We would rather fight than switch" (Wahoo, 1967, p. 151). Under the poster was a drawing of a generic American Indian wearing two feathers in his hair. On the blackboard next to the poster someone had written,
“Opinions do not change facts!” Twenty pages later, another photograph appeared. In this photograph there were two students looking at the poster described earlier. The caption read, “This was round three in the Smoke Signal-Band-Potawatomi war” (*Wahoo*, 1967, p. 174). Later, with a photograph of a tall, wooden statue of an American Indian, the caption read, “Remember the trouble we had with this guy?” (*Wahoo*, 1967, p. 192). Two pages later, there was a photograph of a letter. The letter read,

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Dear Miss Hall: Frankly we prefer OUR headdress to that of your hollow, 250 pound, would world Traveller, (who wouldn't?). But seriously, our feather represents a CHIEF, not a lowly brave - And ours were made BY REAL INDIANS - yours was "whittled" by, would you believe, an ITALIAN. Now really, Miss Hall??? Sincerely, the "Chieftain" BAND!!!!
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The caption below said, “This is the second round in the battle between the smoke signal and the band” (*Wahoo*, 1967, p. 194). Clearly, some conflict or competition had arisen between the band and the newspaper club, but whether it was serious or playful, and what the outcome was, was never revealed in the yearbook.

In 1913, a student of Potawatomi lineage, Frank Topash was included on a page entitled Favorite Songs. On this page the song listed as Topash’s favorite was “Heap Big Injun.” It is not clear if these songs were chosen for the students, or if they volunteered their favorite songs. When Topash was a senior in 1916, he was described as an “Honest Injun” (*The Wahoo*, Frank Topash Biography). Again, it is not clear if this was a descriptor he gave for himself, or if someone gave it to him. What is clear is that Topash’s ethnicity was known, and misnomers were used to identify him.

Occasionally the nickname “Chieftains” or “Chiefs” was attributed to students that were not part of an athletic team or the band. Any student that attended the school could don this
honorary title as a member of the school community. For instance, in 1989 a caption under a candid shot of students said, “Happy Chieftains” (Wahoo, p. 41).

Use of American Indian-appropriated imagery was attributed to faculty and staff. In 1949, Miss Elaine Sheltraw was described as the “Heap big chief” over the commercial department (Wahoo, p. 17). In 1954, under an image of the principal and superintendent was the caption, “Seen having a powwow are these two men” (Wahoo, p. 5). Also describing the principal was, “Only occasionally does he go on the war-path” (Wahoo, 1954, p. 5).

The national organizations of Campfire Girls of America and Boy Scouts of America had local troupes at the school. In 1932, the Campfire Girls listed the “Pottawatomie” and “We-Han-Yak-O” groups in the yearbook. In the 1933 yearbook, “Pottawatomie” is joined by the “Tiyata,” “Tawash,” and “Nowetompotomin” groups. Campfire Girls was again mentioned in the 1934 yearbook, noting that the Torch Bearer is the highest level to be achieved. The Boy Scouts joined the Campfire Girls in the 1942 yearbook.

It was a tradition at Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School for Senior classes to offer the school a gift. At times, these gifts have reflected an American Indian-appropriated theme. In 1968, the class purchased banners to hang in the gymnasium. Each banner displayed the name of a school in the conference with an image for their mascot or nickname. Appropriately, the one for Dowagiac included an image of a generic American Indian head in profile wearing a full headdress. In 1985, the Senior class gifted a stained glass image of a generic American Indian head in profile, wearing a full headdress (Figure 21). This gift was hung in the cafeteria, and was often spotted in the background of photographs of awards ceremonies in subsequent years. In 1989, the Senior class presented the school with a small
statue at graduation. The statue depicted a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress and buckskin, with his arms crossed.

![Image of the statue](image-url)

*Figure 21. 1985 class gift of a stained glass image of an American Indian (Wahoo).*

**Round Oak in the Yearbook.** In 1905, a yearbook reference to “Doe-Wah-Jack pride” shows that the name of the Round Oak mascot, Chief Doe-Wah-Jack, was used to refer to both the city and the school. Chief Doe-Wah-Jack’s image appeared in the 1907 yearbook, though his appearance does not seem directly related to the Senior Statistics that appeared on the same page (Figure 22).
In 1912, the editors of the yearbook gave much thought to the title of that year’s annual book, *The Doe-Wah-Jack*.

Contrary to custom, we have called our Annual the “Doe-Wah-Jack”, after the periodical published a few years ago. We feel that this is the best name for an annual from this High School. We suggest that it would be a very good idea for all other classes to adopt this name for the annual, making it a permanent representative of the school. (*The Doe-Wah-Jack*, 1912, Editorial section).

The periodical that is referred to is a monthly publication that students of the high school produced. Despite their plea, the name was only used one other time for the annual, six years later.
The *Doe-Wah-Jack* periodical appeared more prominently in the 1914 yearbook, *The Advance*. In this, students Delos Bradley and Arthur Wick were listed as manager and editor, respectively, of the *Doe-Wah-Jack*. Though the name and the image used carry appropriated American Indian culture, the other topics discussed were not related to any American Indian culture. This periodical was also listed in the 1915 and 1916 yearbooks.

In 1914, the editors of the yearbook opted to spend a page writing about the importance of Round Oak to the community. No American Indian-appropriated imagery was used in the writing, but it is clear that the community depends on the success of the business.

