

OJIBWE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FROM THE 1930S-1978

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There are few studies that discuss Native American spiritual practices during the period between John Collier's reforms of the 1930s and before the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978. Most studies of Native American religion during this period focus on federal policies toward Native American spirituality and Native resistance to those policies, while cultural studies that focus on how Native American people engaged in their spiritual practices during the period of study are rare. Interviews with members of the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe reveal that during this period, some Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe members, a part of an older generation, still engaged in their spiritual practices despite the restrictions around doing Indigenous spiritual practices. Although some Red Cliff Band members still performed their Indigenous spiritual practices, many people did their practices secretly to avoid the repercussions. They avoided passing down the knowledge of their Indigenous spirituality for a variety of reasons. This resulted in the generation following these people suffering from a considerable loss of their Indigenous spirituality. In the later parts of this period, the younger generations of people began efforts to revitalize their Indigenous spirituality.

Introduction

During the 1930s, John Collier became the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the United States government. During his time as director, he made significant reforms to the U.S. federal Indian policy that lifted various restrictions placed on Native American people. His reforms lifted many restrictions except for, notably, laws that restricted and/or limited the practice of Indigenous spiritual practices by Indigenous people. In 1978 the U.S. Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) to mend this shortcoming. AIRFA protected many important aspects of Indigenous spiritual practice for the various Native American tribes across the United States by permitting Native American people to engage in their Indigenous spiritual practices. Before AIRFA, many Native American spiritual practices were prohibited by United States law or, at the very least, inhibited by United States policy regarding these practices.

Tribes across the United States faced an assault on their spiritual practices during the period between John Collier's reforms of the 1930s and before the passage of AIRFA.

In the state of Wisconsin, members of the Ojibwe tribe were subject to this assault on their spirituality during this period. The Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe is one of many Ojibwe bands in Wisconsin. During the period between John Collier's reforms and before the passage of AIRFA, there were some Red Cliff Band members, a part of an older generation, that still engaged in their Indigenous spiritual practices, although those who engaged in these practices did so in secret out of fear of being persecuted for engaging in these practices. However, many of these people avoided passing down teachings of their Indigenous spirituality, resulting in younger generations of people having a large absence of Indigenous spirituality.

There are many studies that look at the restrictive policies toward Native American spiritual practices between the 1930s and the passage of the AIRFA in 1978. One study by Sarah Dees examines AIRFA itself for its shortcomings in giving Native Americans the free practice of their religion and it shows how those shortcomings could be addressed. Another study by Allison M. Dussias examines the assimilationist policies of the United States, and it uses those past policies to explain how they contribute to current problems Native American people face in their practice of religion. Another study by Suzanne Crawford O'Brien examines key policies to provide a general overview of Native American religious history since first contact with Euro-American people. All these studies emphasize United States policy that affects Native American people to answer their questions and reach their conclusions. This type of study for this period is the most prevalent.¹

Additionally, a variation of this kind of scholarship also critically examines policy directed at Native American people, but it examines how Native American people resisted policies that were negatively affecting them as well. One study by Susan Staiger Gooding has the purpose to examine how legal discourse contributed to transforming how Native American people engaged in their

¹ Sarah Dees, "Religion and US Federal Indian Policy," essay, in *A Companion to American Religious History*, ed. Benjamin E. Park (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2021); Allison M. Dussias, "Ghost Dance and Holy Ghost: The Echoes of Nineteenth-Century Christianization Policy in Twentieth-Century Native American Free Exercise Cases," *Stanford Law Review* 49 (April 1997); Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, "Native American Religions," in *The Columbia Guide to Religion in American History*, ed. Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, Columbia Guides to American History and Cultures (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012).

spiritual practices and how Native American religious discourses affected policy. Another work by Lee Irwin looks at the history of United States policies that were restrictive towards Native American people and the history of Native American social movements that improved the conditions of Native American people engaging in their spiritual practices. Another study by Martin C. Loesch critically examines various United States Indian policies, and it examines the fight by Native American people for respect of their religious practices. Yet another study by Gabriella Treglia critically examines specific United States Indian policy that was restrictive towards Native American people and how Native American people utilized the wording found within those policies to preserve various aspects of their spirituality and culture. All these studies examine policy and the resistance on behalf of Native American people against policies that negatively affected them. This variation of the most common type of study of this period again shows how scholars of this period tend to focus more on the examination of policy.²

Rarely do scholars of this period of Native American history emphasize cultural studies that focus on how Native American people engaged in their spiritual practices during this period. One rare example of a cultural study is Lee Irwin's study. His study examines "the movement among Native American prisoners to have access to native religious practices, specifically pipe ceremonies, sweats, and prayer and drum sessions in prison."³ It also examines how Native American religious practice contributes to prisoner rehabilitation. The methodology used in Irwin's study is to examine the movements that sought to give Native American prisoners access to pipe ceremonies, sweats, and prayer and drum sessions. Additionally, it examines the effects of having these religious practices in a prison setting regarding prisoner behavior. Irwin's study concluded that having these Native American religious practices in prisons is highly important when considering prisoner rehabilitation. The scar-

city of cultural studies during this period shows that this is an incredibly untouched kind of history. This study seeks to develop further cultural studies of this period by adding its findings to existing knowledge.⁴

