

High Country News

For people who care about the West

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SEVERED TIES

To open the West for settlement, the United States stole generations of Indigenous children

By Nick Estes

Ars Charley



Peter Gibb, research archivist for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, studies images of children who were removed from their homelands and sent to the Carlisle Indian School starting in 1879. SERGE VAN NECK

Editor's note

Our shared histories inform the future

On reading Nick Estes' trenchant history of the Carlisle boarding school this issue, you could be forgiven for seeing only the cruelty of U.S. policy in regards to the kidnapping and forced assimilation of Indigenous children. Estes' story, on its surface, is a familiar one; you've likely seen some of the photos from the infamous school — boys and girls in uniforms, cut hair, expressionless faces. For many readers, those faces are relatives — real people, real relatives, who either survived the experience or never returned home. But Estes does more than just revisit those stories and update the narratives; he reframes our understanding of those events. He takes a story you think you know and digs even deeper.



Estes' reporting reveals a hidden truth: that Indian boarding schools were a horrific tool intentionally used to dispossess Indigenous people of their lands, territories and resources. While the program's experience and goals have been known to Indigenous communities for decades, the way it was used to essentially hold children hostage in order to pressure tribes into ceding their land is not common knowledge. But the story isn't just about revealing previously unknown facts; it's about seeking accountability, and perhaps even the possibility of positive change. Rethinking national origins allows us to envision a future in which justice is braided into our collective stories, not merely an elusive, unattainable concept.

That justice, of course, involves how we think of land, who owns it, and who benefits from its theft.

In another story, we examine one of the unforeseen consequences of land theft. Reporter Deb Krol follows a band of Indigenous "guerrilla gatherers" in what is currently California, where a total of 18 treaties were made between settlers and Indigenous communities in the late 1800s, ceding hundreds of thousands of acres. Those treaties were backed by the federal government but never ratified by Congress, leaving tribes landless, without agreed-upon services, often without any form of recognition, and subject to the laws of the state. The consequences of this historic and legal crime are especially clear along the coasts, where environmental laws and state authorities prevent Indigenous communities from harvesting fish, shells, mollusks, seaweed and other foods and medicines. As Krol shows, Indigenous guerrilla gatherers are forced to break settler law to practice their traditions. Indigenous people are fighting for — and winning — subsistence hunting rights, but California still has a ways to go.

From the Carlisle Indian School to the guerrilla gatherers, Indigenous communities continue to challenge American values, forcing Americans to rethink basic ideas of justice and rapprochement. I hope that this issue will encourage you, too, to think critically about the West you love, and the future you desire for it.

—Tristan Ahtone, associate editor

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On the cover

Original illustration by Spirit Lake Dakota/ Navajo artist Avis Charley in the traditional ledger paper style. AVIS CHARLEY FOR HIGH COUNTRY NEWS



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Wind turbines in Wyoming. A newly expanded energy imbalance market could lead to more renewable energy development.

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO/
LANCE CHEUNG

THE LATEST

Backstory

In 2014, California's power grid operator, CAISO, created an energy imbalance market that allows it to share small amounts of power with other utilities to correct imbalances between supply and demand. **This was considered to be a first step toward unifying the Western grid**, which is currently broken up into 38 distinct units. Proponents of a unified grid say it will allow for long-distance sharing of large amounts of wind and solar power on short notice, thereby reducing the need to burn fossil fuels to meet spikes in demand ("One grid to rule them all," *HCN*, 7/18/17).

Followup

Two more utilities agreed in September to join the Western market, bringing the total number of participants to 20 — about three-fourths of all the electricity used on the Western grid. **The widespread participation is likely to break down political barriers to the market's expansion**, which in turn could finally unite the balkanized power grid.

JONATHAN THOMPSON

Ittibah Achafah competes against Tvshka Homma during the championship game of the inaugural women's stickball tournament held in the capital of the Choctaw Nation. Below right, during the championship game, Kristin Josh leads Ittibah Achafah in a team chant. Josh formed the team just a month before the championship game.

TRISTAN AHTONE/
HIGH COUNTRY NEWS



Indigenous women show who's got game

Over Labor Day weekend, the Choctaw Nation held the inaugural women's stickball tournament, where two teams from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians met in a hard-fought championship match. The Choctaw Holiday Festival in Oklahoma is in its sixth year. This was the first time the event included a women's bracket, though Choctaw women have played stickball for hundreds of years. It's the Choctaw national game, as well as an integral sport among the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole and other tribes. The game was created to resolve disputes in lieu of going to war; in fact, stickball is nicknamed "the little brother of war." GRAHAM LEE BREWER

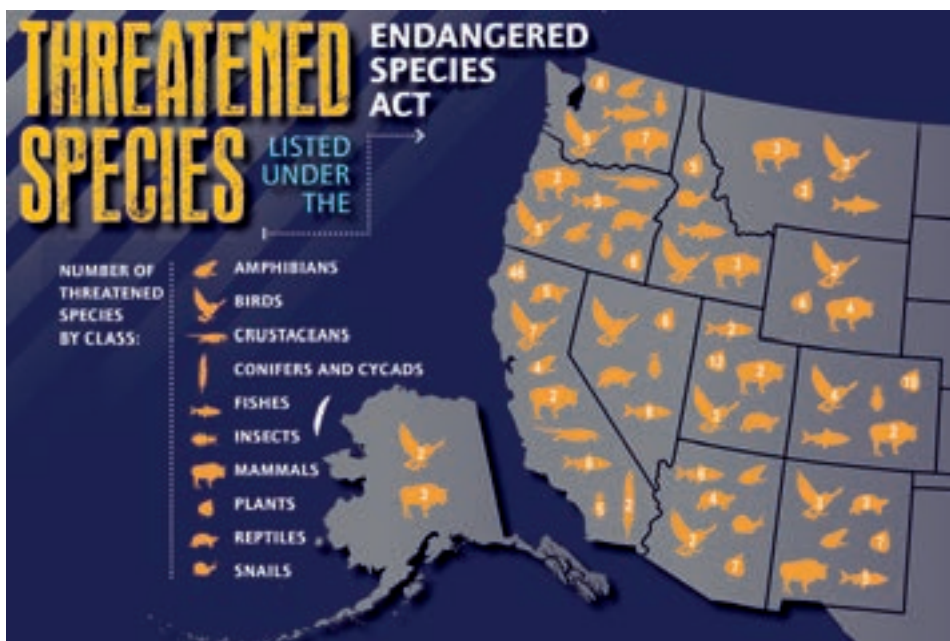
Read more online: hcne.ws/got-game



“They cooked the books and changed every assumption they could to get the answer they wanted.”

— Jeff Alson, a former senior engineer at the Environmental Protection Agency's vehicles lab and one of six ex-government scientists who say they were made to bury climate science — from weakening vehicle emissions to blocking warnings about how coastal parks could flood and possible environmental impacts on the Arctic.

Read the stories of six whistleblowers online: hcne.ws/Trump-silenced-science



JOLENE YAZZIE/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS, SOURCE: WWW.FWS.GOV/ENDANGERED/

A quick guide to threatened terrestrial and freshwater species

The Trump administration is proposing several changes to the way the Endangered Species Act is implemented that would weaken the rules governing protections. See the 167 threatened species the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for overseeing in the West, by state.

JOLENE YAZZIE AND HELEN SANTORO Read more online: hcne.ws/threatened-species

Trending

Birds of prey guard orchards and landfills

Roosevelt Regional landfill in Klickitat County, Washington, is one of the largest in the country at more than 2,500 acres. Jimmy Bathke, a master falconer, has worked there for almost two decades, using three falcons to fend off eagles and the thousands of seagulls that flock to the garbage. This practice, known as bird abatement, is somewhat rare for landfills, which have to meet certain health standards. But falconers are more commonly contracted to keep birds away from orchards, refineries and even housing developments. "I love all animals, but I really like the raptors — it's just the birds and I flying all day long, and it's wonderful," said falconer Sue Hanneman. EMILY MCCARTY/CROSSCUT

You say

NEIL MILLER: "Guarding landfills? We're trying to protect the problem we cause in the first place? Thing seems kinda absurd to me."

PETRA GALLERT "I'd much rather have birds of prey do the job than awful poisons (which inevitably affect the food chain)."

JOE WARD: "This is wrong for a variety of reasons. First of all, it's wrong to keep raptors in captivity. Second of all, it's wrong not to share fruit with wild birds. Thirdly, it's wrong to terrorize wild birds with raptors or in any other way. This is worse than anti-bird netting over the trees."

Read more online: hcne.ws/landfill-falcon and Facebook. com/highcountrynews

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SKIP THE TALKING POINTS

An *HCN* article, "Frontier myths crash into Trump's border wall" (*HCN*, 9/16/19), recently came across my Facebook news feed. I'm a fairly new subscriber and just started following along on social media, and I was mildly shocked at the complete lack of nuanced thought in the comments. That's the typical online climate today, but I expected different from the type of people I thought read *High Country News*. I'll say here what I said there: I don't know if I'd call the border wall "racist" as *HCN* did, but it's certainly being built on President Trump's predication that the people coming across our southern border are murderers and rapists. I've got no time for right-wing or left-wing talking points ... or arguments written in all caps! Let's express our opinions, but have something (anything!) to back them up, please.

Matt Harding
Los Angeles, California

TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Suggesting that Robert "Lavoy" Finicum "was later killed by law enforcement at a traffic stop during the (Malheur) occupation" vastly underreports the facts of that law enforcement contact ("Extremists appropriate Indigenous struggles for violent ends," *HCN*, 9/16/19). Mr. Finicum blew through a stop, nearly hit a law enforcement officer, asked to be shot, and reached for his gun.

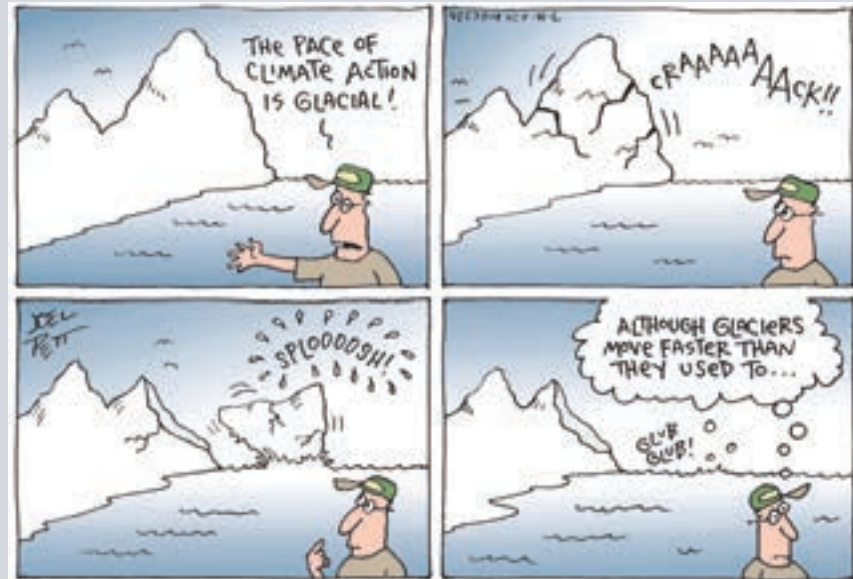
B. Rubble
Sandy, Oregon

EXOTIC MANAGEMENT NARRATIVE

Based on the photos accompanying "A high-flying act in Olympic National Park" (*HCN*, 9/2/19), it looks like your reporter participated in an exciting adventure. However, the article unwittingly reflects a false narrative that has been used to justify the park's management goals for more than four decades.

The transfer of mountain goats to other areas, with the inadvertent deaths of animals in the process and the selecting killing of others, has sparked public controversy for decades. The public review and comments on the management narrative included academic scientific researchers who determined early in the program's development and application that there was little historic and questionable scientific validity to the park's management narrative.

The Park Service contends that mountain goats are an exotic species,



JOEL PETT EDITORIAL CARTOON IS USED WITH THE PERMISSION OF JOEL PETT AND THE CARTOONIST GROUP. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

but there are conflicting reports of goats present in the pre-1925 historic baseline of Olympic National Park. When it developed its management narrative, the park selectively chose references that supported its interests.

University of Missouri anthropologist and paleozoologist R. Lee Lyman has written extensively about the historic and scientific perspective. His 1998 book *White Goats, White Lies* summarizes his years of research.

The park ignored information that would have easily negated its statement that the mountain goat was an exotic species. Mountain goat bones have been found in archaeological sites in the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, with one site located at the base of the west slope of the Olympic Mountain Range. The collective age of these sites extends to at least 8,000 years ago. These archaeological excavations began as early as the turn of the 20th century. I can attest to some of this information because I am one of the archaeologists who recovered mountain goat bones from an excavation in Idaho.

The park claims mountain goats destroy native plants, but ignores the fact that they are also impacted by other species, including humans. (Lyman's book has an extensive discussion about this.)

When Olympic National Park was developing and first implementing its mountain goat management policy, I was the program lead for cultural and natural history programs for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for Washington state. The BLM management area included surface and split-estate lands scattered throughout the state, including the San Juan Islands. The park lay within that geographic area.