In 1918, editors returned to the *Doe-Wah-Jack* title for the annual, and the connection to Round Oak was not subtle as Chief Doe-Wah-Jack appeared on the cover of the book. The editors again encouraged future yearbook staff to use the name, but this was the last time it was to be used, with the exception of the 2005 yearbook when it was used as a subtitle (*The Wahoo: Doe-Wah-Jack*). Instead, beginning in 1919, the editors of the yearbook followed a tradition of calling the annual book (*The*) *Wahoo*, sometimes including a subtitle.

In 1925, a poem, *The Monogram Man*, was included in the yearbook. In this poem, the man was described as being from Doe-Wah-Jack. The town and school were also referred to by this name in 1927 when announcing that “Doe-Wah-Jack’s going to have a baseball team” (*Wahoo*, Calendar).

Events often took place at the Round Oak Hall, Beckwith Estate, or the Beckwith Theater. These places were mentioned in years 1910, 1915, 1923, 1925, 1937, and 1941. Also in 1941, a raffle was run to win a Round Oak stove.

**Advertisements.** Many businesses in Dowagiac used American Indian-appropriated names and logos for advertising. In 1909, the Estate of PD Beckwith ran an ad in the yearbook
that included an emblem with Chief Doe-Wah-Jack’s face in the center. This advertisement appeared in the 1912, 1913, and 1919 yearbooks. Prior to this, the Estate had only advertised with drawings of stoves. The 1914 yearbook featured LA Conklin using the image of the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack emblem, and the Estate of PD Beckwith started to use an advertisement that showed both the emblem and a drawing of their factories. The factory advertisement also ran in the 1915 yearbook, and from 1919-1925.

The 1910 yearbook had advertisements that included references to Beckwith’s influence in the city. With M C Chamberlain Co. pleading with the consumer to “Let us bind your annuals and ‘Do Wa Jacks’ (referring to the high school’s monthly publication)” (The Chinaman, 1910, Advertisements), and advertisements for both Beckwith Photographer and Beckwith Estate Electric Light Department (appearing also in the 1915 yearbook), the company had found its way into many aspects of everyday life in Dowagiac. The Beckwith Theater submitted an ad for the 1915 and 1936 yearbooks as well. In 1928 and 1929, business patrons were listed without an image. Beckwith Estate was included in those lists. In the 1932, 1935 - 1942, 1945, 1946, and 1952 - 1955 lists, Round Oak Company was included. After the company was sold, it continued to advertise in the Dowagiac High School yearbook. These advertisements appeared in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962. Though not officially associated with the Round Oak Company or Beckwith Estates, Chief Doe-Wah-Jack also appeared in an image of a sign that was used to welcome visitors to Dowagiac in 1954 (Figure 23).
In 1916, in an advertisement for a store for men, it says to see Sawalk the Indian for “Heap Much Press ‘Um and Clean ‘Um” (The Wahoo, Advertisements). Though Sawalk could have been a person of Potawatomi lineage, a search of the 1910 and 1920 census records finds no one by that name living in the area at the time. However, this is the only year that this advertisement was submitted in the yearbook, and Sawalk could have moved in and then moved on between the two census years.

Eateries in Dowagiac have long taken on American Indian-appropriated names, and have included American Indian-appropriated images in their logos and advertisements. In 1939, Chief Cafe was listed as a business patron. In 1940 and 1941, Pow Wow Cafe was listed. In 1942, 1943, 1946, 1947, and 1948, The Wigwam, a restaurant that was located inside the Beckwith Building (Cook & Cook, 2001), was listed as an advertiser. The Wigwam appeared one time prior to this in 1934 when a school event took place there. Two students Janet Hilliard, in the 1943 yearbook, and Betty Messenger, in the 1945 yearbook, were mentioned as working at the
Wigwam. Hilliard was described as “a squaw of the Wigwam” (Wahoo, 1943, Janet Hilliard Activities). In 1965 there was one final mention of the Wigwam in the student section. In 1967, advertisements for Big Chief Wahoooo restaurant began to appear. This advertisement included a cartoon depiction of a generic American Indian person (Figure 24). This image appeared again in 1968. These advertisements later dropped the image, and appeared as Wahoo Drive-In in 1972 and 1974. The original image and named reappeared in 1975. Harvey’s, a restaurant, used the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack emblem in their advertising between 1983-1984. Under the emblem it says the words, “Heap Good Food and Drink.”

Figure 24. Big Chief Wahoooo advertisement in 1967 (Wahoo).
Other business with American Indian-appropriated names or logos appeared in the yearbooks as well. In the 1906 yearbook, an advertisement appeared for a local business called Dowagiac Steam Baking Company that included an image of a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. In the 1908 yearbook, *We Came, We Saw, We Conquered*, there was an advertisement for Blackmond, a jeweler, that touts “Souvenir Indian Canoes Doe-Wah-Jack.” Tom Tom was listed in 1941, Chief Industries in 1960, Silver Creek Lanes (with an image of a generic American Indian person in a full headdress as their logo) in 1964, Inn-D-Inn in 1965, Dowagiac Mutual Auto-Owners Insurance (with a stylized drawing of a generic American Indian as their logo) in 1969 and 1970, the City of Dowagiac (with a generic image of American Indian person in a full headdress as their logo) in 1977 (Figure 25), and Du-Wel Products, Inc. (with a photograph of a painting of a generic American Indian person in a full headdress) in 1983. The 1972 advertisement for First National Bank included a photograph of a person sitting at the base of a statue of a generic American Indian. The statue is wearing a loincloth, has his arms crossed, and wears two feathers in his hair. At the base of the statue it is labelled as “Chief Doe-Wah-Jack,” though it does not look like Round Oak’s Chief Doe-Wah-Jack. Accompanying this photo are the words, “Where Chiefs Keep their Wampum” (*Wahoo*, 1972, p. 126).
The trend of using American Indian-appropriated imagery was not only popular to the local area. Companies in the broader region also used these images freely. Indiana Engraving Company advertised in the 1917, 1918, 1919, 1921, and 1923 yearbooks with an image of a generic American Indian in a full headdress.