There have been other cultural studies on this same topic, but they focus on specific Indigenous spiritual practices. One example of this is seen in the study by Thomas Maroukis. The purpose of his study is to provide a "narrative history of the peyote faith with analysis of its religious beliefs and practices as well as its art and music. The historical narrative focuses on the faith's origins, expansion, and development."⁵ The methodology used in this study is to emphasize the voices of members of the Native American Church by using "published autobiographies, published interviews and speeches, including some from the early twentieth century."⁶ This study concluded that Peyotism created a source of community and the movement's intertribal nature reinforced individual ethnic/tribal identities. The existence of cultural studies on a specific set of Indigenous spiritual practices that include this period of study shows the importance of this study. This study seeks to broaden the existing scholarship by focusing on other Indigenous spiritual practices during this period.⁷

Similarly, there have been other cultural studies on this same topic, but they focus on a period before Collier's reforms. One example of this is seen in Tisa Wenger's study. Their study "examines Native American demands for religious freedom in an era when the U.S. government systematically suppressed Indigenous traditions."⁸ It focuses on the period of 1870-1930. The methodology used in this study is to examine various records from across Indian country in the United States for their claims regarding religion. This study concluded that "the very distinction between 'religion' and the 'secular,' as applied in defense of native dances, represented a necessary accommodation to the norms of the dominant society."⁹ The existence of cultural studies on Indigenous spirituality outside of the focus of this study again shows the need for cultural stud-

2 Susan Staiger Gooding, "At the Boundaries of Religious Identity: Native American Religions and American Legal Culture," *Numen* 43 (May 1996): 157-183; Lee Irwin, "Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance," *American Indian Quarterly* 21 (Winter 1997); Martin C. Loesch, "The First Americans and the 'Free' Exercise of Religion," *American Indian Law Review* 18 (1993); Gabriella Treglia, "Using Citizenship to Retain Identity: The Native American Dance Bans of the Later Assimilation Era, 1900-1933," *Journal of American Studies* 47 (August 2013).

3 Lee Irwin, "Walking the Line: Pipe and Sweat Ceremonies in Prison," *Nova Religio, The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 9 (February 1, 2006): 39.

4 Lee Irwin, "Walking the Line: Pipe and Sweat Ceremonies in Prison."

5 Thomas Constantine Maroukis, *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church*, Civilization of the American Indian Series, v. 265 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 7.

6 Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*, 7.

7 Maroukis, *The Peyote Road*.

8 Tisa Wenger, "Indian Dances and the Politics of Religious Freedom, 1870-1930," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (December 1, 2011): 850.

9 Wenger, "Indian Dances and the Politics of Religious Freedom, 1870-1930," 869.

ies during this period. This study seeks to develop cultural studies during this period.¹⁰

This study seeks to answer how members of the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe engaged in their Indigenous spiritual practices in the period between John Collier's reforms of the 1930s and the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. The primary methodology used in this study is oral history, which is qualitative in nature. This study collected its data through interviews. The reasoning behind the use of interviews as the primary form of data collection is because of the nature of the oral history methodology. The methodology of oral history intends to collect the stories of people. In this case, the stories of five individuals from the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe were collected through interviews. The information from these interviews will be used qualitatively to construct a historical narrative of Indigenous spiritual practices among members of the Red Cliff band during the period of the 1930s-1978.¹¹

Furthermore, potential interviewees were subject to two main criteria due to how this study naturally limits the number of potential interviewees. Interviewees must be band members of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe. Additionally, they must have lived in and have some personal memory of the period between John Collier's reforms of the 1930s and the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. This criterion created the best possible pool of potential interviewees that could provide the needed data to answer the question this study seeks to answer.

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What these interviews reveal is that the Ojibwe people in the state of Wisconsin faced an assault on their Indigenous spiritual practices during the period between John Collier's reforms and before the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Different generations reacted to this aggression differently. Part of the people in the older generations continued their practices but in a more secretive way. Some of them would not teach their children their spiritual practices, which had a lasting impact on subsequent generations. Meanwhile, these younger generations would respond to this differently. Some never sought to learn these practices for a variety of reasons while others sought to revitalize their Indigenous spirituality. It has been found that there were some Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe members, a part of an older generation, that still engaged in their Indigenous spiritual prac-

tices, although those who engaged in these practices did so in secret out of fear of being persecuted for engaging in these practices. However, many of these people avoided passing down teachings of their Indigenous spirituality, resulting in younger generations of people having a large absence of Indigenous spirituality.