I knew that mountain goats were

found historically in the state and that their bones had been found in archaeological contexts, so I needed to treat the species as endemic, not exotic. I had to expect to find additional evidence of mountain goat presence in any archaeological site I had to investigate due to the potential developmental project impacts.

My conclusion, then, during my time with the BLM managing the natural history program, that it was not the mountain goat as a species that was exotic, but Olympic National Park's management narrative. After reading your article, it is obvious that the park has today succumbed to its own myth.

Joseph Randolph
Idaho Falls, Idaho

NOT-SO-SPECULATIVE JOURNALISM

I've never been a fan of science fiction and was skeptical of your "speculative journalism" issue (*HCN*, 8/19/19), so I only skimmed most of it. But the article on Glacier National Park 50 years in the future got me thinking about how much the West has changed since I moved here 46 years ago. Winters are warmer with less snow, temperatures fluctuate year-round, and the sun is a burning hot enemy instead of welcome heat on a cool day. Our mountains are covered in dead trees. Probably worst is the poor air quality, not just along the Front Range where I live, but throughout the West. I recently drove from Fort Collins, Colorado, to Portland, Oregon, and back, and not once did I get to enjoy those beautiful clear blue skies that used to be the norm. Now, my big question is, what can I do about it?

Mary Humstone
Fort Collins, Colorado

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For sage grouse, science can be fatal

Is the value of data worth the death it brings about?

BY HELEN SANTORO

Millions of sage grouse once roamed the arid, open sagebrush landscapes of the West. But with overgrazing, oil and gas development, wildfires and other threats, their numbers have collapsed. By the early 2000s, less than 10% of the original population — only about 500,000 birds — remained. In response, the federal government worked with ranchers, states and nonprofits to finalize sage grouse recovery plans in 2015. But the Trump administration has since overhauled those plans, stripping sage grouse habitats of key protections.

Amid this management chaos and with the bird's existence at risk, scientists are dedicated to tracking sage grouse to understand their movements and develop stronger conservation policies. Now, new research suggests that one of the tools scientists rely on to track the birds causes more fatalities than the alternative.

As scientists seek out information on animals' location, movement and behavior to better manage wildlife, they must balance the need to acquire that data with the harm tagging them may cause. "No animal is better off because we tag them," said Steven Cooke, a professor of fish ecology and conservation physiology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. "The question is whether the value of the information that one gets outweighs the impact on one individual." And evaluating that balance requires both stringent ethics standards and a clear-eyed look at the potentially lethal effects of tracking animals.

Wildlife biologists have been tracking animal movements for centuries, but a new kind of tag transformed the practice in the 1960s. Tiny radio transmitters called "very high frequency," or VHF, tags allowed scientists to pinpoint an animal's location, a huge improvement over metal bands with unique identification numbers. But to track a VHF tag, scientists need to be on the ground with a receiver close enough to the device to pick up its signal, which can be difficult or even impossible if, for example, the animal is in a tight canyon. In the 1990s, GPS devices — which allow researchers to track the exact locations of even the most elusive animals using satellites — were developed, once again revolutionizing wildlife research. GPS has opened new doors for scientists, letting them uncover the perilous journey of Wyoming's pronghorn, for example, and a mule deer with the longest-documented land migration in the Lower 48.

But a recent study shows the downside of this technology for sage grouse. GPS is crucial for locating the birds, which primarily are tracked at night and are difficult to find using VHF technology. Researchers wanted to know the impacts of the two types of trackers, which differ physically: A VHF tag sits around a bird's neck, while a GPS rests like a backpack on a bird's rump. Peter Coates, a wildlife biologist at the U.S. Geological Survey, and his team tracked sage grouse with both GPS and VHF tags over five years at 14 sites in Nevada and California. They found that sage grouse wearing GPS devices had around a 40% reduction in survival compared to those with VHF tags.

While wildlife research is important, science has a long history of viewing animals as objects, said Max Elder, a fellow at the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, a nonprofit think tank based in England. Using trackers to get real-time data might speak more to scientists' hubris and desire to manipulate the environment than a need to develop conservation practices, he said. When it comes to balancing the importance of data with individual animal deaths, "Who says that we are the ones to decide those things?"

For scientists, there are standards and strategies in place to help guide these decisions, said Leslie Schreiber, a wildlife biologist who leads the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's sage grouse program. Animal studies typically receive an extensive review by a research organization's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, an oversight board designed to make sure researchers minimize creatures' pain and distress. And studies like Coates' can drive change; in response to his findings, Schreiber's program is collecting more data to better understand the impact of GPS devices on sage grouse.

Wildlife tracking is essential in understanding how populations fluctuate and developing new conservation strategies, Coates said. It's also important to evaluate the negative impacts of tags, and seek to minimize them. For example, his research team is now investigating whether getting rid of the reflective solar panel on the GPS unit they used, which may attract predators, will help sage grouse survive their stints as research subjects. The goal, he said, is "not to dismiss GPS; it's to improve it."

Technology is evolving quickly, and there are already smaller and lighter GPS devices on the market. But, even with the best tracking technology, it's impossible for humans to observe wildlife without impact, said David Stoner, an ecology professor at Utah State University. "We are influencing the behavior of that system simply by virtue of looking at it," he said. □

Using trackers to get real-time data might speak more to scientists' hubris and desire to manipulate the environment than a need to develop conservation practices, says one animal ethicist.



Sage grouse outfitted with GPS tracking units had about a 40% reduction in survival compared to those wearing VHF tags. Though the GPS units are more precise, researchers are now looking at their potentially negative effects on birds. IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

California's forage wars

In Mendocino County, 'guerrilla gatherers' risk fines and jail time to keep Indigenous food culture alive

BY DEBRA UTACIA KROL

Hillary Renick hikes down scree and rocks worn smooth by waves to reach the sandy beach below. The morning fog has receded, but the sky is still gray along the Mendocino County coastline as Renick scrambles up, down and around Pomo village and nearby sites, where her people harvest traditional foods and collect materials for regalia, such as shells. "The rocky inlets are where the abalone hang out," says Renick.

Renick, a citizen of the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, and her crew of self-described "guerrilla gatherers" are scouting Glass Beach in Fort Bragg for abalone, seaweed and shells they use for food, regalia and ceremonies. "We like to say we're badass Indian women gathering under cover of darkness, crawling under fences, over rocks, around 'no trespassing' signs, and through the mud to provide for funerals, feasts and celebrations," Renick says — although men are also part of the group.

Renick and her friends and family routinely defy California laws and natural-resource management regulations they

say obstruct their right to maintain these traditional practices. The stakes are high: Indigenous peoples risk jail time, tens of thousands of dollars in fines and the lifetime loss of state hunting and fishing privileges for doing what they've always done in this area. But they say the possibility of losing this connection to the land outweighs the legal risks.

In June 2019, California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an apology to the more than 155 Indigenous tribes in the state for decades of genocide, oppression, neglect — wrongs that included suppression of traditional subsistence rights. But the state still regulates fishing, hunting and gathering. Decade after decade, tribes in California have had to find ways to maintain their traditional ways of life in a state that has made this challenging — or even illegal.

For millennia, Pomo, Coast Yuki, Sinkiyone, Yurok and other Northern California tribes have sustainably harvested mollusks, surf fish, seaweed, shells and medicines in the summer, as well as acorns and other inland foods, Renick says. She explains that each summer, after her Pomo Band gathered their first harvest, neighboring tribes, and even tribes as far away as Pit River — on the east side of the Sacramento Valley — were invited to harvest. "When they were done, we sent runners (to) Pit River and invited them to gather," says Renick.

In 1851, after California became a state, Gov. Peter Burnett declared in an address to the state Legislature "that a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected." According to historian Benjamin Madley, from 1846 and 1873 between 9,492 and 16,094 Indigenous people in California were killed, many in massacres conducted by state and local militias. Thousands more starved or were worked to death by forced labor, and historians estimate that around 80% of California Indians

died between statehood and 1880.

In addition, 18 treaties that the U.S. negotiated with California tribes were never ratified by Congress, making the tribes' contemporary situation even more challenging.

"The fact that they don't have those treaties has had a long-term effect on California tribes," says Brendan Lindsay, author of the book *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide, 1846-1873* and an assistant professor at California State University, Sacramento. "The lack of treaties makes advocating for land, subsistence and other rights much harder."

Tribal nations that have federal treaties or legal protections tend to have stronger legal footing for defending subsistence hunting and gathering. For example, in the 1990s Ahtna elder Katie John won subsistence fishery rights for Alaska Natives in federal court. And in June 2018, the Supreme Court affirmed a lower court ruling in favor of tribal fishing rights, due to 19th century treaties negotiated with the federal government. But California tribes have no such recourse.

Nearly 100 years after California's statehood, the U.S. enacted Public Law 280, giving several states, including California, the authority to police tribal lands. The 1958 California Rancheria Termination Act ended federal recognition of — and annulled rights for — 41 tribes, and other tribes were terminated in related legislation. Roughly 30 tribes have had federal recognition restored, often through litigation.

For Hillary Renick's family, grim relations with settlers have been a constant theme. In 1856, the 25,000-acre Mendocino Indian Reservation was established in what is now Fort Bragg and the surrounding area. In 1868, the land was taken from Renick's family and sold by the federal government to what Renick says were primarily soldiers and loggers. "My family managed to hold on to a bit of the Noyo Headlands, even though Fort Bragg and the lumber company kept trying to push us out," says Renick.

Today, Renick's extended family occupies several homes in the four-acre plot, separated from the Noyo Headlands Preserve by fencing. Pomos, Coast Yukis and other Indigenous peoples still come to camp and gather in the area. Their ancestors faced vigilantes and bounty hunters, but now there are new challenges: state laws and regulations that interfere with long-held traditions of harvesting food and regalia materials.

"The fishing-rights cases for California are contentious," Renick says. "The state always brings up termination-era legislation (from the 1950s and '60s) to justify exerting exclusive authority over coastal waters and lands."

But one law that Renick says interferes with Indigenous subsistence rights

Hillary Renick stands for a portrait on a bluff overlooking her ancestral land at the Noyo Headlands in Fort Bragg, California. Renick and her fellow guerrilla gatherers risk jail time and fines to forage the coastline like their ancestors did.

RIAN DUNDON





was enacted in 1999. The Marine Life Management Act's goal is to preserve fish, shellfish and seascapes and to repair damage caused by climate change, overlogging and overfishing. The act allows the state to manage entire marine ecosystems and gives authorities greater enforcement power. But Renick says it overlooks Indigenous peoples and their traditional practices.

Poaching has also become a headache for both the Indigenous people who depend on shellfish for food and for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Despite expanded aquaculture, abalone is still in strong demand, mostly in Asian markets. Just one black-market California abalone can fetch \$100 or more, and law enforcement officials estimated in 1997 that 4,800 abalone were poached in Northern California every diveable day.

"It's been especially agonizing to watch the number of poachers increase exponentially in the past years," says Renick. "We've observed poachers using Zodiac rigid inflatable boats and illegal scuba gear clearing entire tide pool ecosystems

of key species, which devastates both the population ecology of the near-shore and the aboriginal subsistence lifestyle that we maintain."

In contrast, Renick and other Indigenous people insist they are mindful of how they harvest, taking only what's needed and ensuring future subsistence needs will be met. "Being here, harvesting our traditional foods and materials, ensures that we nurture our relationship with the lands and waters," says Renick.

CDFW spokesman Patrick Foy argues that poaching has decreased since the ban went into effect. He says the California Fish and Game Commission, which sets policy for the agency, has a tribal representative from another North Coast tribe, and that the Commission consults with tribes. Foy says of the Commission's move to cancel the abalone season that "sometimes

Clockwise from top, Indigenous gatherers skirt the fencing around the Noyo Headlands. Faded abalone shells hold offerings at a makeshift altar at the site of a fatal accident. A lone guerrilla gatherer searches for abalone in the area where for millennia, tribes have harvested mollusks, surf fish, seaweed and shells.

RIAN DUNDON

tough decisions have to be made.”

Abalone isn't the only coastal food coveted by non-Indian foragers. High-end restaurants have a demand for various species of seaweed, another staple in coastal-area Indigenous people's diets. Commercial foragers dominate the scene, leaving little or nothing for subsistence purposes. “For \$175, you can harvest all the seaweed you want because you're allowed to self-regulate,” says Renick. Such foragers, she explains, often take far more than they report, depleting the resource for others.

To Indigenous peoples living in the food deserts of Northern California, sea palm, *tono* — the Pomo word for some of the more common seaweed along the coast — and other such greens of the ocean hold more than cultural significance; they're also an important source of nutrition.

At Noyo Headlands Preserve, Lena Belle Gensaw, a citizen of the Yurok Tribe, carries her teacup Chihuahua, Panini, in a shoulder bag as she climbs down a steep cliff to the rocky shore. She's traveling with her cousin, Sammy Gensaw, and members of Ancestral Guard, an Indigenous advocacy group from the far North Coast. They made the four-hour trip from Klamath to fish and visit with the Pomos — a centuries-long tradition of neighborliness.

To prepare for a cookout at the Noyo “Rez,” Sammy Gensaw searches a woodpile for alder wood, which he says gives off a smoky heat that will enrich the flavor of salmon as it grills over a pit fire.