**After the Resolution: 1990-2014**

After the 1990 resolution between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and Dowagiac Union Schools, a shift began to slowly occur. The new, approved logo appeared on the cover of the 1990, 1992-1994, and 1997-1998 yearbooks. The 1995 yearbook utilized an image that was very close in style of regalia, but was not the approved logo. The tradition of using *Wahoo* for the yearbook’s title continued, and three times a subtitle with an appropriated American Indian connotation was used. In 2005, the *Wahoo* was subtitled *Doe-Wah-Jack*, and in 2012, it was subtitled *The Chieftain*. In 2009, the *Wahoo* was subtitled *Chieftain Superhero*. The
depiction of the Chieftain Superhero on the title page included face paint and a mohawk. The 1998 yearbook reflected back on 100 years of yearbooks for Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School. It included the editor’s forward from the 1918 Doe-Wah-Jack yearbook, and showed an image of the band from 1932 that included the bass drum with an image of a generic American Indian person on it. In 2007, the Freshman section of the yearbook was entitled, “Bottom of the Totem Pole” (Wahoo: 007, p. 67). In 2012, the editors made a statement that said:

"WE WILL ALWAYS BE THE CHIEFS: ... There is a special meaning to being a Chieftain. It is how we play our sports. We play different (sic) than other schools. We play with heart and emotion. Win or loose (sic) we know that our fans will still be behind us and we will always be Chiefs!" (Wahoo: The Chieftain, p. 3)

In the 2013 yearbook, using a technology theme, blue birds, like the Twitter logo, were drawn wearing the headdress from the approved logo (Figure 26). Later, an avatar wore a headdress with two feathers, and the approved logo appeared in the faculty and staff section. A “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it is prominently located on the back of the 2013 yearbook (Figure 27), and in 2014 the image was used in place of a student’s photograph that was not available. The 2014 yearbook also used a stylized font in some sections that could be seen as American Indian-appropriated, and the back cover again showed a “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it. The years 2011, 2013, and 2014 all include a seeking game. The editors challenged the readers to seek out images hidden throughout the book. In 2011, the hidden image was the approved logo. In 2013, the hidden image was the “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it. In 2014, the hidden image was again the approved logo, but this time there was more information. In this yearbook, the approved logo was given...
the name “Wahoo,” and was described as “wearing a feathered hat” (*Wahoo: The Wild Ride*, 2014, p. 69).

![Image of a bird wearing a headdress](image1.png)

*Figure 26. 2013 bird wearing headdress from the logo (Wahoo).*

![Image of a D with a headband and feathers](image2.png)

*Figure 27. A "D" with a headband with two feathers hanging on it was featured on the back of the 2013 Wahoo.*
Athletics. While the athletic teams were still known as the Chieftains and Chiefs, women’s teams also started to use the nickname Lady Chiefs in 1995. Yearbook writers used only these names to describe the teams, with the exception of the 1997 yearbook when they were described as “courageous warriors” (Wahoo, p. 89). In 1991, a basketball caption described a play as a Chief “attack!” (Wahoo, p. 66). In 1999, a caption of a football photograph read, “Chieftains are on the war path!” (Wahoo, p. 43). In 1996, the section about the cheerleaders was entitled, “Who’s that Chieftain in my teepee? It’s me, it’s me!” (Wahoo, p. 83). No other remnants of American Indian-appropriated language were used to describe the athletics teams. By 1991, the center of the basketball court had been repainted with an image of a basketball. In 1992, the approved logo can be seen prominently behind the tennis courts.

In 2002, a new banner was hung on the wall of the gymnasium. This banner was in the shape of a feather, and read “Dowagiac” vertically. This banner could be seen hanging until 2010. In 2005, an identical banner could be shown hanging in the cafeteria. A table banner was frequently seen in the gymnasium with two of the approved logos facing one another from each end of the banner. In this photo a “D” with a headband and two feathers was also visible. This first appeared in 2003, and could be seen in photographs through 2009. In 2004, a banner hung behind the sports winners with the word “Chiefs” inside a feather. In 2011, a photograph of the football field showed that a “D” in the center of an arrowhead had been painted on the field (Figure 28). This can be seen again in year 2012.

By the mid-1990s, a shift was made to incorporating single feathers into uniforms. The 1994 girls’ basketball shorts showed a single feather on the outside of each leg. These can be seen being worn by girls’ basketball players through 2002. In 1997, a feather replaced the letter “I” in “Dowagiac” on the football jerseys. In 1998, a basketball coach was shown wearing a shirt with a horizontal feather with the word “Chiefs” inside it. In 2001, that same image appeared on the track team’s jerseys, and the girls’ junior varsity soccer team jerseys showed a single feather. These jerseys were worn by the cross country and track teams through 2002. In 2002, the football jerseys with the feather in place of the “I” were worn by the junior varsity team. This style was also worn by the basketball players in 2002. In 2002, 2003 and 2004, the varsity football jerseys again showed a single feather. At that time, it appeared horizontally, above the number. The junior varsity soccer team jerseys had a single feather on them in 2002.
In 2005, a “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging from it began to appear on sports uniforms, first on the boys’ golf shirts. In 2006, it appeared on the boys’ cross country jerseys and boys’ basketball jerseys. In 2009, the girls’ tennis shirts also began using this image. In 2011, the warm ups that the cheerleaders wore, baseball jerseys, and coach’s apparel also included this image. In 2012, the boys’ soccer jerseys, girls’ basketball warm ups, wrestling warm ups and singlets (Figure 29), baseball hats, and girls’ volleyball jerseys included the image. These uniforms remained until 2014. In 2007, the football helmets showed an arrowhead with a D in the center. These remained until 2014.

