

A Critical Review of
"Shoot, Minnie, Shoot!" the story of 1904 Fort Shaw Indian Girls B Basketball's First World
Champions by Happy Jack Feder
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In collaboration with

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Granddaughter, Great-granddaughter, and Grandniece of Fort Shaw 1904 basketball team players

None of us wanted to go and our parents didn't want to let us go. Oh, we cried, for this was the first time we were to be separated from our parents. Nobody waved as the wagons, escorted by the soldiers, took us toward the school at Fort Shaw. Once there, our belongings were taken from us, even the little medicine bags our mothers had given to us to protect us from harm. Everything was placed in a heap and set afire. (Lone Wolf, son of Fine Shield Woman, a Piegan Blackfeet, and James Willard Schultz in *Native American Testimony*. Peter Nabokov, editor. (1991, 220))

Like Lone Wolf, Indian children were taken from their families and communities to boarding schools, sometimes for as long as ten years and sometimes as far away as 1,000 miles in often abusive and physically unhealthy environments. This was part of a grand federal plan to "civilize" the Indian. Boarding schools, officials hoped, would offer a way both to assuage the guilt of whites for massacres and small pox infestations and the like, and to open vast and currently "useless" domains for settlement.

Like Lone Wolf, many Indian people remember the loneliness and loss, and they tell their children boarding school stories that others have forgotten. All the while, the media and popular fiction and even serious histories have romanticized or demonized their stories, eclipsing their voices and reinforcing stereotypes. *Shoot, Minnie, Shoot! the story of the 1904 Fort Shaw Indian Girls Basketball's First World Champions* is this kind of fiction. In this review, we offer our readings of the novel in the interest of "Indian Education for All" teaching imperatives; our hope is to make clear where history and fiction differ regarding the Ft. Shaw Indian girls basketball team and to emphasize the importance of accurate representations of American Indian life, past and present.

"*Shoot, Minnie, Shoot!*" is a novel, written and self-published by Happy Jack Feder, a fiction writer and publisher who has made his home in Sun River Canyon, Montana, about thirty miles west of present-day Fort Shaw.

To its credit, the novel recognizes the girls' achievement, as well as the racial struggles of the time. Clearly, Mr. Feder appreciates basketball, threading his story of these remarkable teenagers with the conflicts he imagines they may have experienced, with easy dialog and realistic game scenes, with their responses to triumph, with a few romances, and with some semi-historical stories related to boarding-school and Indian/white issues and events.

On the copywrite page, Happy Jack Feder offers a disclaimer: "This is a work of fiction and any resemblance or similarity to any persons or events is entirely coincidental and unintended." However, the title and reviewers' notes, the Library of Congress designated category of "Historical Fiction," the accurate names of the Fort Shaw ball players and superintendent, photographs of the team members, direct quotes from newspapers, and facts about the 1904 Fair all contradict Feder's claim of its purely fictional basis. The persons or events are *not* at all coincidental. Therefore, the novel must be regarded and evaluated as "Historical Fiction."

So what makes this small-distribution book so worthy of critical attention? Like so much fiction about Indians, "*Shoot, Minnie, Shoot*" suffers from misinformation, contradictions, false assumptions, and all-too-common stereotypes (noble, uncivilized, wild or animal-like, and savage, for a few). Such stereotypes and distorted generalizations hide the seriously complex truths that lie beneath, while the voices of children such as Lone Wolf are clearly disregarded. It seduces the unwary reader, primarily non-Indian, while it betrays the very people it purports to praise.

One particularly egregious distortion involves the mis-impression the cover photo gives. It's not Minnie! Furthermore, in his Author's Notes, Feder regrets that Belle Johnson holds the ball on the front cover, not Minnie, who *is* pictured on page 161. But that's not Minnie, either. It's Emma Sansaver, as recognized by Barbara Winters, Emma's granddaughter. Forgetting for a moment the insult Belle Johnson's descendants might feel in reading that the writer regrets that their grandmother is holding the ball, consider how readers would respond to a novel about Jackie Robinson with an unlabeled photo of Hank Aaron on the cover? Identifying photographs accurately is a fundamental responsibility of a publisher. Clearly, this is false advertising.

Feder also claims that "no facts have been turned upside down or perversely interpreted" (162). Well, "*Shoot, Minnie, Shoot*," may not be in the league of Custer mythology, but in the interest of "Indian Education for All" and the importance of accurate representations of American Indian life, past and present, we'd like to get the facts straight.