The abalone's pink meat is prized for its sweet, salty flavor and slight crunch. Some describe it as a cross between shrimp, scallop and octopus, but for Gensaw and the others gathered here, it just tastes like home. Mollusk — with its savory, salty flavor — and seaweed, complement the freshly caught salmon the Yuroks brought for the meal.

While the food cooks, the conversation turns to more mundane concerns, and even some gossip. “It's pretty easy now, with technology, to figure out when the tide is right,” says Shawn Padi, from the nearby Hopland Pomo community, as he looks out over the waves. “A hundred years ago, you'd have to read the moon and leave the valley three days ahead of time to walk over here and hit the big tides.”

Talk soon turns to more serious topics. Gensaw and Renick discuss how the Yuroks can bring abalone back to their own diets, and of course they discuss the law, and why the guerrilla gatherers need to defy it.

Renick says when it comes to prohibitive state regulations, the solution is simple: “Change the laws.” □

This story is a collaboration between High Country News and Roads & Kingdoms. It was supported by the Economic Hardship Reporting Project.

BLM staff confronts leadership over headquarters move

Agency leaders were unable to answer some of the most basic questions about relocating to Colorado

BY NICK BOWLIN

When it comes to the relocation of the Bureau of Land Management's headquarters, acting Director William Perry Pendley, a self-proclaimed “sagebrush rebel,” is just following orders.

At least, that's what he told a crowd of agency staff in Washington, D.C., at an early September meeting to discuss the planned move to Grand Junction, Colorado. Though he's long been associated with the effort to transfer public lands away from federal control, Pendley denied that the impending agency move was an underhanded attempt to weaken federal authority.

“President Trump is unalterably opposed to the wholesale disposal or sale of federal land,” Pendley said. “(Interior Department) Secretary (David) Bernhardt is unalterably opposed to the disposal or sale of federal lands, and that's my position, too. I'm a Marine. ... I follow orders, and our plan is to hold on to the land we have.”

Later in the meeting, Deputy Director of Operations Mike Nedd, another ex-military man, struck a similar note in discussing the move and the impetus behind it. “I'm a soldier,” he said. “I report to someone.”

The audience was not convinced. Throughout the 80-minute session, the details of which were first reported by *E&E News*, agency staff condemned the move's impact on their lives and families and, in particular, the lack of transparency surrounding the decision. The Washington BLM staff, who packed the room, questioned the wisdom of the move, as well as its underlying motivation.

Audio of the meeting obtained by *High Country News* offers an intimate glimpse of the confrontation between BLM leadership and agency staff — highlighting Pendley's inability to justify the move to the people most affected by it.

“How did we get here?” one man asked. “Was something so terribly broken? — and this is a Marine talking to a Marine.” Here, Pendley interjected with a playful “Semper Fi,” which brought a laugh from the audience.

“Y'all didn't take anybody in this room

into consideration.

“Did anybody take the time,” the questioner went on, “to talk to each and every one of these individuals in this room to see how the move would impact them and their family? ... Y'all didn't take anybody in this room into consideration.” He added that he has no plans to move West, questioned whether anyone in leadership had the “moral courage” to stand up to Bernhardt, and called the move a “political thing.”

The room, which had gone serious and silent after the exchange with Pendley, erupted in loud applause.

The mood seemed bewildered and occasionally combative, as the audience delved into the uncomfortable subject of logistics, wondering what, of any, BLM functions might be eliminated and how the employees' lives would be affected.

“I will say that the morale of the folks I know in this room is as low as I've ever seen it,” said one man, who added that he's seeking a new job.

The exchanges grew more personal. These workers have decades of experience and settled lives in the nation's capital — children in school, mortgages. Nedd, a career staffer himself with nearly 30 years at the agency, stressed that he understood their frustration. Indeed, as someone who holds one of the positions slated to move, he seems to share many of their complaints. Nedd, one of the highest-ranking BLM staffers, implied that he personally does not support the relocation.

“I've been at this bureau for 28 years. I had the opportunity to sit in some of those meetings. If I had to make a decision, I probably would have made a different decision,” Nedd said. “But I follow orders. That's what we do. We all follow orders to some degree. And anytime I don't want to follow orders, I have some choices, like go find another job or work for someone else.”

This was not the agency's first attempt to sell the move internally. In mid-July, some staffers were briefed on it, though the earlier session apparently failed to bring everyone up to speed or quell employee fears. But the basic facts of the move, which was announced shortly after the July staff meeting, are fairly clear: Agency leadership said that BLM employees were to begin moving to Grand Junction on

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Oct. 1. Twenty-seven top positions will relocate as well. Supporters say this will put those decision-makers in the middle of the 245 million acres the BLM oversees, which are overwhelmingly in the West. About 97 percent of BLM staff are already based in the region, and those stationed in Washington typically work with other federal agencies or Congress. In addition, 222 additional jobs will be dispersed throughout the region over the next several years. Currently, only about 60 positions are expected to remain in the capital.

At the September meeting, staff members repeatedly took the mic to say that they felt left in the dark on all but the most basic, publicly available information.

"I deeply regret that we have not been able to be more factually forthcoming with you prior to today," Pendley said. It was due to an abundance of caution, he said, in making sure that every step of the headquarters relocation had legal support.

Even so, there was a noticeable lack of concrete answers regarding employees' specific concerns, including the ongoing workload during the relocation process, financial planning and a timeline specifying when staff would have to leave. Pendley's opaque answers, whether caused by an inability or unwillingness to be clear, brought rumbles of dissatisfaction from the audience. He said that people would be informed about their job's status by Sept. 17 — a deadline he promptly missed, *E&E News* reported.

By the meeting's end, audience opinion seemed to have solidified against Pendley. People were not getting the answers they sought, and some even doubted that the move would take place. But the move, Pendley declared, is a done deal; the agency is about to sign a lease in Grand Junction, he said.

"Obviously, there are people who disagree," Pendley said. "But it's the secretary's conclusion that he's dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's with the required consultation with Congress."

Congress has provided \$5.6 million for relocation, Pendley noted, adding that this will be "sufficient." He said that he expects more funding going forward. However, that relocation money was allocated when Republicans controlled the House of Representatives. Now Democrats, who are opposed to the Grand Junction move, are in charge of the Interior Department spending bill for 2020, and there is currently no money set aside for it. The agency staff is aware of this. One woman confronted her boss over the yawning uncertainties regarding the move. Congress holds the "power of the purse," she reminded Pendley. People are making "life choices," based on Secretary Bernhardt stating that he is "confident."

"If the interest was to really do this in a way that offered clarity to folks," she

said, "then it would have been appropriate in my opinion to actually get authorization from Congress for the entirety of the move."

To deny that Congress may withhold more money for the move is "disingenuous," she added.

"That's not taking care of the people," she said. "And it's not taking care of the bureau's operations because the damage is done. ... I'd like a response to that," she finished.

After the clapping that followed her statement, Pendley began his response by saying, "The secretary remains confident ..." only to be immediately drowned out by groans and derisive laughter, shouts of "Come on!" and general uproar. "We can speculate all afternoon," Pendley pushed on, "about what could happen. ... I'm not going to go down that road, I'm sorry."

"We are basing life decisions on speculation," the woman replied.

A few days later, Pendley publicly defended the relocation before the House Natural Resources Committee. The move, he repeated, would help the agency better fulfill its mission. Led by Committee Chair Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, the committee's Democrats tore into Pendley for past statements in which he condemned federal management of public land and advocated for its transfer to the states. After the hearing, Grijalva said that he might use the committee's legal authority to subpoena the BLM for documents about the move's true motivation and cost — information the agency has refused to provide, according to *Politico*.

But Pendley toed the administration's line in justifying the move to BLM employees. "It was a decision made before I got there," Pendley said, "but it's a

decision I fully embrace and that I intend to complete."

The Trump administration has rolled back dozens of Western public-land regulations and yielded to the demands of land-transfer advocates by shrinking in national monuments and promoting people like Pendley — a legendary figure in the Sagebrush Rebellion.

Given this context, it's reasonable to doubt goodwill in the proposed move and reorganization. Democrats and Western watchdogs suspect that the relocation is an attempt to dilute the agency's oversight capacity by moving it away from the power centers of federal decision-making and reducing the staff size. Pendley maintains that no "functions" will be lost in the move, but, as one staffer noted, it's been estimated that a substantial majority of staffers will not relocate, making it hard to imagine that some important work won't slip through the cracks. With a change like this, long-term, experienced staffers with significant expertise will inevitably be lost.

In what was the final public question of the employees' meeting, a woman asked Pendley about a recent agency letter to Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., which stated that BLM jobs slated for New Mexico could be rescinded in retaliation for Udall's opposition to the relocation. Her question was simple: "Who's in charge of selecting where the positions are going?" she asked.

"(We're) currently working with the state offices on those final decisions," Pendley replied.

"These are the type of decision that should have been made prior to announcing a move," she shot back, "if this is for the best for the BLM. How is that not determined already?"

"Can't explain," Pendley replied. □

"Did anybody take the time to talk to each and every one of these individuals in this room to see how the move would impact them and their family? ... Y'all didn't take anybody in this room into consideration."



In leaked audio from a Sept. 5 BLM staff meeting, newly appointed acting Director William Perry defended the agency headquarters relocation from Washington, D.C., to Grand Junction, Colorado.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, DEMOCRATIC STAFF



Betting on Airbnb

Vacation rentals have gutted the culture of nearby communities, but a new project in New Mexico flips the narrative

BY ELIZABETH MILLER

The sun rises over the mountains onto Estevan Rael-Gálvez's vacant family home, left. Right, Alice Gallegos at the entrance to the casita she and her son fixed up as an Airbnb.

LUNA ANNA ARCHER/
HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

From her office in Questa, New Mexico's Visitor Center, Lindsay Mapes can walk out the door, cross a vacant lot and peer through the windows of several empty houses. Some look ready for their residents to return, with photos still on the walls and chairs at the table. In others, the ceilings have begun to sag. A cream-colored house with a peaked tin roof and a wooden porch gazes eastward toward the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. With its dramatic views and architectural charm, it has what real estate agents call great potential. But the house has been empty for years.

"It sits there so lonely and sad," said Mapes, Questa's economic development director. A pair of teenagers parked their car at the end of the lot, and she chatted with them long enough to make sure that the property owner knew they were there.

The current owner, Estevan Rael-Gálvez, doesn't want to sell the house; he spent his childhood here and wants to keep a toehold in the community. But he isn't ready to live in it, either. He's one of many homeowners who want to hold on to family properties, even though their jobs or circumstances have taken them away from a place they consider home. The 2014 closure

of the nearby molybdenum mine sped many of those departures. Mapes moved to town from Taos after she was hired through the Questa Economic Development Fund, an independent nonprofit that is financially supported by the mine's owner, Chevron.

In June 2017, she drove through the village counting vacant homes. After two days, she stopped at 99. According to census data, about 17 percent of the houses in this 1,770-person community still have their "hats and boots" — roofs and a viable foundation — but no signs of occupancy.

Though Airbnb has developed a reputation for draining small mountain towns of affordable rentals and destroying community identity, Mapes thinks that the company just might be able to help Questa rebuild itself.

Mapes sees short-term rentals as a way to provide income for homeowners and a welcome for more tourists, thus enabling the village — perched between the peaks of the Carson National Forest and the canyons of the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument — to capitalize on its outdoor recreation potential.

"Instead of getting a hotel owner to come and build some Motel 6, we're addressing it from a very grassroots level," Mapes said. "These homes are less in jeopardy of being sold, so it's keeping the social fabric of the town and staving off gentrification."

Questa sits at the southernmost edge of the San Luis Valley in north-central New Mexico, where the headwaters of the Red River emerge from the blue profiles of the 12,000-foot-tall mountains near Wheeler Peak, the state's highest point, plunging into the black-walled canyons of the Rio Grande Gorge.

The town was founded in the early 1800s, when the Spanish government gave a land grant to 50 Spanish families and sent them north to graze sheep and plant beans and corn — and, in the process, displace the Jicarilla Apaches, Utes, Comanches and other local tribes. Nearly 80% of Questeños claim ties to those early settlers, according to a report from the Taos-based group Rio Chiquito Research and Consulting.

Questa was once home to 2,200, with a bustling main street and shops that supplied farmers, ranchers and prospectors. The farming community became a mining town after molybdenum was found nearby in the early 1900s. Now, the open-pit mine and its tailings ponds are a Superfund site that requires millions of dollars and decades of remediation work, and Questa's population hovers around just 1,700. Many fear that as more people leave, an important piece of the Southwest's colorful cultural mosaic will disappear. A town that tells a story of itself as a community that takes care of its own will lose that identity.

"It can seem like a better idea to let the house sit than to sell it to a newcomer who may or may not make the effort to weave themselves into the community that they're moving into," said Gillian Joyce of Rio Chiquito Research and Consulting, who co-authored a report on Questa's lodging program.

If those buildings disappear, she said, they'll take with them cultural

Elizabeth Miller is a freelance journalist who covers public lands and communities from her home in New Mexico.

touchstones: the old corner store, the old school, a grandmother's house.