Figure 29. 2012 wrestling singlet with the “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging on it (*Wahoo: The Chieftain*).

**Homecoming.** Homecoming floats and banners continued to depict American Indian-appropriated imagery in the early 1990s. One homecoming banner in 1990 depicted a generic American Indian person wielding a tomahawk, and another showed a generic American Indian
person with a large nose and full headdress. A float from that year showed a scarecrow dressed in Redface. In 1991, a banner announces that, “The real chiefs are from Dowagiac!” In 1992, 1999 and 2003, students attempted to add the approved logo to their homecoming banners with their own drawing abilities. In 1993, a large paper mache image of Bart Simpson appeared in Redface on a float, wearing two feathers in his hair and carrying a tomahawk. In 1995, the Senior float included a teepee with symbols drawn on the side to represent appropriated American Indian imagery. In 1997, a homecoming banner included a feather. During Spirit Week in 2006, two students dressed in Redface to show their Chieftain pride. In 2011, two photographs showed two different banners with a drawing of a “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging on it (Figure 30). Also in 2011, students on the Homecoming court rode in a parade. The cars that the students rode in had magnets on the sides that included the approved logo.

Figure 30. Freshmen carry a banner in the Homecoming parade (Wahoo: Color Me Crazy, 2011).

In the early 1990s, fans continued to wear tee shirts and sweatshirts with images of generic American Indian people that wore a full headdress. In 1991, an advertisement that hung in the background of a photograph taken in the school’s main office showed two generic
American Indian people facing each other, both wearing a full headdress. In 1995, a student was shown wearing a letterman’s jacket with a patch of a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. Students were referred to as “Chieftain fans” in 1996 (Wahoo, p. 4), “fellow Chieftains” in 1997 (Wahoo, p. 33), parents were referred to as “a host of Chieftain moms and dads” in 1997 (Wahoo, p. 33), and alumni offered their best wishes “from your fellow Chieftains” in 2009 (Wahoo: Chieftain Superhero, p. 118).

In 2003, fans could don a foam finger that read “Go Chiefs,” and “We’re #1!” and included the approved logo. Sweatshirts and tee shirts with the approved logo started to appear in yearbook photographs in 2004. A poster on the wall in 2005 read, “Go Chiefs,” and included the approved logo. In 2006, another poster read, “Go Chieftains,” and includes two single feathers. In 2007, fans tee shirts and sweatshirts began appearing showing the letter D in an arrowhead. In this year, clothing items also started more frequently appearing with the approved logo as well.

In 2008, as mentioned earlier, branding expanded to include the image of the “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it. That began appearing on uniforms, tee shirts and other clothing items (Figure 31). In 2010, the “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it were also engraved onto plaques given to that year’s Outstanding Athletes.
In 2010, the “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging on it, inspired other imagery. In that year’s yearbook, rather than hanging on a letter “D,” the headband was drawn hanging from a sticker that read “Chiefs” in a drawing of a student’s locker. In 2011, drawings from elementary students were included in the yearbook. Two of these drawings also included drawings of the “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging on it. In 2014, the school’s robotics team also used the image. Their “D,” though, was made to look like it was constructed of metal plating, and the team used the name the “Chieftainators.” The stoles that the graduates wore in 2014 included both the “D” with a headband with two feathers hanging on it, and the approved logo.
**Performing Arts.** The band continued to use the name Dowagiac Chieftain Marching Band through 2006. After 2006, there was a brief mention of the band as the Chiefs in 2012, otherwise they were called The Big Orange Machine, or the Dowagiac Marching Band. Majorettes dressed in Redface until 1997, but without the headdresses starting in 1991 (Figure 32). The capes on the backs of the band uniforms retained their appropriated American Indian imagery through 1994.

![Figure 32. 1991 majorettes (Wahoo).](image)

In 1992, the drama club again presented *Li’l Abner*. As before in 1981, students dressed in Redface onstage to play the roles. In 1994, the drama club presented both *Tom Sawyer* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. Again, both of these plays required the use of Redface by actors.

**Student Activities.** The Chieftain Monitor newspaper continued to appear listed in yearbooks as a school activity, or photographed as the name had been painted on a classroom wall, until 2010. Visiting author Frank McCourt was quoted as learning how to say the name of the town by using “Doe-Wah-Jack” in 1998. That same year, one of the White co-valedictorians chose to use a Hopi proverb during her speech. In 1999, under a photo of students stacked upon each other, the caption read, “The Seniors show a totem pole of friendship” (*Wahoo*, p. 2). At the
2003 Senior Night, a group of students performed *YMCA*, with one of them dressed in Redface. The Business Club’s banner depicted the approved logo next to a chart in 2004 and 2005. In 2011, a club called Adopt-a-Chieftain was started. The purpose of this club was to decorate the lockers of students who played athletics to encourage them on game days. This club was again featured in 2013 and 2014.