SUMMARY: The novel begins on the Shoshone Indian Reservation in central Idaho, "a day's horse ride from the Montana border," where images of five blue swallows, flying "to a distant and unknown destination," appear to Minnie. Putting "the dream away for a moment," she

thinks again about "her one consuming passion: . . . to accomplish a wondrous and great deed." She also thinks of the stories of Shoshone women warriors, and how her Shoshone people "needed to be reminded that they were as great a people now as when their grandmothers were babies" (9). Although she does not know what she will accomplish with her life, a spark of potential "greatness" burns within her as something to counter "the suffocating stillness of sedentary reservation life" (10).

The "kindly [Fort Lapwai] Indian agent and schoolteacher," (11) Mr. Burton, recognizes Minnie's intelligence and throwing skills. He suggests she leave her family to attend the Federal Indian Boarding School in Fort Shaw, Montana, hundreds of miles north and east. Her father agrees, because he believes she will "bring honor and joy" to her family (16). Throughout the novel, images of the five swallows recur, and Minnie grows to understand their significance for her and for the team.

At the Fort Shaw boarding school, Minnie interacts and sometimes conflicts with other students. She also learns to play basketball and to perform Delsartean dances and pantomimes. The tallest player on the team, Minnie soon wins the attention of crowds who cheer "Shoot, Minnie, Shoot," as the unbeatable team achieves widespread recognition. The team is the pride of the school. Mr. Campbell, the superintendent and coach, teaches his students about Lewis and Clark and the upcoming centennial celebration to be held in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904. Over several months, the girls practice, raise funds and travel from Fort Shaw to Missouri for the World's Fair and the competition for "World Basketball Champions."

In the end, the Fort Shaw team defeats the Missouri Women's All Stars "24-2" to receive the trophy for the "First World Championship of Women's Basketball." Minnie's "vision" of the soaring swallows comes true, and she is reunited with her father when he surprises her in St. Louis.

REVIEW: The true story of the Fort Shaw team is inspiring and certainly engaging, but these women deserve an honest and respectful rendition that is historically accurate and culturally authentic. This novel is neither.

Despite its being loosely based on the history of the Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School, on published newspaper articles about Fort Shaw games and students' musical presentations, on information regarding the 1904 World's Fair, and on the girls' tribal backgrounds, "*Shoot, Minnie, Shoot*" does not reflect the historical facts as it could. Moreover, it lacks literary integrity. The characters and many imagined scenes are not only unbelievable but literally outrageous, and the most basic respect for acknowledgment of sources is absent. Had the author interviewed and then requested feedback from descendants, or had he read the article entitled "World Champions: The 1904 Girls' Basketball Team from Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School," by researchers Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, first printed in the *Montana Magazine of*

Western History (Winter 2001), he could have avoided some glaring contradictions, misrepresentations of historical facts, false assumptions, and all-too-common stereotypes.¹

First: consider the issues of family, and tribal or cultural affiliation. The novel introduces Minnie as a young girl with a father, Sees-Far-Away, and with a living mother, "the youngest of her father's four wives." They live in a tipi on the Shoshone Indian Reservation, near the Fort Lapwai Agency (10-11). In the novel, Minnie takes the last name of the Indian Agent, Mr. Burton; and then at Fort Shaw, she explains to her classmates that her Shoshone people are "part of the Sioux nation . . . Minnehaha is a name often given to a girl who is what you might call a Sioux princess" (44).

The truth? According to researchers Peavy and Smith, the historical Minnie Burton's mother, "a Western Shoshone from Nevada, had died when Minnie was nine, and Minnie and her younger brother were thereafter raised by their Lemhi Shoshone father, William Burton, and their stepmother, a Bannock woman"(Peavy and Smith 9-10).

Minnie's tribal heritage, as the novel attributes her saying, is also inaccurate. Shoshone is not a "part of the Sioux nation" (44). The term "Sioux" is the term the Anishnabe used for their traditional enemy, and comes from the word "niddowasioux," meaning "little snakes," "adders." The designation *Sioux* represents the congregate of Lakota/Dakota people, who lived and hunted in the Montana, Dakota, and Minnesota territories. Their language systems differ significantly from Shoshone, and their locations on opposite sides of the Rocky Mountains would have made such a relatedness impossible. The idea of an Indian princess is completely made up. Minnehaha does not mean Indian princess in Lakota, and the concept of royalty did not (and does not) exist in traditional Lakota thought. Moreover, "Minnehaha" is Algonquin, not Lakota or "Sioux." We wonder how Abigail Adams' descendants might feel about a fiction writer suggesting Abigail's name originated in Spain and that her ancestral home, England, was a part of the French Nation.