Mapes has launched a two-pronged effort aimed at preserving some of them. Along with working to increase Airbnbs, she hopes to create long-term rentals by offering low-interest loans for home repairs as well as property management services through the Questa Economic Development Fund. She has recruited half a dozen vacant homes for a pilot rental program, designed to draw residents from the tighter rental markets in Taos and Red River, both about a half-hour drive away.

Mapes has also helped to add almost 10 spare bedrooms, casitas and duplexes to Airbnb. She answers homeowners' questions, takes photographs and drafts the listing, then links it to the owner's bank account and cellphone to manage. With a quarter of Questa's households living on \$15,000 a year, extra income can make a big difference.

Diane deFremary, a 70-something-year-old with a chin-length bob clipped back by barrettes, was among the first participants in the Airbnb program, listing two of the three bedrooms in her house. She bought five acres up a dirt road almost two decades ago and built a manufactured home with a painting studio, deck and walled garden.

On a warm July afternoon tempered by a breeze, she sat on the porch and described her various guests — "nothing but good experiences." She's hosted skiers and snowboarders from Texas, a retiree from Ireland, a couple of jewelers running a festival booth and a painting instructor who came for a weeklong plein air event. Three biology students stayed there for an entire month while studying a prairie dog colony. The income deFremary earns buffers the seasonal fluctuations in her employment.

"It's how I made it through April," she said.

Just 20 miles down the highway in Taos, vacation rentals have been blamed for crowding the rental market and pricing out the local workforce. When deFremary visits the bustling, artsy community near the Taos Pueblo, one of the oldest continuously inhabited Native communities in the United States, she can't help but be aware of the problems and controversy. Still, she said, "It's not going to hurt anything (for Questa). It's just going to help."

But Joyce, who lives in Taos, remains cautious about Airbnb's role in Questa. "I don't see a problem with some of them converting into Airbnbs," she said, given proper licensing, fees and taxes, and a reasonable limit on their number.

In Taos, vacation rentals have consumed such a sizable portion of the housing that they're shifting the town's economics and demographics. Rental and home sales prices in Taos are well above what's affordable for locals who earn the

median income. According to census data from 2010, the most recent available, nearly 23% of Taos County homes are second homes — nearly four times the statewide average. And those numbers predate the rise of Airbnb, so 2020's census may show a worsening trend. At the same time, the town's legacy Hispano families are leaving; 2010 marked the first year less than half of the population identified as such. Locals joke that Taos' downtown plaza isn't even part of "town" anymore: It's become a tourist spot.

Questa should take heed, Joyce cautioned: "The plaza is not going to mean what it historically meant to the local community if it's primarily a place for tourists."

Mapes said that the homes closest to the plaza in Questa have been prioritized for the long-term rental program. She agrees that Airbnb is a good thing "with moderation." But licenses and taxes are still a long way off — there's no village staff to handle it, she said — and now is not the time to be creating roadblocks.

"The day that Questa has a problem with Airbnb, I think that will be kind of a celebratory problem — like we made it," she said. "Then we'll have other problems to work on."

Meanwhile, Estevan Rael-Gálvez, the owner of the empty cream-colored home off the highway, envisions something unique for the house one day. He'd like to see it used for an artist residency program or as the headquarters of a local nonprofit.

When Rael-Gálvez was growing up in Questa, his grandmother always set an

extra plate at the table, just in case. He learned from her, and from the rest of his community, to try to leave the world better than you found it. But unfortunately, he said, in Questa, "the economy often does not support one's dreams, or one's realities of having to just make it in a small town."

He wants the town to think seriously about its future. "How do we still ensure that there's a connection between those who have left — an understanding that they can come back someday?"

But he's reluctant to give into the Airbnb trend, fearing that the village could become too dependent on tourism. That dependency has transformed other towns and led to depopulation and gentrification across the West. Mapes has tried to recruit him, but he's not interested in running an Airbnb.

However, he is interested in the long-term rental program that's inviting families back to town. Rael-Gálvez, who owns three houses, is considering taking that option with one of them, testing it as a way to stave off the deterioration of local historic properties. He wants to provide affordable housing for people who live in Questa rather than tourists who are just passing through.

"I'm so tied to it personally, because it's where I was raised — in at least one of these houses — so I have always said, I would never sell. From a business standpoint, that's crazy," he said. "But I also have this image in my mind of, I want to return someday. Maybe not now, but I want to be under that old apricot tree as an old man." □

"How do we still ensure that there's a connection between those who have left — an understanding that they can come back someday?"

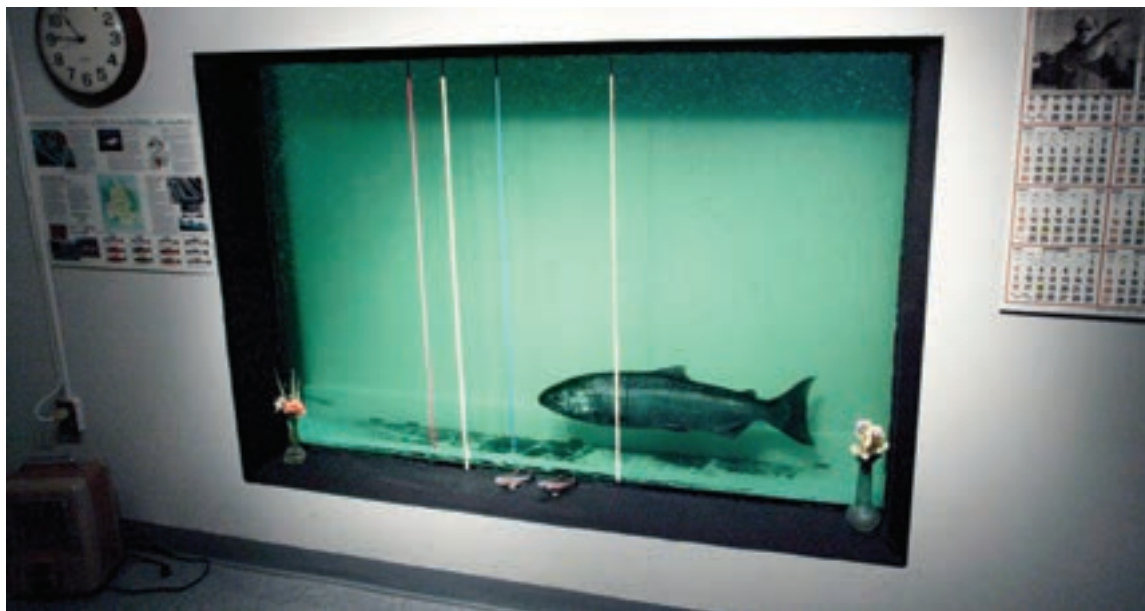
— Estevan Rael-Gálvez, who grew up in Questa

Questa Economic Development Director Lindsay Mapes removes the window coverings on a vacant, graffiti-covered home that will soon be used as an Airbnb. LUNA ANNA ARCHER/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS





Left, the fish ladder of Ice Harbor Lock and Dam on the Snake River redirects through a parking lot. Hotter water temperatures of such dam structures impact salmon survival rates. FEDERAL CAUCUS/CC VIA FLICKR



Right, a chinook salmon swims in the counting window at McNary Lock and Dam on the Columbia River near Umatilla, Oregon. JEFF T. GREEN/GETTY IMAGES

Courts can't keep salmon from the edge of extinction

Restoring fish in the Columbia and Snake rivers may require a political fix

BY CARL SEGERSTROM

On Sept. 20, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission voted to close all fall steelhead fishing on the Clearwater River and part of the Snake, tributaries of the Columbia, because so few fish had returned from the ocean. These steelhead are one of 13 threatened or endangered salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Since the Columbia Basin's rivers were impounded by dams — including four on the Lower Snake and more than a dozen on the Columbia itself — a handful of salmon populations have died out. Now, about two-thirds of the remaining runs are at high risk of extinction. Compared to pre-dam returns in the 1950s, only 3% of wild sockeye and spring- and summer-run chinook, and 15% of wild steelhead, returned to the upper Snake last year, according to an analysis by the advocacy group Save our Wild Salmon. This year, returns look even worse.

Years of low salmon numbers, concern over endangered orcas that feed on salmon, and cracks in political support for the Lower Snake dams are breathing new life into the fight to breach those dams. For decades, lawsuits by tribal nations, state agencies and fishing and conservation organizations have forced changes in dam management aimed at improving fish survival. But those court-ordered tweaks haven't pulled salmon back from the brink. Now, salmon advocates are looking to the court of public opinion in their quest to see the Lower Snake River dams removed.

In the 1930s, hydroelectric dam construction in the Columbia Basin began, electrifying and irrigating the inland Northwest

and sending commodities like wheat downriver on barges. But dams exact a heavy toll on salmon: Reservoirs not only create hotter water than the fish are adapted to, they slow their downstream journey to the ocean and force them to navigate artificial passage systems. To offset those impacts, the Bonneville Power Administration, the federal agency that sells power generated by the dams, has poured about \$17 billion into hatchery programs, fish passage projects and habitat restoration.

But since the early 1990s, state agencies, tribes and salmon advocates have sued the federal government, arguing that it's not doing enough for endangered fish. At issue are "biological opinions" from the National Marine Fisheries Service, reviews of management plans developed by the federal agencies that manage the Columbia basin dams: the Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration and Bureau of Reclamation. The biological opinions assess whether dam operations are likely to cause salmon extinctions and recommend ways to offset harm. But since 1993, federal judges have repeatedly overruled them.

In the process, courts have become the system's de facto managers: Judges have ruled that more water be spilled over dams, and forced agencies to develop specific habitat improvement programs. While advocates have long sought the removal of the Snake River dams, federal environmental laws don't give judges the authority to force dam removal. Judges have, however, ruled that the federal government must assess the impacts of breaching dams as part of a National Environmental Policy Act review, a draft of which is expected in February 2020.

Salmon advocates have long argued that dam removal is the best way to restore salmon runs. That view is bolstered by a 2017 analysis by the Fish Passage Center,

an organization funded by the federal government, which found that breaching the lower Snake River dams and increasing spills over the Columbia's dams would quadruple the number of salmon returning to spawn, compared to the status quo. But dam removal is not a silver bullet, biologists warn. "Even if we took out the dams, there could be other limiting factors for salmon recovery," said Christopher Caudill, a fish ecologist at the University of Idaho. Warming headwaters and changing oceanic conditions can harm salmon whether or not the dams are removed, Caudill said.

Any overhaul of the Columbia and Snake River dams likely requires an act of Congress as well as a lot of promises to local stakeholders who stand to lose regional infrastructure. Dam removal has long been anathema to politicians who tout the system's economic benefits. But the economics are changing as maintenance costs rise and natural gas and renewables undercut hydroelectric prices.

Now, the politics may be changing, too. Earlier this year, Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, broke with area politicians by calling for a serious look at removing the four dams on the lower Snake River. Simpson said he wants to work on a new federal plan to ensure salmon recovery in Idaho, one that would replace the Northwest Power Act, the 1980 legislation that guides dam management in the Columbia Basin.

That political action can't come soon enough for salmon advocates tracking the threats fish face, including reservoir water temperatures that hit unhealthy levels for weeks at a time. "The climate is changing faster than the laws can keep up," said Angela Moran, an organizer for Save Our Wild Salmon. "We need political and community support, because we know that will be the biggest step to taking down the dams." □

Carl Segerstrom is an assistant editor at *High Country News*, covering Alaska, the Pacific Northwest and the Northern Rockies from Spokane, Washington. [@carlschirps](#)

Photo contest winners

What shows up when the sun goes down?

Even with light pollution on the rise across the West, you can still find places where the night skies inspire. So for this year's annual photo contest, we asked readers for examples of their own nighttime photography. They did not disappoint, sharing nearly 150 photos of moonscapes, starlight and other wonders of the evening and night. Enjoy the winners, chosen by our editors with help from readers. **WEB EXTRA:** hcne.ws/2019photos



▲ **Runner Up: Mesa Arch** A nighttime display in Canyonlands National Park, Utah. WHIT RICHARDSON

▼ **Editor's Choice: Ground Strike** An off-duty fire lookout caught this spectacular and threatening connection at 3 a.m. in Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. MARK S. MOAK



▲ **Editor's Choice: Northbound** During sunset at Death Valley's Racetrack Playa, the photographer saw the track of perhaps the park's strangest phenomenon — its "moving" rocks. JOHN MUMAW



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The time is right for new leadership at *HCN*



BY PAUL LARMER

Under a fogbow, Bob Boekelheide, former director of the Dungeness River Audubon Center, and Betsy Carlson, coordinator for the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, set their course on a bird counting expedition on the Straits of Juan de Fuca outside Seattle.

PAUL LARMER

In mid-September, with summer tenaciously holding on in Paonia, Colorado, I aimed my Toyota toward Salt Lake City, Utah, for my 51st board meeting as executive director of *High Country News*. My eyes bathed in the rich colors of the desert outside Moab, and I marveled that the aspen trees and oak brush near Soldier Summit had yet to turn color — surely a result of this year's abundant moisture and very warm temperatures.

Still, I couldn't suppress a feeling of excitement and anxiety as I careened into thick 80-mile-an-hour traffic heading up I-15. This board meeting would be different; it would confirm a new direction for myself and for *High Country News*.