In 2012, students started a club called Chieftain Heart. The logo for this club was a drawing of a heart with a headband with two feathers hanging on it. The role of the club was to raise school spirit in all events, not just sports, and to “exemplify the pride and tradition of the Dowagiac spirit” (*Wahoo: The Chieftain*, 2012, p. 48). This club was also described in the 2013 and 2014 yearbook.

The stained glass image of a generic American Indian that was gifted to the school in 1985 continued to hang in the cafeteria. Throughout this time period, it appeared in the backgrounds of photographs of awards ceremonies and group photos. The banner that hung during awards ceremonies in the late 1980s with a drawing of a generic American Indian person with real feathers was again hung in 1990. At a 1991 academic achievement night, a new banner was hung. The image included on this banner was an image that was very close to the style of regalia worn in Mix’s painting, but it was not the approved logo. This was used through 1994.

In 1991, a photo of a person wearing traditional Potawatomi regalia appeared in the yearbook (Figure 33). This person is believed to be Brian Dayson, a student of Potawatomi lineage. Another photograph of Dayson in regalia appeared in the section that celebrated the football team’s trip to the Silver Dome for the state championship. Dayson is seen on the sidelines, and the caption of this photo reads, “Brian (the name of the football player in the photograph) stands on the sidelines by the mascot” (*Wahoo*, 1991, p. 85). This is the third time
that the Chieftain mascot had been embodied, and the first time that it had been embodied by a person in traditional Potawatomi regalia. The final time that the Chieftain mascot was identified as a person is in 2012. In this photograph the student that was identified as such was dressed in a banana costume (Figure 34).

*Figure 33. A student appears dressed in traditional Potawatomi regalia in 1991* (*Wahoo*).
Students of Potawatomi lineage continued to attend Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School, and participate in athletics and school clubs. In 1999, a photo of people wearing traditional Potawatomi regalia was included. In 2005 and 2006, John Merseau played soccer. In 2007, the co-Valedictorian was Mike Kasper. The caption below a photograph of him speaking at graduation said that he, “got in touch with his ethnic roots after reading some of his speech in the Potawatomi language” (Wahoo: 007, 2007, p. 24). That same year, a section of the yearbook was dedicated to the students at Dowagiac Union High School of Potawatomi lineage. It told a brief history of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and interviewed six students. The students mentioned the support that they feel from their tribe, the health and education benefits they receive, their unique heritage, and their love for fry bread. In 2008, Charles Mersereau and John Morseau participated in Academic Challenge. Corrine Kasper and Gabriel Kasper were Students of the Month in 2012.
In the 2006 yearbook, Central Middle School, that had once been Central High School, was celebrated by student editors. The building was being torn down that year, and many photographs of the building were included in the yearbook. One of these photographs shows a relief of a generic American Indian person that was on the side of the building (Figure 35). The person is wearing a full headdress, the words Doe-Wah-Jack are below him, and four arrowheads point to each corner of the square. The caption reads, “The Chieftain head can be found around the building. This is also an important aspect not only to Dowagiac schools but also to the community as well” (*Wahoo: Dream Dare Do*, 2006, p. 110).

![Figure 35. Central Middle School relief (*Wahoo: Dream Dare Do*, 2006).](image)

**Advertisements.** Town businesses continued to advertise in the yearbook using American Indian-appropriated language and images. Harvey’s changed its name to Round Oak Restaurant and Lounge, and in 1993, used the Chief Doe-Wah-Jack emblem with “Heap good food and drink” below it. This advertisement appeared again in 2011. In 1996-1998 and again in 2013, Dowagiac Commercial Press used an advertisement that included a drawing of a generic American Indian person. In 1999, a photograph of a painting of Chief Doe-Wah-Jack on the side of a downtown building appeared with the advertisements. In 2005, automotive dealership C
Wimberley placed an advertisement that included a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress (Figure 36). By 2005, Wahoo Drive-In had become Mr. Wahoo’s, and the advertisement for this business also depicted a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. In 2007, the 1967 advertisement for Big Chief Wahoooo was repeated, showing a generic American Indian person with face paint, a headdress, and a lance. In 2011, Mr. Wahoo’s advertised again, but did not include an image. The 2009 advertisements include one from Indian Lake Golf Course that showed a drawing of a generic American Indian person wearing a full headdress. From 2011-2014, an advertisement for DEA included the approved logo in their advertisement.

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians advertised in 1996 and 1997. In 2008, the Wahoo staff offered a thank you to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Fund for their support. This combination of appreciation and advertisement was accompanied by a photograph of people in traditional Potawatomi regalia.
DISCUSSION

The Research and the Theory

As Brayboy (2005) explains, Tribal Critical Race Theory is concerned with colonization. While Brayboy refers to colonization as it applies to land, and assimilation as it applies to the loss of culture to White supremacy, it can also be suggested that colonization can be extended to include cultural appropriation and the misuse of American Indian bodies. Throughout the 110 Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks examined, there were more than 1,750 examples of appropriated culture and depictions of American Indian bodies. It is important to remember that yearbooks are not complete pictures of a school year, and that it is likely that students experienced many more encounters with appropriated American Indian imagery and language.

As the yearbooks were examined, one trend that stood out was the number of disembodied heads that appeared, almost always in profile, and often wearing a full headdress. While not violently without their heads, this disembodiment represents a cultural decapitation. The head was removed from the body, just as the culture was removed from the people, and used as those in the dominant culture wished. Almost never were these images the same, until the resolution in 1990 that led to the adoption of an approved logo. Not only were they inconsistent, they were also not reflective of the Potawatomi heritage present in the area. Many other cultural items depicted were also not accurate to the area, including the teepees.