During the period before the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and after John Collier's reforms of the 1930s, some people in the older generation still engaged in their spiritual practices despite the restrictions around engaging in Indigenous spiritual practices. Ron Deperry, an elder of the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe, recalled moments when he was very young when he saw his elders engage in their spiritual practices. Deperry noted that these practices were not prevalent across the community, but, if they did happen, they were often seen at the funeral services for an elder who passed away. He remembered that some people "went to the four days of fasting" for the person who passed away. When he was at the funeral services for the elder who passed on, he shared that people made offerings of tobacco by burning that tobacco in a fire that was going on the side. Another thing Deperry recalled was that there would be a smudge going on the side for people to use. According to Deperry, these practices were not common, but it would depend on the family. Nevertheless, these were some of the spiritual practices that older members of the Red Cliff Band engaged in despite the restrictions placed on Indigenous spiritual practices.¹²

Another example in which people of this older generation engaged in Indigenous spiritual practices is at powwows. Mark, an elder of the Red Cliff Band, shared some of his early memories about some powwows in Red Cliff. He recalled that the community had powwows at the old community hall by the casino on the reservation. He remembered "going to 1 or 2 there" when he was really young. He noted that the powwows did not happen that often though. From when he was at the community powwows, he recalled what people did at them and how people were dressed. Mark stated that there was "Dancing and singing at powwows. You didn't see too many people dressed up with Indian garb and stuff like they do nowadays...they wore like feathers and leather vests...different stuff like that." He noted that the powwows were somewhat different from how they are nowadays. Many people at the powwow did not wear dance regalia as they do at modern powwows. People back then mainly wore leather vests and feathers. Some did wear regalia similar to

10 Wenger, "Indian Dances and the Politics of Religious Freedom, 1870-1930."

11 One interviewee chose to remain anonymous. That individual will be referred to as "Mark" in the paper.

12 Interview with Deperry, 6/8/2023, in possession of author.

modern powwows and people at these powwows still engaged in dancing and singing according to Mark. The powwows that Mark described are another example where people in this older generation still engaged in Indigenous spiritual practices despite the restrictions on spiritual practices.¹³

Additionally, Jim Pete, another elder of the Red Cliff Band, provided more insight into the powwows that occurred in Red Cliff. After recollecting some of his earlier memories, Pete stated, “in the early 60s... Every once in a while, there’d be some kind of event that was planned where there might be a powwow.” According to Pete, the powwows that occurred in the Red Cliff reservation during this time did happen, but they were infrequent. Pete added that “most of the people that would come in to dance and sing and drum at that would be from” other tribal communities. Pete also recalled that “we would have... a good showing of a community members there.” Pete’s recollection of these powwows again shows how the older people in the community, and even from other communities, engaged in Indigenous spiritual practices despite the restrictions on spiritual practices.¹⁴

Although some Red Cliff Band members still engaged in their Indigenous spiritual practices, many people did their practices secretly to avoid the repercussions of engaging in Indigenous spiritual practices. Marvin Morris, another elder of the Red Cliff Band, provided an example of this after recollecting some of his earliest memories of people engaging in these spiritual practices. When Morris was a little boy, he worked in a lumber camp that his grandpa owned. He remembered that his “grandpa had, I think, 20 men working for him. They were all Indian men.” Morris recalled that these men “would practice it at night. And that was religion and dancing and stuff like that.” Morris noted that these Indian men performed these practices at night because they were afraid of being seen engaging in these practices. According to Morris, “We didn’t dare do it where they could see us.” The cover of the night provided these men with a layer of secrecy that was necessary for them to feel safe to engage in these practices. Morris later explained that people were afraid of being seen practicing because they were terrified that they may be killed by police or even by people in the local community for practicing. This fear led to people practicing with extreme caution and others not practicing at all because of that fear. This account by Morris shows why some Indigenous people practiced in secret with extreme caution and why others did not practice at all during

this period.¹⁵

Another instance where people in this older generation engaged in their practices in secret is seen in ceremonies with a big drum. Frank Montano, an elder of the Red Cliff Band, described a distinct memory where he had seen a big drum when he was a young boy, maybe five-six years old. He remembered that there was this old couple that lived on the reservation “in this big house down in that area there... And we lived there with them for quite a while... And I remember them as the keepers of a big drum that was in the area.” This old couple that Montano lived with for a while were keepers of a big drum. He recalled that “when someone would pass or other things... they would do those songs and that whole ceremony and stuff” [in the house]. He also noted that “these things were done in a secretive way” at that time. They did these ceremonies in secret, in their home, hidden away from everyone. Montano mentioned this was because they were afraid to practice publicly due to fear of being punished. He stated, “You couldn’t let it out into the community worrying that there would be some punishment for it because you weren’t just following the spiritual practices of that religious group that took over this area, which was... of course, the Catholic” Church. This is another example where people in this older generation had to practice in secret to avoid the repercussions of engaging in these practices.¹⁶