I often find it hard to believe that I have worked here for 27 years now and served as director for 17. It has been — and still is — an amazing journey, but the time is ripe for a change. Earlier this year, I told the board that I was ready to step down as executive director, and concentrate instead on doing what I do best (and enjoy the most) — working with *HCN*'s generous donors and doing more writing of my own. The board agreed in June, and in Salt Lake it officially began the search for a new director. You can find an ad for the job in this issue of the magazine as well as on our website, hcn.org.

In today's rapidly changing media and information landscape, *HCN* needs acute editorial vision, creative marketing, robust executive-level management and the capacity to raise millions of dollars every year to sustain its world-class journalism. The 50th Anniversary in 2020 is a unique opportunity for the organization to realize all four of these goals.

The time is right to bring on a new leader, with the skills, energy and ideas to help *HCN* navigate the unprecedented environmental, social and communication challenges of our times. And by staying on in a modified role, I can fulfill my own desire for change, while working to provide long-term support for a remarkable

organization. Once the new director is hired, I'll shift over to fundraising for our 50th Anniversary Campaign and continue my adventures with *HCN*.

SPEAKING OF ADVENTURES, just days before the board meeting, I completed a 3,000-mile trip that took me to Washington's Olympic Peninsula and included visits with dozens of readers and supporters.

Wisps of fog, but no rain, greeted my son (who had driven up from Portland) and me at Olympic National Park's Hoh Rain Forest, which receives up to 170 inches of rain a year. We walked under ancient Sitka spruce, eight arm-spans around, and big-leaved maples clothed in moss like J.R.R. Tolkien's Ents. The air felt deliciously moist, though we discovered that even this forest can burn, as it did in 2015. That fire followed one of the driest years on record, and climate change is likely to guarantee an even drier future.

On mile-high Hurricane Ridge the next day, we crossed dun-colored meadows speckled with purple asters; two black-tailed deer bucks huffed at each other, while a doe grazed peacefully nearby. Beyond gleamed a few of the famed glaciers of Mount Olympus. Here we saw climate change in action. The glaciers are disappearing rapidly: In 1982, the park had 266 glaciers; in 2009 there were 184.

I headed next to Port Townsend, a rapidly growing exurb of Seattle in the Olympics' rain shadow that receives just 17 inches of rain a year. Writer Annie Proulx, a longtime *HCN* reader, put me in touch with Betsy Carlson, the citizen science coordinator for the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. Soon I was heading onto the Salish Sea on board Ross Anderson's boat with a crack team of naturalists, all interested in how this cold-water ecosystem's denizens are faring in the warming Anthropocene. We focused on birds as Ross, a former *Seattle Times* reporter who won the 1990 Pulitzer for his coverage of Alaska's Exxon Valdez oil spill, guided the boat toward the Smith and Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve, designated in 2010.

"Six rhinoceros auklets at 2 (o'clock)," local birding legend Bob Boekelheide called out. By late morning, with the help of naturalist-writer Steve Grace, we'd identified more than a dozen species, including tufted puffins, red-necked phalarope and several gulls and cormorants. In patchy fog, hundreds of doe-eyed harbor seals gazed at us out from the rocky shores of the tiny islands. Birdie Davenport, who manages Washington's aquatic reserves, told me the state hoped to create more reserves like this one to sustain essential wildlife breeding and feeding grounds. Funding and staffing are tight, however, so she relies on citizens. Heading back, we dodged a giant red container ship bound for Seattle, reminding me that millions of citizens now crowd around these waters, consuming goods from around the world.

I love this complicated, ever-changing place we call the West. I love my colleagues, too, and I love all of you, the amazing readers who keep us on our toes and keep us going. I hope to see you on the road sometime soon. □



"On the Road to 50" is a series of community gatherings in cities across the region, collecting feedback about *HCN*'s future direction as we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2020. See more: hcn.org/otr-50

Paul Larmer is executive director/publisher of *High Country News*.



SEVERED TIES

To open the West for settlement, the United States stole generations of Indigenous children

NEARLY 200 NATIVE CHILDREN LIE BURIED

at the entrance of the Carlisle Barracks in the “Indian Cemetery” — the first thing you see when entering one of the United States’ oldest military installations. It is a grisly monument to the country’s most infamous boarding school, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which opened in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and closed in 1918. Chiseled onto the white granite headstones, arranged in the uniform rows typical of veterans’ cemeteries in the U.S., are the names and tribal affiliations of children who came to Carlisle but never left. Thirteen grave-stones list neither name nor tribe; they simply read “UNKNOWN.”

It’s a chilling scene that I was unprepared for when I visited last year on the 100-year anniversary of the school’s closing. And the experience was made even more jarring by the mandatory background check and armed checkpoint I faced just to visit the cemetery and the school’s remnants. The campus is an active military base, and the heightened security measures are due to post-9/11 precautions. The unquiet graves of these young casualties of the nation’s bloody Indian wars lie next to the Army War College, which trains officers for the nation’s longest war, the war on terror.

The cemetery was not supposed to be at the front entrance. It was an accident: In 1927, to make room for a parking lot, the Army dug up the children’s graves and relocated them behind the base — out of sight. Then, in 2001, the back of the base was turned into the entrance to satisfy new security protocols. Now, Carlisle’s deadly past is on full display.

Carlisle, and boarding schools like it, are remembered as a dark chapter in the history of the ill-conceived assimilation policies designed to strip Native people of their cultures and languages by indoctrinating them with U.S. patriotism. But child removal is a longstanding practice, ultimately created to take away Native land. Although Carlisle is located in the East, it played a key role in pressuring the West’s most intransigent tribes to

cede and sell land by taking their children hostage.

A century after its closing, however, unanswered questions surround the Carlisle Indian School’s brutal legacy. Secrets once thought buried — why did so many children die there? — are coming to light. And the descendants of those interred are demanding more than just the return of their stolen ancestors.

“The past of Carlisle is really about justice,” says Ben Rhodd, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe’s tribal historic preservation officer. Since April 2016, his office has been pursuing the return of 11 children buried at the Carlisle Indian Cemetery. Even in death, Rhodd explains, Rosebud’s children remain “prisoners of war,” held at a military base and unable to return to their home on the Rosebud Reservation, children who were “hostages taken to pacify the leadership of tribes that would dare stand against U.S. expansion and Manifest Destiny.”

Rosebud is not alone in seeking justice for its young ancestors. The Northern Arapaho reclaimed its first children in 2017, and other tribes have followed suit. Since 2013, the National Congress of American Indians has requested all federal records for the hundreds of Native children who have disappeared or died while attending one of the hundreds of federally run or funded boarding schools. So far, there has been little response from federal officials, who say the requests are nearly impossible to fulfill. “A lot of students end up disappearing in the archival record,” says Preston McBride, a graduate student who has researched the case for the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and written about disease and student deaths at Carlisle. McBride calls this phenomenon “administrative disappearance,” in which “even tribes don’t have the records.”

“SON, BE BRAVE AND GET KILLED,” Ota Kte’s father told him, as if he were going to war. The boy recalled the phrase as he was led onto a boat with other Lakota children guided by strange white women

and men. This was Carlisle’s first class: 86 Lakota, 66 from Rosebud Agency and 20 from Pine Ridge Agency, the children of recalcitrant people who refused to cede any more land to the United States. The expression — “be fearless” — had been so thoroughly engrained in Ota Kte’s being that, he claimed, “I knew nothing else.” During the long, difficult journey eastward, which continued by rail and ended at Carlisle, the boy clung to his father’s words.

At the barracks, orderlies lined the children up and told them to take turns sitting in a chair. It was Ota Kte’s turn: Long, thick locks of black hair fell from his head as he sat motionless and at the mercy of the barber. His eyes burned, and he forgot his father’s instructions. It was the first time in his young life he remembered crying and feeling fear. To his people, cutting one’s hair meant grieving the death of a relative. By taking his braids, Carlisle had shorn him of his physical and cultural identity. Ota Kte mourned the loss of himself.

He was no longer Ota Kte, “Kills Plenty,” a name he earned for the enemies slain by his father, George Standing Bear. That name, which held so much meaning, was replaced by an arbitrary one. Told by a white teacher to choose a Christian name from the chalkboard, a name he couldn’t even read, “I took the pointer,” he wrote in his book *My People the Sioux*, “and acted as if I were about to touch an enemy.” That day, he became “Luther” in the enemy’s language. With his culture stripped from him, he felt that he “was no more Indian” but “an imitation of a white man.”

Although Luther Standing Bear eventually returned to his home at the Rosebud Agency, many of his peers didn’t. “The change in clothing, housing, food, and confinement combined with loneliness,” Standing Bear reasoned, “was too much.” He estimated that in the first three years at Carlisle, nearly half the Lakota children of his class died. “In the graveyard at Carlisle most of the graves are those of little ones,” he lamented.

“A lot of students end up disappearing in the archival record. ... Even the tribes don’t have the records.”

—Preston McBride, graduate student who has written about disease and student deaths at Carlisle Indian Industrial School

To return
Rosebud's
children
from Carlisle
"is to seek
justice for all
children and
all humanity
who come to
this land, our
land, to the
Native land."

—Ben Rhodd, the
Rosebud Sioux
Tribe's tribal historic
preservation officer

In those early years, more students died at the school than graduated from it. And if one did escape death and return home, that survivor became, in Standing Bear's words, "an utter stranger" to their own family.

STANDING BEAR'S STORY OF LOSS and transformation wasn't solely his own; it was a shared, collective experience. And many families continue to grapple with its legacy, including my own. While researching this story, I discovered that at least five of my ancestors from the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe had survived Carlisle; the boarding school experience is just one generation removed from my own. My father, Ben Estes, and his siblings were students and survivors of the Catholic-run St. Joseph Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota — the town where I was born and raised.

For Ben Rhodd, it's also difficult not to see echoes of this sordid history in today's headlines as thousands of migrant children separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border are confined in detention facilities. "Children are being incarcerated unjustifiably, without merit but for economic gain." Many of those children are Indigenous, fleeing violence in countries like Guatemala and Honduras. To return Rosebud's children from Carlisle, Rhodd says, "is to seek justice for all children and all humanity who come to this land, our land, to the Native land."

Since 2017, students' remains have been successfully returned from Carlisle's notorious Indian Cemetery on three occasions. After more than a decade of negotiations with the U.S. Army, the Northern Arapaho Tribe secured two returns. The first, in August 2017, brought home two children, and the second brought home three more in June 2018. They paved the way for a third effort this June that returned six more children — three from the Oneida Nation and the rest from the Iowa Nation, Modoc Nation and Omaha Nation. At the request of the descendants, the Army disinterred the remains, transferred custody of them, transported and reburied the children on tribal lands or in private cemeteries. The children of Carlisle are starting to return home.

But not yet to Rosebud.

Despite numerous petitions, Ben Rhodd says, "we have not been able to retrieve them due to the Army's process." The Department of the Army requires a certified affidavit from each child's living descendants. Unfortunately, some of those children were orphans or have no living descendants, and the tribe, according to the Army's procedure, cannot advocate on behalf of its own deceased members. "Why does the Department of the Army say that a tribe — as a legal entity, a government and a people — cannot petition for the return of those who have no living descendants?" Rhodd asks.

"How is it that the Army cannot change its ruling that a nation has no right to claim its own dead?"

The answer to that question partly lies with the history of how Lakotas lost their sovereignty, land and children in the first place.

WEAKENED BY THE CIVIL WAR, the United States capitulated to the Lakotas in the aftermath of Red Cloud's War (1866-1868), which expelled white settlers and military forts from the buffalo hunting grounds of the Powder River Country in present-day Montana and Wyoming. This resulted in the signing of the Fort Laramie Treaty, which set aside 35 million acres for a "permanent home" for Lakotas "that no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy" — a significant victory against an invading nation. Just three years later, Congress abolished treaty-making with Native nations altogether. The opening of Carlisle marked a radical change not only for Standing Bear's people but also with regard to Indian policy and the aims of U.S. imperialism.

During the late 19th century Plains Indian Wars, the Indian boarding school found its primary purchase. The bloody consequences of two bedrock U.S. institutions — African slavery and the killing of Indians — inspired Carlisle's founder, Richard Henry Pratt, a military man, to embark on a bold experiment to solve the so-called "Indian question," once outright extermination was no longer palatable. Like many of his peers, Pratt was a Civil War veteran turned Indian fighter. And he came to regard Indian killing as he had slavery — as unsustainable. A radical solution was needed.

As the title of his autobiography — *Battlefield and Classroom* — suggests, Pratt transposed the Indian wars from the frontier to the boarding school. By removing Native children by the hundreds and then thousands from their families, he thought he could break the resistance of intransigent Native nations. Between 1879-1900, the Bureau of Indian Affairs opened 24 off-reservation schools. By 1900, three-quarters of all Native children had been enrolled in boarding schools, with a third of this number in off-reservation boarding schools like Carlisle. Pratt had turned Gen. Philip Sheridan's murderous expression — "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" — into a new motto: "Kill the Indian, save the man." Only the military could achieve that kind of goal.