When Eby (1988) wrote in his editorial, “There should be no insult in recognizing our Indian heritage and in trying to think of Dowagiac as what the word Chieftain means - the head of the tribe. The leader of the pack” (p. 5), he wrote about taking something that doesn’t belong to the dominant culture (perhaps the most important thing, the leaders and elders) and using them
to boost the spirits of a sports team. By romanticizing the leaders of a group of people in this way, the sacred honor that they hold is diminished. As Pewewardy (2001) said, “Those who blindly adore the difference of the other, is just as afflicted as those who vilify it” (p. 261).

Earlier, Davis’s (2002) and Deloria, King, and Springwood’s (2001) ideas about American Indian stereotypes were discussed. Davis’s (2002) identified stereotypes of the “bloodthirsty savage” and the “noble savage” (p. 11) were found throughout the yearbooks. While Deloria, King and Springwood’s (2001) “drunken native” (p. 8) was not apparent, modified versions of the “dancing native,” and the “sexual native” (p. 8) were present.

The “bloodthirsty savage” (Davis, 2002, p. 11) is depicted from William Penn’s description of American Indian people as a “common danger” (1905, Essay on National Growth), to every description of the athletics teams as being savages, scalping their enemies on the warpath. In this way, American Indians were dehumanized. Student-constructed Homecoming floats and banners often depicted American Indian people as killers, using a number of weapons and methods of destruction, in the name of energizing athletes and fans. A common school spirit and pride was developed through the colonization of American Indian bodies and appropriated culture through violence.

By combining the original ideas of the “dancing native” and the “sexual native” (Deloria, King & Springwood, 2001, p. 8), an idealized, graceful, “Indian Princess” (1954, p. 17) emerges. The Dowagiac marching band’s majorettes are the most obvious examples of this stereotype. Valued for their ability to twirl a baton while wearing a loincloth and a midriff top, this belittling of the American Indian experience maintained a White supremacist and misogynistic culture for forty years. In 1971, when a majorette won homecoming queen, she traded her headdress for a
tiara, showing that American Indian culture can be tossed to the side when a Euro-American tradition that is perceived as superior is offered.

Two other stereotypes not mentioned by Davis, Deloria, King and Springwood were noticed. The first is the misuse of American Indian people as otherworldly beings, or as having a connection to the spiritual world. Examples of this appear in the 1907 Class History that mentions the Great Spirit, and when an athletic team is urged to “put the Indian sign on” (p. 44) their opponents in 1956. The knowledge of the natural and supernatural world is desired by the students, as the sharing of this knowledge from American Indian people to the students is mentioned in 1931 and 1954. In fact, in 1954, it is discussed as being wisdom of a shared heritage between the American Indian people that lived in the area and the White students who requested it. It is Fisher (2001) that suggested that with the addition of the American Indian wisdom and spirituality, the White student believes they will become elite.

Simultaneously, the American Indian body is demonized in depictions, particularly on the Faculty page of the 1925 yearbook in which an American Indian person is drawn with tall pointed ears and horns while it engages in a ritualized dance by a fire (Figure 37). This particular depiction of an American Indian body and its experience with spirituality, shows how foreign and demonic the American Indian culture is to the White students creating the yearbook.
The stereotype that was not discussed by other scholars researched is that of the American Indian as the fool. With performances by the Glee Club and Drama Club that showcase American Indians in a comedic role, like 1918’s *Pocahontas: A Comic Operetta*, and 1981’s *Li’l Abner*, it is not surprising that students continued to mock American Indian culture, language, and bodies through drawings on banners and skits at pep assemblies. While “Chieftain Charlie” may have been an entertaining part of the cheerleader’s performances in the 1950s and 1960s, he did not receive respect as he was “being carried around … by his enormous nose” (*Wahoo*, 1965, p. 151). At other pep assemblies, boys dressed in Redface are described as “witty” (*Wahoo*, 1958, p. 30), and cheerleaders in Redface are described as participating in their regular “antics” (*Wahoo*, 1964, p. 45). These descriptions convey that the behavior that the
students were demonstrating was not that of cultural respect, but mockery. This cultural mockery was not only accepted by other students and the staff, but encouraged, laughed at, and then dismissed as playful, when in actuality it was harmful.

Yearbook illustrations also perpetuated the stereotype of the American Indian as the fool. In a 1925 joke section, two American Indian heads are shown facing one another with their oversized headbands down over one eye (Figure 38). Their slack jaw faces convey an absurd feeble-mindedness. In 1959, an American Indian person is drawn laying on rocks with a pipe next to the Most Likely to Succeed section. Using this drawing in this context insinuates that the American Indian person is lazy, and that it is included with these words in irony. The 1960 yearbook is full of drawings of American Indian people with very large, cartoon noses. If this caricaturizing of the American Indian face was not demeaning enough, the Sports page also depicts eight American Indian people engaging in athletic activities. In most of these depictions, the American Indian person has failed in some way, making a joke of their ability to play the sport (Figure 39).

Figure 38. The 1925 Joke section (Wahoo).
Even the “Chieftain” is diminished in three of the four instances that it was physically embodied. The first two times that a person was identified as the Chieftain mascot, the person was a young child. This infantilizes the position, rather than honoring a community’s culture, and creates a mental scenario in which a Euro-American child is capable of doing the important work of leading a tribe. The last time that a Chieftain mascot was identified in the yearbook, the title was attributed to a person in a banana costume. Again, the role of the Chieftain is ridiculed rather than honored, and the disparagement is celebrated as being playful.