The implied heritage of Belle Johnson is also problematic. In Feder's compilation of contemporary newspapers, with the exception of what Feder calls "obvious" fictional narratives (164), the fictional writer, Jonathon C. Foggs, says, "It would not surprise me the very least if Belle [actually Piegan/ Blackfeet] is the granddaughter of Crazy Horse [actually Oglala Sioux] himself, so valiantly did she push the ball up field" (150). We might suspect Belle's descendants would find the association insulting. However, giving the reporter some room for error, a reader could possibly assume that the reporter may not have known that Piegan/Blackfeet and Oglala Sioux are different tribes. But with the compilation (147-153) including no quotation marks or citations, it is difficult to distinguish whose voice we are actually reading, Feder's or the fictional journalist. Who is the writer committing the error? Feder or an eastern reporter at the turn of the century?

¹ Peavy and Smith have several times given a talk about the Ft. Shaw Indian Girls basketball team entitled, "A Shoot, Minnie Shoot!"

Even more disturbing is Feder's admitted "masquerade" of Louis Youpee as Metis (mixed-blood or French/Cree in this case). In his "Author's Notes," Feder says he made the change because the Metis "deserved mention," since "huge numbers" had lived in the area "before returning en masse to Canada in 1905" (164). Feder identifies Youpee as "Sioux and not Metis," but in fact Louis Youpee was Chippewa (Peavy and Smith 7). Again, like the mislabeling of the photograph on page 161, Feder doesn't get it right. But that's not the only inaccuracy. All Metis descendants did not return "en masse" to Canada. In fact, they remained hidden in the Choteau and Sun River Valley area, as well as other places throughout Montana to avoid persecution from the military who had executed their leader, Louis Reil. Today, keeping their Metis history alive, many still live in the Sun River Valley and Choteau area. But what of Louis Youpee's actual heritage? Is it not worth including? What is his story?

Another serious problem occurs with the identification of the spiritual figure who influences Minnie throughout the novel, as well as the dangerous assumptions and treatment of spiritual beliefs of other students and team members. Again, Feder acknowledges that there is a debate as to whether "Old Man and Great Father are two separate entities or merely parallel manifestations of The One God" (164). Feder oversimplifies and trivializes the issue.

In the first place, not all tribes and not all Native people ascribe to a belief in "Old Man," and not the Shoshone in particular. While Minnie's Shoshone father attributes her dream to "Old Man," this spiritual figure is actually the trickster/transformer *Napi* of the Blackfeet, not the Shoshone. Then, Minnie later "knows" that each girl on the team had found a way to believe in both Great Father of the church and Old Man at the same time." (87) At the end, we read that "Old Man and his good friend, Great Father [of the white people] . . . enjoy a good laugh," as they appear joyful in Minnie's dream, having shown her the way to the championship game in St. Louis (160). The ecumenical spirit of such depictions of tolerance fits with the spunky persona of western fiction, a conflation born of common sense ala Mark Twain and Will Rogers, yet one has to question its trivializing effects. While it is entirely possible that individuals in the Blackfeet or in the Judeo-Christian traditions might have a dream such as Minnie's, few Christians or Muslims would trust a fictional narrative that confuses Mohammad with Jesus.

Most disturbing is the implication that Native American ethnic or cultural authenticity is a mute issue, since non-Indian readers won't know about the great diversity of tribal nations and cultures. In truth, more than 550 federally recognized tribal nations exist today. If a writer gets them mixed up, it won't matter. Perhaps no one will notice.

Second: consider the author's application of "poetic license." Feder's narrative about the appearance of Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill Cody at the 1904 Fair is inaccurate and disrespectful, despite Feder's admission that he has "a fondness for Sitting Bull and [thinks he deserves] a ticket to see his descendants echo his famous battle and mete out a second 'Last Stand' to yet another cocky leader" (164). Cheering for the "Underdog," a typical Hollywood motif in depicting dominant/minority relations, tends to obscure all sorts of real-life domination, suggesting that any individual can succeed in realizing the American dream, no matter how oppressed his or her group or people may be.