According to Ben Rhodd, the expression also stemmed from a Christian desire to convert Native people. "The churches in their benevolence — and I say that facetiously — sought not to destroy Native people by warfare or annihilation," he says; "they sought to change the man, change the heart, change the

spirit of Native people. They concentrated on the baptism of Native children." Pratt himself was a lay minister in the Methodist Church. A cleric and a soldier, he wielded two powerful instruments of colonization, a Bible and a gun. "In Indian civilization I am a Baptist," Pratt wrote, "because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked."

Pratt first came to the idea of the boarding school while commanding mixed units of freed African-American and Indian scouts in punitive campaigns against Kiowas and Comanches on the southern plains of Texas. He believed the U.S. military had succeeded where past attempts to "civilize" enemies had failed: They had forged a sense of duty and loyalty in conquered peoples. Pratt observed how the Army of the West had successfully brought together whites, blacks and Indians by turning them into Indian fighters. Under white leadership, of course, the military had the greatest civilizing influence on the frontier. But not everyone was equal.

While Pratt rejected biological notions of white racial superiority, he subscribed to social evolutionary theory. Regarding white Europeans as the most civilized, he placed black people above Native people in terms of social development and readiness for citizenship. He believed slavery was "a more humane and real civilizer" than the reservation system. Slavery, he thought, was the ultimate "Americanizer" — "forcing Negroes to live among us and becoming producers," as opposed to the "Indian system through its policy of tribally segregating (Indians) on reservations." Forced alienation, starting at birth, from homeland, language, family and culture, and enslavement with intimate oversight by white overlords had prepared black people for assimilation, according to this view. Pratt wanted to reproduce similar conditions for Natives. The prison became his first laboratory and prisoners his first students.

In 1874, an opportunity presented itself. A military tribunal failed to convict Native resistance leaders on the Plains because the U.S. attorney general had ruled that "a state of war could not exist between a nation and its wards." It was decided to imprison without trial the most intractable "wards," paradoxically, as "prisoners of war." The next year, Pratt became the jailer of 72 Cheyenne, Caddo, Arapaho, Kiowa and Comanche prisoners at Fort Marion, Florida. "A few of the chiefs were sent as hostages for the good behavior of their people," observed Henry Benjamin Whipple, an Episcopal bishop who visited the prison. Prisoners were drilled with military discipline, wore surplus Civil War uniforms, cut their hair, learned English, and eventually became their own prison guards. "They

learned by heart life's first lesson," Pratt observed, "to obey."

Fort Marion was a small experiment with a large impact that gained more traction during a tumultuous time. The same year the United States celebrated its 100th birthday, at the Battle of Greasy Grass (known in U.S. history as Little Bighorn), a Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho alliance wiped out Col. George Armstrong Custer, Pratt's former commander, and his 7th Cavalry. A U.S. military victory seemed unlikely. Tactics shifted to starving out the militant Lakotas by killing off the remaining buffalo herds, a primary food source, making reservation life not a choice but a necessity for survival. The next step was to undermine customary authority by weaponizing Native kinship systems against reservation leadership. "Carlisle was established to intern, so to speak, the children of leadership," says Ben Rhodd, "to hold them as hostage, so that their fathers would not be so warlike and resist."

Pratt's success at Fort Marion convinced Indian reformers in Congress to authorize the Indian Bureau to turn the old Carlisle cavalry barracks into the first federally run off-reservation boarding school. It was a peculiar assignment: an active military officer overseeing a school administered by the civilian-run

Department of the Interior, which itself managed wildlife and Indians. And the first class would be drawn from those most responsible for Custer's crushing defeat, the Lakotas. In 1879, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ezra Hayt ordered Pratt to recruit first from Pine Ridge and Rosebud, "because the children would be hostages for the good behavior of their people."

When Pratt first visited Rosebud in September to recruit children, he was met with suspicion. "White people are all liars and thieves," Spotted Tail, a principal leader, told him bluntly. Two years earlier, the United States had taken the sacred Black Hills for its coveted gold under a policy known as "sell or starve." Spotted Tail saw boarding school as another ploy to take more land. But Pratt told the leader that the Black Hills were taken mainly because the Lakotas couldn't read the documents they had signed. Convinced by this logic, Spotted Tail conceded. The agency leaders decided that education was necessary for the survival of their people. They agreed to send their children. Yet Spotted Tail's initial distrust proved tragically justified.

A year later, when he joined a delegation to Washington, D.C., and visited Carlisle, Spotted Tail witnessed a horrific scene: Children wore Army uniforms, marched and did drills under the flag

of the military that had killed so many of his people. He saw child soldiers, not students, and an Army base, not a school. Spotted Tail's own son faced a court-martial for bad behavior and was confined to the guardhouse for a week, a military jail originally built to house prisoners during the Revolutionary War. Jail was entirely foreign to Lakotas, and corporal punishment for children was taboo. Out of protest, Spotted Tail withdrew his own children from the school. He wanted to take all the Lakota children with him but was prevented from doing so. It was clear to Spotted Tail that Carlisle taught children not to read and write, but rather to obey and submit.

Available data suggest that most of the students succumbed to illness or were sent home because of it and died there. Unsanitary conditions caused outbreaks of disease, and the lack of warm clothing and bedding added to the miserable conditions. In the first two years, 16 Native children died at Carlisle, and eight died after being sent home. Sent to recruit more students from Rosebud as an adult, Luther Standing Bear encountered resistance from grieving parents, because "so many had died there that the parents of the Indian boys and girls did not want them to go."

In December 1880, Ernest White Thunder and Maud Swift Bear, children



Ben Rhodd, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's tribal historic preservation officer, talks with Peter Gibb, the research archivist for the tribe who has worked extensively on the Carlisle children's recovery effort, in the tribal office in Rosebud, South Dakota.

SERGE VAN NECK

"It seems as though (our children) learned how to die instead of reading and writing."

—White Swan from Cheyenne River, during an 1889 congressional hearing

of prominent Rosebud leaders, died at the school. Their parents petitioned the commissioner of Indian Affairs to have their bodies returned home but were denied to discourage other parents from making the same request. While it was willing to expend resources taking children from their parents and shipping them to far-off boarding schools, the Indian Bureau considered it impractical to send their bodies home when they died.

When Spotted Tail visited Carlisle, a homesick Ernest White Thunder stowed away on the train home with him, hoping to escape. He was soon discovered and sent back. Shortly thereafter, sick and refusing both food and medicine, he died at the age of 13. "His father, Chief White Thunder, was very angry that he had not been notified that his son was even sick," Standing Bear recalled. If they could not return his son's body, the chief asked if "they might at least place a headstone over his grave." According to Standing Bear, "Neither request was ever granted." To this day, the site of his burial remains unknown.

CARLISLE WAS NOT UNIQUE, either in its existence or its depravity. "Child removal is a global issue for Indigenous peoples," said Christine Diindiisi McCleave, executive director of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). Australia's "stolen generations," for example, were "mixed-race"

Indigenous children ripped from their families with the aim of "breeding out the colour" of Indigenous Australians. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has also documented the violent and traumatic legacies of Canadian residential schools and Indigenous child removal policies from the 1880s to 1996, which were modeled after U.S. boarding school policies. In 2015, the commission found that at least 6,000 Indigenous children died in Canadian residential schools. Canada had a total of 150 schools, less than half the 357 identified in the United States. "It's likely that the number of students who died in the United States is much higher," McCleave concludes.

Seeking justice for past abuses of child removal, Indigenous peoples have successfully pressured Australia and New Zealand for increased Indigenous political autonomy and partial land return. The United States, however, refuses to account for its failure to document the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous children in its boarding schools. The responsibility of counting the dead and disappeared falls to individual descendants, tribal nations like Rosebud, and organizations like NABS.

In a report filed for NABS, Preston McBride documented more than 450 children who died as a result of attending Carlisle. The majority of deaths happened during Pratt's oversight (1879-1904)

and peaked in the 1890s. But McBride thinks that number is a vast undercount. "Carlisle's ultimate demographic impact is hard to pin down," he says. It's difficult for several reasons; sometimes tribes and parents were never notified of a child's illness or death, and federal record-keeping was careless.

The National Archives in Washington, D.C., holds the majority of the thousands of student files. The children's death records are kept on index cards in shoeboxes simply labeled the "Dead Files." But the records themselves are incomplete. "All of the (male children) with the last names L through Z are missing," McBride tells me. And the bodies might not even be at Carlisle; children who didn't die on campus were sent home to die, but the tribes might not have recorded the death. Others died at a nearby sanatorium. At least 11 died while on the so-called "outing program," which put Native children to work, for little or no pay, for white families in Pennsylvania, New York or New Jersey as housekeepers or farm laborers.

McBride says that this was common practice among nearly all government-run boarding schools, making individual researchers' attempts to document deaths a monumental task. That's why last April, NABS, the Native American Rights Fund, the International Indian Treaty Council and the National Indian Child Welfare Association jointly filed a

Rosebud Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Ben Rhodd stands at the entrance to Rosebud Veterans Cemetery, where the remains of children who died at Carlisle will be buried once they're returned to the tribe, protected from people on the road and those entering the cemetery by the Rosebud veterans buried at the entrance.

SERGE VAN NECK



petition with the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances “to account for the fate of Indigenous children taken into federal custody” as part of U.S. boarding school policy. The U.N. Working Group was created in 1980, in part to document and respond to the thousands of disappeared political dissidents following the U.S.-backed military coup in Chile in 1973. Since then, it has documented tens of thousands of cases in 88 countries.

If the petition is successful, the U.N. Working Group could open a dialogue with the United States to begin to account for missing Native boarding school children. It could also launch an official investigation whose results would likely bolster cases like Rosebud on behalf of all Native nations, to return missing children to their tribes. That’s the outcome McCleave desires — a thorough documentation to provide answers to descendants and pathways toward justice. “It’s important to see where we’ve been, to know where we are and where we’re going,” she says.

BY 1889, A DECADE INTO THE CARLISLE EXPERIMENT, Lakota parents were heartbroken. Up until then, the Lakota leadership had put up a united front opposing the 1887 Dawes Act, which proposed to allot reservation lands by parceling out individual plots to individual Lakota families and selling off “surplus” lands to white settlers. Given the forced starvation already occurring on reservations and the loss of the Black Hills, the horror of the unexplained deaths of boarding-school children was just too much to bear.

During a congressional hearing in Washington, D.C., in December 1889, Lakota and Dakota leadership discussed the loss of their children in regard to their decision to finally accept allotment. Coupled with the slashing of food rations, the taking of their children was “like cutting our heads off,” American Horse from Pine Ridge told the commission. White Swan from Cheyenne River explained, “It seems as though (our children) learned how to die instead of reading and writing.” The delegation had been lured to the East not only to sign over their lands but to also see their children. “Pine Ridge and Rosebud have their children at Carlisle mostly, so wherever their children are, they would like to go that way on their road home and see their children, and then go right home. That’s all,” Chief John Grass from Standing Rock pleaded before the delegation departed.

That same month, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan issued a memo to boarding schools — “Inculcation of Patriotism in Indian Schools” — which ordered the singing of “patriotic songs,” the recognition of U.S. national holidays, “reverence (for) the flag,” and a day commemorating the passage of the Dawes Act. The aim was “to impress upon Indian youth the enlarged scope and opportunity

given them by this law and the new obligations which it imposes.”

Hoping to ease the pangs of hunger and reunite with their children, the Lakota and Dakota leaders accepted the Great Sioux Agreement of 1889, which opened up 9 million acres for white settlement and created the six modern Sioux reservations of Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, Lower Brule and Crow Creek. But the off-reservation boarding schools stayed opened — more children died, and more land was taken.

Between 1887 and 1932, federal allotment policy, which coincided with the peak of government-run off-reservation Indian boarding schools, devoured 91 million acres of Native land. In total, two-thirds of all tribal lands were lost, an area nearly the size of what is currently the state of Montana.

For Carlisle students like Luther Standing Bear, the civilizational project — from boarding schools to allotment — was a failure. Unable to apply the trade he learned at Carlisle on the reservation — there were no jobs there for tinsmiths — and frustrated by the restrictions regarding what he could do with his land, he chose a career off-reservation, acting in Hollywood Westerns. In his twilight years, Standing Bear pondered his father’s instructions to “be brave” and to go to Carlisle. If he were given such a choice with his own son, Standing Bear concluded, “I would raise him to be an Indian!”

THE FOUR WORST THINGS that could happen to a Lakota family happened at Carlisle, Ben Rhodd says. “The worst thing is to lose a child,” he tells me. “The second is to lose your mother. The third is to lose your father. The fourth one is to not know where a warrior lies.” The heavy price of losing relatives was intertwined with the loss of homelands.

The morbid task of disinterring and reinterring dead children, something unknown to Lakota culture, has forced the creation of new practices. “We still retain spiritual traditions,” Rhodd explains. “We have had to create another way to bring back the dead from another place, whether it be from a museum, university or lab. With spiritual guidance, we still retain enough of our ancient knowledge to bring our children home.

“Each child will be wrapped in their own buffalo robe, except for one, a female, who will be wrapped in smoked elk hide at the request of her descendants,” he says. “We’re preparing.”