Brayboy’s (2005) TribalCrit theory that American Indian culture is used for the material gain of the dominant White culture is also evident in the Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks. From the initial use of Chief Doe-Wah-Jack by the Round Oak Stove Company and Beckwith Estates, American Indian bodies and culture were commodified in
Dowagiac. In 1905, it is apparent that Round Oak’s Chief Doe-Wah-Jack had influence on the community perception of itself. A reference to “Doe-Wah-Jack pride” shows that members of the community relied upon Round Oak’s industry, and banded together as the business’s success indicated the city’s success. What once was a mascot for a local business, had become a mascot for the entire city. With Chief Doe-Wah-Jack the community also began to understand that it was acceptable to use American Indian culture and bodies to make money, and sustain a capitalist society. Over 115 examples of advertising in this way can be seen in the yearbooks.

The concept of using American Indian bodies and culture to make money was not lost on the students. Students in 1977 and 1978, and again in 1984, showed their understanding of this when they used a generic American Indian head in the place of an imagined business logo on their Homecoming floats. Just as the community was using these images to sell items not related to traditional American Indian culture, so did the students by placing them on the sides of a train, a can of shaving cream, and board games. In 2013, the yearbook staff added the headdress of the approved logo to a business’s logo to associate the school in another act of commodification of cultural images.

The commodification was continued by the school as hats, tee shirts, sweatshirts, and foam fingers were sold to fans of the athletic teams. Because the image in the approved logo was given to the school to use as they wished, it was not uncommon to see this image on any number of items, being sold at the local gas station (J. Wesaw, personal communication, October 4, 2017).

As King (2001) suggested, the school did seek authenticity to prove that the use of the Chieftain mascot was honorable. In 1961, the majorettes’ headdresses were authenticated as being made by “an honest-to-goodness Indian” (Wahoo, p. 43) in the yearbook. Indeed, the
headdresses were made by a local member of the Pokagon Potawatomi tribe (J. Winchester, personal communication, October 30, 2017). Since their use by the school, the headdresses were donated to the Dowagiac Area History Museum. The feathers used in the headdresses, sacred eagle feathers, were then repatriated back to the original owners, and replaced with turkey feathers (S. Arseneau, personal communication, October 4, 2017).

The school community again sought to create a level of authenticity by engaging with the tribe in 1990. By seeking the approval of the Pokagon Band, and using a logo drawn by a tribal member, the school was making an attempt to soften and streamline the image of the Chieftain to one that was more legitimate in its cultural understanding. The authenticity that was created by this agreement, as well as the attempt to have an authentic Chieftain mascot on the field at the state football championships, created a community understanding of absolution for past oversight and inaccuracies. It is not known what prompted the school’s decision to reach out to the tribe. Whether it was a genuine concern for a culture, the community, and the student body, or the fear of litigation and public criticism as being politically incorrect, some positive changes were made, however, the Chieftain name remained.

Brayboy’s (2005) statement that by increasing both cultural and academic knowledge, American Indian students could gain power to self-determine and find success. This is evidenced in the pages of the Dowagiac High School/Dowagiac Union High School yearbooks. Prior to 1990, students of Potawatomi lineage appeared to be idealized for their athletic ability. The groups that they participated in were almost all athletic groups, though a few were mentioned for their artistic abilities. After the resolution of 1990 that included some improvements in depiction and cultural education, students of Potawatomi lineage continued to be active in sports and the
arts, and were also involved in academic activities, selected for citizenship awards, were presidents of student clubs, and one was honored as co-valedictorian.

The decision for any American Indian body to make decisions about public representation by non-native groups are complicated (Brayboy, 2005; King & Springwood, 2001). Some tribal members are situated at the intersection of their ethnic heritage, while also being socialized in the Dowagiac School System as Chieftains. Their pride in one community does not negate the pride they hold for the other community. The conversation is also complicated by the political climate, the desire to be self-governed, and the racialized context of the issue (Brayboy, 2005). Priorities must be set, and often sovereignty, economic independence, and blatant racism top the list. “Chieftain,” as a word, is not among the most problematic slurs that one hears regarding American Indian people, though it does generate a mental picture and understanding. When asked how she responds to concerns about Dowagiac’s use of “Chieftain,” the current communications director for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians responded, “The Band does not have an official statement on the Chieftains mascot. The main tribal activity regarding mascots has been centered on those schools and teams using the R-word” (P. Risser, personal communication, October 23, 2017).

Implications of the Research

The appropriation of American Indian culture and imagery was, and continues to be, deeply ingrained into the way of life of Dowagiac Union Schools students. Because these micro-aggressions are so widely accepted and encouraged by the administration, staff and other students, many students, including some of those who are members of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, find it difficult to see another perspective. For me, it took removing myself and having more social and educational experiences, to be able to see that the continued use of
American Indian mascots is problematic. Perhaps this is why Eby (1988) suggested that the only people offended by the mascots were outsiders. Or, perhaps it is the continued systems of social oppression that keep members of the community from sharing their dissenting opinions.

Though the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the Dowagiac Union Schools came to an agreement about the continued use of Chieftain as a nickname in 1990, the impact on the students was not immediately apparent. The ceremony that took place at a football game announcing the resolution made no appearance in the school’s yearbook. There was not an announcement in a yearbook regarding the new logo. No evidence is apparent in the yearbooks that the curricula changed, or that any different information was shared with the community.