Although Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa Sioux) was tragically shot and killed in 1890 over Ghost Dance fears and internal tribal conflicts, Feder has imagined him present at the 1904 Fair. In company with Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull makes Minnie's "heart ache to see her own people." He speaks "in a Sioux dialect" that Minnie has difficulty understanding, and Buffalo Bill calls him a "crusty feller." By contrast, Buffalo Bill's appearance makes Minnie "feel *proud*" (123). He looks to Minnie like "the epitome of American majesty" (125). The situation is as absurd as a cranky John F. Kennedy showing up at Nixon's inauguration. The contrasting descriptions of Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill are most disturbing, with "majesty" being ascribed to an entertainer, and a political and spiritual leader of thousands called "feller." Now it's possible Buffalo Bill might have said as much about Sitting Bull *B* they were, in fact, friends until one was sent to arrest the other in 1890, with Sitting Bull's assassination following shortly thereafter. We might accept this exchange in the novel as satire, but it's not. It is included as an imagined extension of a true story.

Third: consider the way Hollywood rather than history pervades the novel through the non-Native bias evident in the stereotypes. Although the existence of the novel itself represents Feder's attempt to show respect and sensitivity for the Native people, his fictional narrative betrays his lack of understanding for the very complex truths that lie beneath his assumptions.

Take the situation of Emma Sansaver. According to Emma's granddaughter, Barbara Winters, Emma's father Edward died when Emma was seven years old. But in the novel, her father suddenly shows up at the school and chastises her for wearing a feather in her hair. "What's this garbage? I said no injun clothes or foofaraw and I meant it." (30) Emma challenges him in a "brave and true voice" with "Yet you married my mother. A full blood.' And then he slaps her.

Now it's entirely possible a white father may have behaved this way, but it's unlikely that such a man would so dramatically change. In Chicago, Minnie persuades her teachers to let audience members participate in a dance. Although Emma's fictional "father" has followed the team, still exhibiting disapproval, Minnie draws him in and he dances with Emma. Moved by the crowd's applause, he now understands "his daughter was now her own woman. She was who she was and that was that. She excelled at being herself. . . . Emma was the best Emma possible. His job was done(122)." Fictional depiction aside, the reader is supposed to believe that this white father *Ca* clear racist *C* was really a good man. The chapter in which Minnie's father slaps her ends with *A* some men from town" gathered to find Oliver, who they speculate has run away to look for his father. In a subtle way, all these depictions call for benevolent administrators and teachers to fill the fatherhood gap with a benign paternalism.

The historical F. C. Campbell is generally reputed to have been a kind and highly motivated administrator, educator and coach. But Feder finds it necessary to incorporate guilt as a motive for Campbell's "generous and enthusiastic efforts to better the Indian condition" (163), inaccurately incorporating the Massacre on the Marias into his novel. Campbell says, *A* You and I were only boys. Eighteen and soldiers On that awful morning we were the boots of twisted and amoral generals whose criminal egos ran amok."

The truth? Most of the soldiers who participated in the Massacre on the Marias River of 173 Blackfeet old men, women, and children on January 23, 1870 were young and inexperienced. Campbell would have been just six years old on that date. Moreover, Campbell himself was an accomplished athlete, and an educator, who "recognized the self-esteem sports could impart to young athletes" (Peavy and Smith 7). Feder had enough motivation for Campbell. He didn't need guilt.

In language, image and situation, the novel is rife with both positive and negative stereotypes along with the oversimplification of culture, language, religion, and dress that creates outright incongruities and contradictory historical and cultural truths. These are some examples that hopefully will require little explanation.