And while the Northern Arapaho Tribe’s recovery of three children from Carlisle’s Indian Cemetery has been successful, even giving credence to Rosebud’s case, not all tribes want their children returned. For some, cultural customs forbid disturbing the dead.

The 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act might

not be appropriate for the Carlisle Cemetery, either. According to Christine McCleave, if invoked, NAGPRA might require a full archaeological survey, potentially disturbing the graves of children who come from tribes who don’t want them disturbed. “As they continue more repatriation, it does affect those tribes,” McCleave tells me. “What if they pull up a grave and it’s the wrong set of remains again? They don’t know who’s buried where,” she tells me. During the excavation of one child’s grave in 2018, for example, the Army found two other sets of remains from other children.

Rosebud is aware of this concern. But Rhodd knows the history of the cemetery: Some of the children have already been moved, five times at most, others at least twice. He fears that under Army jurisdiction, the cemetery may be relocated again. To the tribes who don’t want their dead disturbed, he offers the lessons Rosebud has learned. They had to create new ways of retrieving their stolen ancestors, he says, and he hopes a successful tribal appeal will encourage others to do the same. “We will help you,” he says to those who have doubts. “We will assist them with what they need. But it is up to them.”

As the Rosebud Sioux Tribe moves forward with its appeal to recover its 11 missing children, the stakes go beyond Carlisle. Much like Ota Kte (Luther Standing Bear), I began writing about Carlisle’s legacy, trying to be brave, but found my feelings teeter between hopelessness and anger. The struggle is as much for the return of stolen children as it is for the land itself. The boarding schools were created, not as educational efforts, but as instruments to dispossess Indigenous people of their territory. And like the conflicts that raged during Luther Standing Bear’s youth, which led to him to Carlisle, the struggles over the land have not ended.

When it’s not working on the missing children, Ben Rhodd’s office defends tribal sovereignty, fighting the oil pipelines crossing the territory of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline route snakes through a patchwork of tribally and privately owned land in the northeastern part of the Rosebud Reservation. The fragmentation of this part of the reservation is a direct result of the Dawes Act, which the tribe accepted on the condition of its children coming home from boarding school — a promise that never materialized. And while Rosebud may get its children back, the future of the tribe’s land is still in question.

But the return of the children is a step towards justice.

“I can see that place in my mind’s eye. I’ve stood there twice,” Rhodd says to me calmly, speaking of the Carlisle Cemetery. His resolution seems simple and inspiring in the face of the history that has worked against his people. “We’ll bring them home.” □

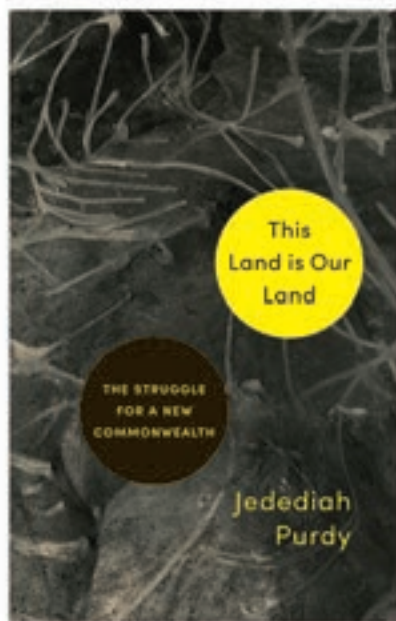


Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) is an assistant professor of American studies at the University of New Mexico and the author of *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019).

Avis Charley (Spirit Lake Dakota/ Navajo) is a painter and ledger artist who uses color pencils on antique documents, a historic style practiced on the Plains to record important events. Charley’s work celebrates the evolution of Indigenous identity, from pre-reservation period to the present day.

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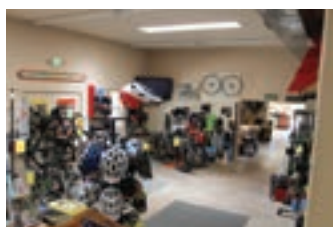
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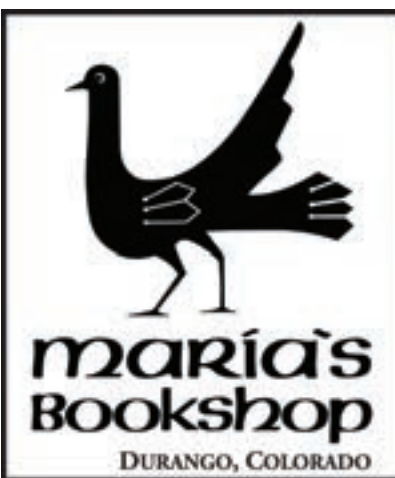
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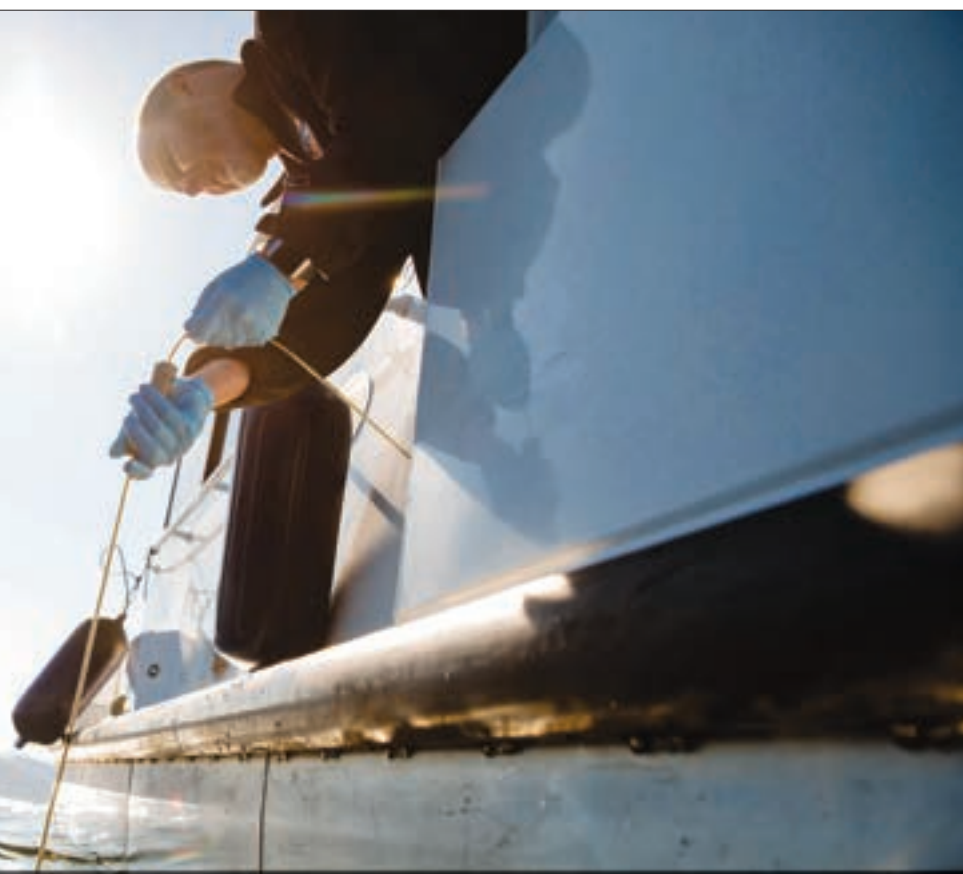
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This photo was taken on Coeur d'Alene Lake, where Associate Editor Emily Benson spent several months digging into the story behind the lakebed's contamination from heavy metals. A clean-up will require collaboration between the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the state of Idaho, which have a history of disagreement.

Photo by Jerome Pollos for High Country News



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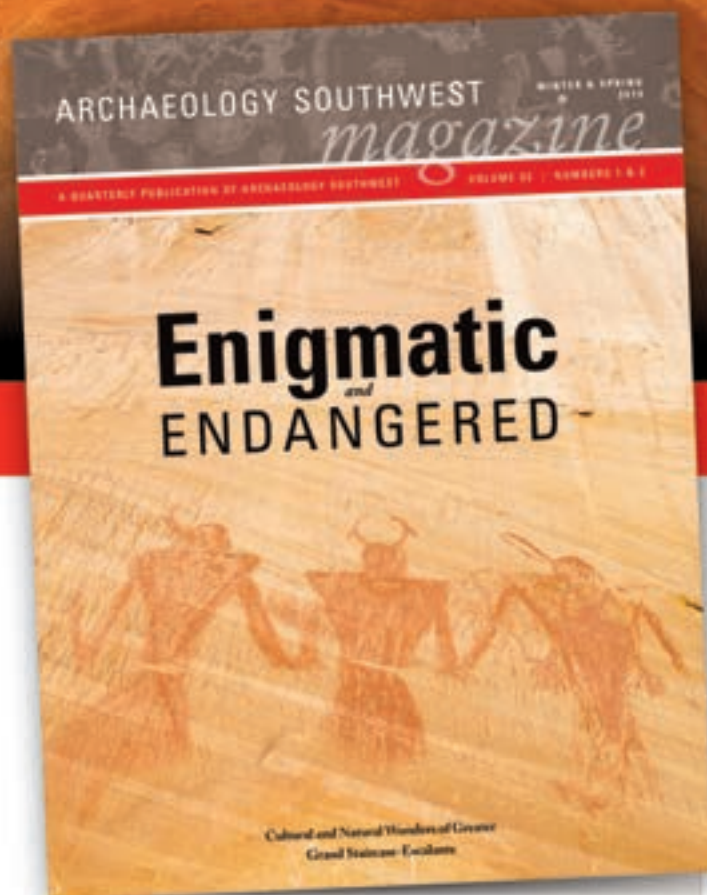
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An old ship made new

At the beginning, which might have otherwise been the end,

In the early stages of the restoration project, Goolden removes concrete from *Tally Ho*'s bilges with a jackhammer.

COURTESY OF LEO GOOLDEN

the ship was an empty shell, without mast or motor. Just a bathtub with a deck so rotten you could toe into it like mulch, the wood well on its way to being dirt again. But she had a name: *Tally Ho*.

In May 2017, Leo Goolden climbed into the belly of the boat for the first time and sat with the fragile wooden ribs curled around him, rain dripping onto the plastic sheet stretched overhead. Inside the living wreck of the ship he had come so far to see, he conjured the photograph that drew him in: *Tally Ho* a hundred years ago, all new wood and fresh paint, crisp white sails petaled above in the wind.

She had already evaded death several times. In 1927, she won a prestigious race in conditions so stormy only one other boat finished with her, and in 1968, she was half-wrecked on a reef in the South Pacific. Always she was repaired, sold, sailed again. But eventually she coasted into the long decline common to wooden ships of a certain age, and was beached in this Oregon boatyard. Now, with the yard slated to close, the end seemed final.

But Goolden saw a chance for a new beginning. Fascinated by old boats, he

had skipped university to apprentice in a shipyard in his hometown of Bristol in southwestern England. By age 25, he'd repaired a single-masted Swedish sailboat and sailed across the Atlantic, alone, navigating by sextant after his GPS broke and he decided not to replace it. Three years later, sitting in *Tally Ho*, he remembered how it felt to leave land behind for the 20-day crossing: danger and excitement intermingled, a fizzy awareness that whatever happened next would change him for good.

Recognizing that feeling again, Goolden knew that what came next would not be easy. He would have to replace much of the ship's skeleton and nearly all of the planks along her hull, and then rebuild the cabins, deck, mast and sails. It would be expensive, a difficult job for one person. But when he finished — if he finished — *Tally Ho* would sail again. Or perhaps a reincarnation of her — the same shape, wrapped in new timber.

One month later, *Tally Ho* was 400 miles north, in Sequim, a sleepy lavender-lined town nestled between

Washington's Olympic Mountains and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, where some family friends had suggested Goolden turn their backyard into a boatyard. He gave up his sailing jobs, moved in and set up shop.

With his perpetual bedhead and sleepy, sun-creased eyes, Goolden's affect sometimes belies the bedrock confidence with which he approaches everything he does. After his Atlantic crossing, Goolden skippered on private yachts, despite his youth and lack of experience. He looks serious when puzzling through some tricky problem, mouth pressed into a thin, straight line and a pencil tucked behind his ear, but a faint crook of an eyebrow betrays the dry, self-deprecating wit he deploys easily and often.

On video, this translates into a quirky, hard-to-categorize charm. Goolden started documenting the restoration process on YouTube after a friend showed him the popular channel of an attractive young sailing couple, apparently financed by the spoils of viewership. Goolden thought, "Surely, if they can do it. ..." He'd dabbled in photography and music production before, and he cut the first few



videos with his usual attention to detail and a snappy, instinctive style.

But each took two or three full days to produce, and Goolden felt conflicted about not spending that time working on *Tally Ho*.

The ship was in even rougher shape than he expected. In January 2018, after prising off the ship's lead ballast keel — a solid, age-pitted metal beam that runs along the bottom of the boat — Goolden discovered deep fissures in the antique timber just above it. While the damage to *Tally Ho*'s planks and frames had been easily visible, he'd hoped to preserve the original beams of the ship's backbone. Now he realized that wouldn't be possible — and the enormous pieces of new lumber he'd need to replace them would jeopardize his dwindling savings.