While students of Potawatomi lineage did appear to participate in more academic activities and social clubs after 1990, this cannot be attributed directly to the few minute changes that were made as a result of the resolution. It was also around this time that the tribe was able to achieve government affirmation of their tribal status and more financial independence, and subsequently they had more resources to support the needs of their members. The growth and success of the tribe is likely the cause of the success of their young people, rather than the concessions that their school made when trying to retain their demeaning mascot.

The topic of the Chieftain mascot needs to be addressed in Dowagiac. The Dowagiac Union Schools needs to reinvigorate the conversation around the Chieftain mascot. They need to look for alternative ways to build community and school spirit that is not on the backs of a group of people that have been systematically oppressed by the government and its institutions. They need to make the language and culture classes that the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians offer a priority by supporting them with funding. Dowagiac Union Schools needs to take the lead in interrupting the idea of “but that’s the way it’s always been.” They could continue to be
leaders in the community in recognizing the value of all of their students and the surrounding community members.

There are big actions that could, and should, happen. In the meantime, educators can begin to affect change by reading, and hearing the voices of those most affected by American Indian mascots. Continuing the conversation among educators and education leaders within buildings, service agencies, and more broadly at conferences will help to shift language and an understanding of bias within the classroom. Looking for opportunities to interrupt the narrative of oppression is important in serving all of our students and creating equitable educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

According to Eckert (2001), the kind of agreement that Dowagiac Union Schools and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians have may make for a kinder, more authentic logo, but the harm inflicted is still that of racism. In 2013, the Dowagiac Chieftains were again challenged as the Michigan Department of Civil Rights sued 35 districts, stating that their American Indian mascots impacted student learning. The complaint was dismissed due to a lack of evidence of specific student harm (Yoakum, 2013).

The Dowagiac Union Schools commitment to the 1990 resolution remains, but wanes in energy. Though slurs and demeaning language continue to be disallowed, and a commitment has been made to continue to present curricula that is inclusive of the local Potawatomi heritage (P. Harstig, personal communication, August 24, 2017), the use of the tribe as an expert resource has dwindled. While the tribe offers culture and language classes to local schools, Dowagiac Union Schools have yet to take advantage of them (J. Wesaw, personal communication, October 4,
And while the approved logo appears on some merchandise and official documents, there has been a rebranding, and the “D” with a headband and two feathers hanging on it is used most frequently (P. Hartsig, personal communication, August 24, 2017). It appears that little conversation between Dowagiac Union Schools and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians has occurred regarding this change, and the Dowagiac community accepts the “D” logo broadly. The logo even appears on the sides of the Dowagiac Police vehicles (Dowagiac Police Department, 2015).

In 1994, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians was finally recognized by the federal government (Eby, 1994). This action reaffirmed the status of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians as a tribe, rather than granting it (History, n.d.). Serving 10 counties in southwestern Michigan and northwestern Indiana, they offer housing, education, family services, medical care, and cultural preservation services to their members (Eby, 2007a).

Tribal members continue to practice traditional arts as well as more contemporary media (Art, n.d.). Dancing often occurs at pow wows as a gift for those watching, to lift their spirits (Dance, n.d.). Some tribal members continue to look to the Seven Grandfather teachings (Traditions, n.d.), honor the Four Directions (Four Directions, n.d.), and use traditional medicines (Medicines, n.d.). The tribe is working to revitalize their native language their regular classes with tribal members (Language, n.d.), and an effort is being made to reclaim the clan system in a way more congruent to contemporary life (Art, n.d.)

In 2007, the Band opened a casino (Eby, 2007b). Prior to opening, tribal leaders estimated that the casino would generate $20 million to be paid to the state, and another $4 million would be paid to local agencies in the first year (Eby, 2005). The second portion mentioned is managed through the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Fund that holds the
mission of supporting area governments, non-profit organizations, and school districts (Eby, 2007b). Dowagiac Union Schools have appreciated a share of these gifts, and enjoy a relationship of cooperation regarding land usage with the tribe (P. Hartsig, personal communication, August 24, 2017). The superintendent also closely follows the conversations of other local schools as they navigate their usage of American Indian mascots.

In March of 2017 the Michigan State Board of Education reaffirmed its opinion that Michigan schools should not continue to use American Indian mascots and nicknames (Hill, 2017). A motion was passed that would give the state superintendent the ability to withhold funding from districts with American Indian mascots, however the state’s attorney general stated that the superintendent does not have the legal authority to withhold the funding.

The 2012 yearbook made it clear; the students wish to “always be the Chiefs” (Wahoo: The Chieftain, p. 3). The 1990 resolution between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the Dowagiac Union Schools supports that statement. As already asserted, American Indian people should have the power to state who they are and how they should be depicted (Davis, 2002). So what’s an anti-racist, White woman to do when tribal leaders are telling her that they have decided to support the continued use of the Dowagiac Chieftain? If the social change is not being led by the members of the tribe, does one continue to act in support of removal of the nickname and logo? As Brayboy (2005) claims, the answers are in the personal narratives of the American Indian people. I am committed to continuing to hear these valuable stories, and I am committed to engaging in the conversations necessary to determine what appropriate next steps toward social change should be. My hope is that conversations occur. It has been almost forty years since the resolution, and it appears that not much communication and consideration of the topic has occurred in the meantime. I will continue to address the conversation of educational
equity in my work with my own students and colleagues in an effort to create collaborative action.
APPENDIX

Yearbook Data Grid
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