1. "Before succumbing to the conquering combination of white people's diseases, soldiers and endless streams of settlers, young Shoshone men had entered adulthood by performing a great deed." This reinforces the notion that Indians were a *conquered* people, along with the disappearance of previous ways (10).
2. "[Minnie] was happy to attend school and learn about the world beyond the reservation, whereas her mothers and grandmothers might have slowly tortured to death a captive or fought off a murderous grizzly bear while out picking huckleberries."(11). Where did the author get this idea?
3. And later in St. Louis during one of the preliminary games, a similar image describes the Fort Shaw Indian girls: "Minnie and her mates wouldn't have heard the roar of a grizzly bear if their head were inside its open jaws. They *were* the grizzly bear" roaring "up and down the field." (113).
4. "The brand new cotton dress the Fort Lapwai Agency had distributed, along with other clothes, to her family. . . . made her feel clean and pretty"(11)--as if she were not somehow clean when she was at home with her Shoshone people.
5. "Trapped again, thought Minnie. Trapped in a hopeless reservation." (12)
6. "I want to become a Shoshone by the old ways. But here on the reservation there is nothing great to do. There is nothing *little* to do, either. Our opportunities have been taken from us. We count days and moons and winters. That is all" (13).
7. We wonder about the reference to not touching tears (14), and the reference to "devil Blackfeet" and cutting out "their *beating* hearts" (15). The reviewers know of no such tradition related to drying one's own tears. Although cutting out the beating heart of an enemy was a practice in some tribes, its use in this text seems sensational.
8. The race to the boarding school is less believable than their running away from it might have been. In general, the boarding school experience represents a cultural genocide, in the words of Richard Henry Pratt, "Kill the Indian, save the man. "
9. Belle Johnson tells Minnie, "[Fort Shaw] is a huge boarding school . . . everyone is good friends" (18).
10. In her Indian dress at Fort Shaw and after her three-day trip to the school, Minnie feels "awful . . . like a sack of squishy, rotting potatoes" (19).
11. Looking at Mr. Campbell, Minnie thinks, "exchange the clothes for Indian garb, and he would still command respect" (22). His surrogate father role (Great White Father) and the patriarchy of mainstream American society are reinforced yet again.

- 12.** "Most Metís lived in Canada, but a few bands had drifted down to Montana . . . the Metis, who spoke an indecipherable mixture of French and Indian"(28). In truth, many Metis people lived in Montana *B* and still do. Metís or Michief was a very common language on the western plains and in Montana. Metís dictionaries have been written. A more accurate statement would have been a mixture of French and Cree. Michief is still spoken in at least four states and five Canadian provinces. Reference to other peoples' languages as "indecipherable" comes from ethnocentrism and ignorance at best.
- 13.** "Both the red and white parts of my heart" (31) represents a serious oversimplification of identity issues and echoes the romanticism and tragedy of "halfbreed" pulp fiction.
- 14.** "The dark thought crossed her mind that, like her grandmothers, she might also have enjoyed torturing captured enemy braves had she been born fifty years earlier"(45). Where does this idea come from? It perpetuates the stereotype about Indians as savages at the same time it instills the idea that the girls come from cultures where women were strong and brave *Ca* mixed message at best.
- 15.** "Minnie had forgotten that some Indian boys did not let a girl order them about" (57), as though white men do? This is an interesting passage considering how many women in "white" America during this time period were treated as second-class citizens *B* could not vote, for example.
- 16.** "Maybe I shouldn't be so impatient that I haven't had my vision yet"(58). Typically, don't talk publicly about their visions or dreams. These are personal, and the way Minnie talks about her vision contradicts the way a traditional Shoshone individual might talk.
- 17.** The passage about "delicious and hearty" meals (59) doesn't discuss why many Indian children on the reservations suffered from malnutrition. The passage suggests Indians didn't know how to eat properly; in fact, malnutrition was a serious problem in boarding schools.
- 18.** The passage regarding Minnie having a "mean vision" is disturbing (69-70). Moreover, the mention of Indians "getting visions all the time" takes a deep spiritual, sacred ceremony and belittles it. Indian people and others still do receive personal visions that should be respected.
- 19.** What is the Blackfeet perspective (74) on the Baker Massacre? Why not include Belle Johnson's perspective?
- 20.** When two boys disappear, having been seen "heading toward the horse barn two hours earlier," Emma Sansaver cries, "Ho! What if they're *stealing* horses to escape!"(83). Would *she* say *stealing*? Is this not a Euro-American gloss? Some of the students might have seen this as "counting coups," but as it stands, the passage mirrors the *Asneaky* Indians of Hollywood westerns.
- 21.** "Nettie always carries a braid of [sweetgrass] in a little bag as a *perfume* (85). Sweetgrass is used for purification not as a perfume.
- 22.** Although 300 students came from diverse Native and mixed-blood backgrounds, one (very thick) dialect is represented in the fictional voice of Genie Butch, her mother "Assiniboine and her father a "Scottish" immigrant. Minnie admires her voice as "an exotic songbird." However, while Genie suffers only a hint at criticism for not speaking clear English, Miss Howard, the literature teacher, tells Belle, "with a bit of effort I'm certain you will eliminate those few remaining traces of that clipped Blackfeet accent. It simply ruins *Paradise and the Pearl*. The words must flow gently, please" (42).