"A few people have suggested that it might have been simpler and quicker and cheaper to build a new boat rather than restore this one," Goolden says in one early video, sitting below the swell of *Tally Ho*'s flank. "And they'd be absolutely right. But that's not the point."

His breath hangs in the cold air as he looks intently into the camera lens. "This is about rebuilding a historic vessel and saving it from destruction," he says. "When this boat is finished, I'll be sailing on a vessel that was built over a hundred years ago — that's sort of magic."

Imagine a wooden boat as a body. The centerline is the spine, running from bow to keel to stern. The frames are the ribs, curving upward in matched pairs, and the planks that skin the ship, like the cells of the human body, are made to be recycled and replaced as they break down over time.

In Goolden's videos, days of work unfurl in time-lapsed minutes, the ship shifting under the shadows that sweep through the shed. Rotten timber is pared away gently, like flesh, and new wood is sliced and smoothed and fit into place. It's part "things organized neatly" and part time travel, as a century of entropy is slowly, painstakingly unwound.

In the two years since the first video,

Goolden has amassed more than 100,000 subscribers and nearly 2,000 Patreon supporters, who donate between \$2 and \$100 for each new episode. "I want to say a massive massive 'Thank you' to everyone who's generously donated or otherwise supported this project," he says at the end of one early video. "As you know, this is not funded or sponsored or anything like that. It's just my own crazy madness."

"It's recovering from all the knocks and bruises it's had over the years, and so will we."

His madness has proved surprisingly infectious. On a 5,000-member Facebook group, fans offer advice or encouragement to Goolden and each other. People send tools and materials from an Amazon wishlist or loan him larger items, including a forklift and welding equipment. One even brought a working 1930s ship saw that can cut massive oak timbers to precise angles.

Others, the super fans, come to Sequim to volunteer their labor — maybe 50 people over the last two years, determined to be a part of the project. Finn Birch, for example, a 25-year-old English forester, found Goolden's videos after a fractured kneecap put him on the couch for a few weeks in January. Two months later, still healing, he flew to the States to join *Tally Ho*.

In the sunny, sawdust-heaped yard one afternoon in July, on his second visit to Sequim, Birch was searching for the shapes of new frames in the stacks of milled timber waiting to be cut. He scanned the grain for knots and defects, then steered the chainsaw to shear heartwood from sapwood. The pieces he cut would be planed and smoothed, then cut again, carefully beveled, on the ship saw, and finally fastened together with wooden nails into a solid, graceful arch.

Birch looked up at the boat, studying the pale new ribs that gleamed among the last few old frames, their dark, weathered wood porous as bone. The group would finish the rest before summer's end, and then Goolden would keep going: the planks, the deck, the mast, the sails — everything that would make *Tally Ho* whole again.

"It's recovering from all the knocks and bruises it's had over the years," Birch said, resting a hand on the ship saw table. "And so will we."

In philosophy, the story of the ship of Theseus probes our uneasy relationship with identity and change. In the tale, the Greek hero Theseus sails home after slaying the Minotaur and becomes king of Athens. His ship is enshrined as a national treasure, but over time, as planks splinter or a bulkhead leaks, parts are replaced, one by one. After a hundred years, nothing of the original remains. Is it, the philosophers asked, still the same ship?

It helps to think of wooden boats as living organisms, Goolden said, their components continually being repaired and replaced. This simple answer hides a subtler, more complicated truth: Maybe it's only the same ship because we call it the same ship.

"We understand the world by categorizing things, and naming them," Goolden said one evening in July. "That makes it easy to understand, but it's not actually the way it is. If I say, I'm a separate person, and I'm called Leo, that makes it easier for me to understand my relationship with other things. But the food I eat — when does that become me?"

Goolden jokes that he initially thought the *Tally Ho* would take him two years. Two years later, his estimate is the same: two more years. But he can see the end point now. The boat has its new keel and frames. The new planks are stacked in a kiln to dry, waiting to sheathe the boat in new skin.

In the same way, we are all made up of processes and all subject to entropy. The microbes and cells and molecules that compose our bodies degrade and are replaced daily. Our memories, too, shift and settle into different shapes over time. But above it all, encompassing everything else, there's a name that others call us, and we call ourselves. □

Amelia Urry is a writer and poet in Seattle.

Left. *Tally Ho* in 1927, running downwind with spinnaker during the Fastnet Race in the Solent off the Isle of Wight, United Kingdom.

BEKEN OF COWES

The base of *Tally Ho*'s restoration in Sequim, Washington. At the stage pictured, only the keel timber had been replaced, and Goolden was getting ready to start removing planks and replacing frames.

COURTESY OF LEO GOOLDEN

An act of hope

Sometimes you need to take a weekend off from worrying about climate change and just go camping with your kid



KRYSTAL QUILES FOR HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

We were walking along a trail sandwiched into a narrow strip of woods between a row of campsites and the Tucannon River. A pair of girls whizzed past us on bicycles. In a pack on my husband's back in front of me was our 13-month-old son. It was cool under the trees, but in the moist air along the river, the mosquitoes were out in force. One landed on the baby's left ear as I watched, and I wondered why the hell we were doing this, but then a veery began singing somewhere nearby, I caught sight of the sunlight glinting on the water through the brush, and for a moment everything felt OK.

This was our first time taking our son camping. Not having any experience doing this with a tiny human in tow, we thought it would be sensible to start small, with a single night at a state park about 30 minutes from our home in southeast Washington. It's really just a patch of trees by the river surrounded by rippling green wheat fields that would be dry and brown by the end of summer, the campground populated mostly by RVers stopping over on cross-country treks. But in addition to the mosquitoes, it had yellow warblers flying through our campsite, muskrats swimming in a side creek, and a reputation as a good spot for trout fishing. We figured it would do as well as anywhere for a test run of sleeping in a tent with an almost-toddler.

It took me a while to decide for certain that I wanted to do this at all. Nothing else in my life is quite as effective as a walk in the woods for calming the clamor of my anxieties or quieting the never-ending to-do list in my brain. I never feel more content, more myself. I want my son to see that part of me, and I hope that a sense of kinship with the natural world might enrich his life as it has mine.

But I worry. By encouraging him to cultivate that same connection, am I only setting him up for a painful future? He'll live to see the unfolding climate crisis diminish our planet's living beauty in ways that will be permanent and painful. I'm afraid that by teaching him to love streams full of salmon and woods full of songbirds, I'm betraying him, dooming him to a bitter, grieving adulthood when the streams are empty and the woods are silent. Would I serve him better by spending my weekends, say, volunteering with climate justice campaigns, rather than teaching him to make s'mores and identify constellations and bird songs?

I try to justify it to myself with data. Researchers have found a connection between early experiences in nature and environmental activism later in life: Kids who play in the woods become adults who invest their time and energy in taking care of the planet. There's also evidence that kids who spend time in nature do better in school, are healthier mentally and physically, and are even more generous and altruistic than their peers.

That's the kind of kid I want to raise. But ultimately, it wasn't the statistics that made up my mind. It was a feeling — hope. Taking our son camping has become my stubborn way of hanging onto hope that a beautiful future is still possible. So we went to the woods.

FOR THE MOST PART, it turns out, camping with a 1-year-old is not particularly relaxing. I struggled to entertain our energetic little boy while my husband put up the tent and made dinner, and later it was a huge relief when, about 10 minutes after we put him to bed, he finally fell asleep. But the weekend wasn't really about relaxing; it was about setting the tone for the kind of family we want to be.

And we survived. In fact, when we got home the next day — after changing a poopy diaper, coaxing my son to take a nap in his crib, showering, unpacking, and hosing a mysterious sticky substance off our tent — I made a reservation for another night the following month at a different campground. This one was a little further away, at a trailhead for a path along a river up into Washington's Blue Mountains.

How can I help my son build a strong relationship with something that's changing before his eyes? How can I tell him to build his sense of self on something that won't be there for him in the same way in five years, 10, 50? I'm still figuring it out. But here's the thing — change and loss are part of parenthood, too. My son is changing every day, the tiny baby I held last year already gone for good, and I can't know what the future holds for him. All I can do is try to take good care of him, advocate for him, love him and teach him how to hope. □

Rebecca Heisman is a science communicator and writer who lives in Walla Walla, Washington.

A close-up photograph of a pair of Patagonia work pants made from a coarse, brown canvas material. The pants are folded, showing the texture and construction details like a button and a pocket. A small, dark, rectangular label with the Patagonia logo is visible on the fabric. The lighting is warm and focused on the folds of the fabric.

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MONTANA

A grandmother in the small town of Polson, Montana, was not happy about all the cars zipping past her at high speed when she walked down the road with her grandchild. So Patti Baumgartner decided to fake a speed trap: She ransacked the bathroom for her white hair dryer, parked herself in a chair near the road, and pointed her dryer directly at passing drivers, hoping they'd get the message to slow down. Her son, Tim, tweeted a picture of her on duty to the Montana Highway Patrol, showing his slipper-wearing mother sitting on a lawn chair, a coffee cup in one hand and the other waving her hair dryer at drivers. Trooper Noah Pesola thought her approach was creative as well as hilarious. Speeding in Montana is a problem, he told ktvq.com, and he liked Baumgartner's solution so much he gave her the title of "Honorary Montana Trooper." Though Baumgartner acknowledged she "couldn't tell if her white hair dryer really slowed cars down," she said she has no plans to stop her campaign.

ALASKA

It just keeps getting more uncomfortable for officials of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, which governs 25,000 square miles of Alaska. The assembly made headlines recently after it was forced to allow members of nontraditional religions to offer the opening invocations at its meetings. A Satanist (*HCN*, 9/16/19) opened one meeting, and then this September, "Pastafarian" Barrett Fletcher took his turn. Wearing an upside-down spaghetti colander on his head as a sign of his faith, Fletcher intoned, "May the Great Flying Spaghetti Monster rouse himself from his stupor and let his noodly appendages ground each assembly member in their seats." One person in the audience turned his back in protest; another observer giggled. Fletcher told the *Washington Post* that he was there to defend the First Amendment's separation of church and state: "I'm very offended by having God associated with my local politics." Borough officials had fought for years for the right to enforce an official religious — usually meaning Christian — observance before convening, but the Alaska Superior Court ruled the policy unconstitutional. As one borough councilman put it, "We lost a lawsuit and basically (we) have to allow anyone



MONTANA Grandma is packing serious heat. PATTI BAUMGARTNER/FACEBOOK

that wants to give an invocation to give it." After Fletcher, who is 67 and a semi-retired handyman, concluded with a solemn "Ramen," the councilman carefully noted, "We didn't invite him."

Fletcher said he'd become a Flying Spaghetti Monster "ministeroni" four years ago, founding his congregation of 30 pasta-eaters just to oppose the borough's exclusionary policy. Mike Arthur, an independent filmmaker who is producing a documentary about Pastafarians, said Oregon resident Bobby Henderson founded the sect in 2005 to challenge the teaching of intelligent design in Kansas schools. Since then, Arthur said, hundreds of thousands of people have "signed up" as adherents. There are no religious requirements, though Arthur noted that at pasta-fueled gatherings you might see people wearing "the infamous pasta-strainer as a form of head-gear." Becoming a ministeroni is not arduous; it requires payment of a fee of \$25 for an online certificate.

COLORADO

The word "disposable" is an overused word, one of those words that basically makes little sense because nothing ever just vanishes into thin air. That's the conclusion of Dave Barkey, who sells sophisticated grinders to wastewater treatment facilities that have become clogged by allegedly disposable or flushable "wipes." The throwaway-wipes industry is booming, Barkey told the gath-

ering of 900 wastewater managers at a recent meeting recently in Keystone, Colorado, "growing at more than 5% a year, with sales expected to climb to more than \$20 billion in 2021." The "wipes frenzy," reported the *Colorado Sun*, is happening at the same time as something environmentally good — low-flush, water-saving toilets — but unfortunately they act together to strain wastewater treatment plants until they're downright constipated. Barkey's mechanical solutions include "chopper pumps with screw-type propellers," grinder pumps with cutters, and screens and augers. His dour sewer talk was enlivened by stories of cities with "whale-sized fatbergs of wipes" blocking the smooth passage of wastewater. As a Denver consultant on treating wastewater advised the group: "People need to stop using (wipes)."

ARIZONA

In the Boatman's Quarterly Review, the featured Grand Canyon River guide is always asked: "What's the craziest question you've ever been asked about the canyon/river?" Examples are plentiful, because so many of us seem to be clueless about the natural world. Guide Erica Fareio, 43, said the memory of her favorite query still makes her laugh: A tourist asked, "Does that rock (that sticks straight up out of the river) go all the way to the bottom?"

THE WEST

"Chemtrails," as some call those jet contrails that sometimes streak the sky, are not the nefarious plot that conspiracy theorists imagine, yet this debris is evidence of serious pollution, reports *Earth Island Journal*. The waste comes from burning jet fuel, and it's made up of condensed water and soot. Surprisingly, these familiar contrails have "a greater climate impact than the greenhouse gas emissions associated with burning jet fuel." At high altitude, the expelled water freezes and also traps heat in the Earth's atmosphere. Researchers found that reducing soot from burning jet fuel had the greatest potential to decrease the warming impact of contrails.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.



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