23. While we might admire Feder for his ability to write the Scottish dialect so well, we wonder, why not incorporate all the others, various native and western-European, as well? Why not use Genie's actual dialect, since her father was British not Scottish? (Peavy and Smith 11)

24. "Mr. Campbell stood comfortably in silence, a practice he'd deliberately styled from Indians . . . He found many Indian mannerisms and rituals more than admirable" (84).

And then there's the noble savage stereotype that can take the form of the "doomed one who is destined to be extinguished or the "Indian always with us in the drop of American Indian blood" that many Americans claim. The fictional Mr. Campbell chastises Mr. Sansaver for condemning Emma when he sees her wearing a feather in her hair. He says, "I admire your efforts to have her educated formally, but you do her a terrible injustice by punishing her for the few noble Indian habits she dares to practice" (102). We wonder, is she practicing other less-noble habits? Are all Indian habits noble, with Minnie practicing just a few?

Minnie herself is extraordinarily noble, singularly courageous and brave. Following the image and symbolism of the five swallows "still winging through her life," she succeeds in helping to solve five problems: One, to help "Emma find peace with both her father and Louis Youpee"; two, to help "Oliver find a college that would accept him"; three, to help "Miss Howard and Mr. Duffield broach the subject of marriage"; four, to help "Mr. Campbell find a worthwhile opponent for their championship game"; and, five, "before leaving the World's Fair and returning to Montana, she would discover in what direction to aim the remainder of her life" (95-96).

Minnie has so much confidence in her "vision," that she can boldly tell Mr. Campbell that they are "going to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition," and "our team is going to win ten gold medals. Winning the medals is the great deed I will accomplish" (71). Just before the final game in St. Louis, Mr. Campbell speaks with the team and tells them he must "let go of his child," and not be with them on the floor as a coach. The fictional narrative puts him in the stands, but in fact, he had left St. Louis in August to return to Fort Shaw where he was still administrator and teacher. Speaking to the girls, he says: "It was the thousands of white people who saw something noble in you and rose above their prejudices to cheer you on" (137). In a similar vein, Minnie notices the character of their opponents, the Missouri All-Stars. "They all shared [their coach], Stremmel's heartless calculating face, [carrying] and aggressive confidence." And with typical nobility, Minnie thinks, "Now here are players worthy of a championship game and my vision" (142). Such passages bring to mind the concept Renato Rosaldo develops in his book, *Culture and Memory, A imperialist nostalgia.*" It is the longing on the part of the oppressor for the return of the people one has destroyed.

After Referee Kelly's toss of the medallion, "gold spinning in summer sunlight" at the start of the game, he hands it to Minnie. But Minnie doesn't keep it. Instead, as the gun sounds the end of the game, she races to Referee Kelly and presses it "into his hand" so he will remember this "magic day" (154). As with the passages quoted above, Feder often pushes the idea that

Indians were pervasively grateful to their non-Indian teachers and coaches for mentoring them.

Fourth: Consider the distorted portrayal of the Federal Indian Boarding School system as pervasively positive and helpful, with children better off away from the reservations and their Indian communities. Feder includes the situation of a runaway, Oliver Old Coyote, whose father is alcoholic and a "murderer." In a peculiar valorization of white education, Oliver says this to Minnie: "I promise you, Minnehaha Burton, daughter of the great Shoshone Chief Sees Far Away and his wife, Looks In Water, that Oliver Shakespeare will never again run away from this fine school" (60). Minnie smiles in approval.

To be sure, this situation with Oliver does illustrate the way local bounty hunters would catch the runaways, be paid by the school, and then would give part of the money back to the runaways. "Oliver laughed. >But [the pouch] was empty when I gave it to hem. He put the money inside the pouch. It's the bounty money Mr. Campbell had to give to Mr. Cobb.' Oliver rubbed his stomach. >Also, his wife Mrs. Cobb feeds me very well. She is a fine cook.'" (66-67)

The images of laughing when they are caught running away and girls mostly happy and excited to be living together at Ft. Shaw (25) make some big assumptions regarding children living away from relatives in a militaristic atmosphere. The impacts of boarding school policies were more devastating to Native people than single massacres, as deplorable as massacres may have been. Consequently, Native peoples today continue to suffer intergenerational historical trauma from their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents having been raised away from tribal communities and in abusive and often physically unhealthy environments.

Although "these magnificent red children will be capable citizens" (23) is probably a true sentiment of folks working at the boarding school, many people probably aren't even aware of the true nature of the underlying philosophy of boarding schools. Thomas Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1889-1893, stated "A wild Indian requires a thousand acres to roam over, while an intelligent man will find comfortable support for his family on a very small tract. When the rising generation of Indians have become civilized and learned to use the land they live on, a vast domain now useless can be thrown open to settlement and become the seat of great farms, happy homes."

The novel takes up the topic of white ways versus Indian frequently, but deceptively casts them as polar opposite ways of life between which one can sometimes choose and other times not. Overall, the idea of progress suggests that the "Indian" in the children will "disappear" as they learn white ways. At the Christmas Ball, Emma speaks to her friends about missing her old life.

At school we try so hard to be good white people that we forget we are also good Indians. We try hard to learn the white people's ways, and that is good. That is how it must be if we are to survive and prosper. When kidnapped by warriors from another Indian nation, did not our ancestors also learn the language and ways of their new home? This is why we have come to Fort Shaw. Here we have learned to play basketball better than white men and soon we are

going to a World's Fair to become the champions of the world. This is a good thing. But we must not forget the part of us that is Indian. We cannot forget this. . . . Our little sadness at the Ball was the Indian in us calling out to be remembered and celebrated. It won't go away just because we pretend it is, but gone (86).

We wonder, what is the "Indian" inside? An emotion? A culture? A value? An image? A dance? A romantic memory and vanished past? Being "better than white men" can hardly be seen as the goal of boarding schools, where the students provided free labor for farm work and other low-skilled jobs required by white businesses and families local to the schools. On another note, we wonder, why did huge audiences of non-Indian people admire the girls and their achievements? Because they exceeded the general public's athletic expectations for Indians? Because they fulfilled America's obsession for athletic competitions, whether it was baseball or boxing or basketball? We wonder, why not the truth? Why change the final score which was 17-6 and make it 24-2?

Finally, what does all of the misinformation, distortion and stereotype in this novel add up to? It is literary malpractice. Consider more of the testimony from Lone Wolf of his boarding school experience. Although the episode took place more than ten years previous to the championship days, Lone Wolf's experience certainly contradicts the romance of flying blue swallows and smiling gods.

It was very cold that day when we were loaded into the wagons . . . I remember looking back at Na-tah-ki and she was crying too. . . .

Next was the long hair, the pride of all the Indians. The boys, one by one, would break down and cry when they saw their braids thrown on the floor. All of the buckskin clothes had to go and we had to put on the clothes of the White Man. If we thought that the days were bad, the nights were much worse. This was the time when real loneliness set in, for it was when we knew that we were all alone. Many boys ran away from the school because the treatment was so bad, but most of them were caught and brought back by the police. We were told never to talk Indian, and if we were caught, we got a strapping with a leather belt.

Native American Testimony. Peter Nabokov, editor. (1991, 220)

Like other popular fictions and ethnocentric histories, Feder told Minnie's boarding school story as an outsider to the cultures, to the histories, and to her personal experience. He told the story as *he* imagined it, apart from the available truths of the ball players in particular, and apart from the narratives of children like Lone Wolf. On January 23, 2006 the *Great Falls Tribune* featured an editorial by Ellen Goodman, columnist for the *Boston Globe*. She says, "The morphing of truth and fiction promotes a world in which facts are 'subjective' and reality 'flexible.' It feeds on indifference to honesty and a belief that every truth is up for grabs. This is the danger of fiction such as *Shoot, Minnie, Shoot!*

In Sherman Alexie's poem, *Introduction to Native American Literature* the speaker reminds us of our limitations with respect to others:

Because you have seen the color of my bare skin

does not mean you have memorized the shape of my rib cage.

Because you have seen the spine of the mountain

does not mean you made the climb. . . .

Because you sleep/does not mean you see into my dreams.

(*Old Shirts and New Skins*. Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center-University of California, 1993. pp. 3-4)

At the very least, the descendants who have recorded and freely shared their families' stories deserve an honest and respectful rendition that is historically accurate and culturally authentic. It's a matter of simple respect.