Another example where people in this older generation engaged in their Indigenous spiritual practices in secret is seen in Pete’s account of how people from Red Cliff and another Ojibwe community engaged in these practices. Pete first recalled how people from the Red Cliff Band engaged in their practices. He stated, “I think... If it was something that was spiritual or traditional or cultural. That was mainly done... in a home. The homes when people that were there were from the community.” According to Pete, people within his community during that time, mainly, engaged in their spiritual or traditional practices in their homes. He also added that they would only engage in these practices if the only people within the home were from the community. Pete then explained how people from the Bad River Band of Ojibwe engaged in their practices during this time. He shared that Joe Rose

would talk about his mother, Dolly Rose, when she was growing up over in Bad River. And he said... they would go to church on Sunday morning. You know, a

13 Interview with “Mark,” 6/8/2023, in possession of author.

14 Interview with Pete, 6/11/2023, in possession of author.

15 Interview with Morris, 6/7/2023, in possession of author.

16 Interview with Montano, 6/9/2023, in possession of author.

lot of people in the community would go to church. And he said a lot of times...what my grandma and her relatives would do, he said, they would sneak way out in the woods somewhere and then they would have their traditional ceremonies out there.

Pete explained that people from Bad River would sneak deep into the woods and practice their traditional ceremonies out there. He also noted “that if they were going to practice something,” they would have “to be very careful so that they wouldn’t get punished for doing that.” These examples shared by Pete again show that people in this older generation had to practice in secret to avoid the harsh repercussions they would face for practicing.¹⁷

Many of these people in this older generation who engaged in Indigenous spiritual practices avoided passing down the knowledge of their Indigenous spirituality for a variety of reasons. Deperry explained that there was a kind of shame associated with learning anything that was too Ojibwe or Indigenous when he recollected on his experience being a student in the Red Cliff Catholic school. This shame came from the Catholic Church, which frowned upon younger generations, of which Deperry was a part, learning these things. He would go on to describe this and more when he stated,

Well, there were certain things that the Catholic Church would frown on...Like my grandma and aunts and my mom and them, when they visited, they spoke Ojibwe...and we couldn’t speak Ojibwe anywhere and especially in the school. We couldn’t speak Ojibwe to our classmates and what happened was, is that if you did, you’d get your hair cut. They’d cut your hair...And there were some kids that got those haircuts from the nuns right here in Red Cliff... Yeah. They just...cut their hair. Just right on down... And our parents at the time, they knew that. And then so... when our grandmas or grandmas and aunts and ladies, when they’d come to visit... We would be sent outside because they were speaking Ojibwe and they didn’t want us to hear that because they knew that you would be speaking that and listening and hearing and you’d be speaking it somewhere else, and they didn’t want you to learn that. And so that was a downplay on the language for us in that time period. But they were being protective of us in that way.

Not only did the Catholic Church frown on younger

generations learning Ojibwe ways of being, but they also punished them for engaging in these ways as is evident with them cutting children’s hair as a form of punishment. This punishment also made an example out of the students who practiced by publicly humiliating them. This shame felt for being Indigenous and engaging in Indigenous ways resulted in parents not teaching their children Indigenous ways to protect them from being punished for participating in those ways, as Deperry recalled. Deperry would go on to say how this shame of being Indigenous not only resulted in families not teaching their children their Indigenous language, but it extended into every aspect of being Indigenous. He stated, “a lot of those, like I said, those traditional and cultural and spiritual were kind of downplayed.” He then explained that families, “at times, then they just wouldn’t do it.” According to Deperry, in some cases, families would just stop engaging in any Indigenous practices altogether to protect their children from the shame and punishment they would experience for engaging in these practices. This shows how and why people in this older generation avoided teaching their children many Indigenous practices including Indigenous spirituality.¹⁸

Additionally, Mark shared how the Catholic Church contributed to creating shame in engaging in Indigenous practices from his time being a student in the Red Cliff Catholic school. Mark experienced abuse from staff in the Red Cliff Catholic School on many occasions during his time as a student at the school. According to him, this was because of how staff at the school, and people outside of the school, viewed Indigenous people. He stated,

I started in my Catholic school and them Sisters are mean; they’d beat the shit out of you. Mostly the Indian kids... they just didn’t like me, I’m dark. And then in the summer, we’d get just real dark. Me and my brother and sister. Everybody is the same being a goddamn Indian because you get shit on all the time... in school, they’d send you over to the priest and they’d whip the shit out of you... Or hit you with an INAUDIBLE or hit you with one of those rulers. Fuck, it’d hurt your hand for a week.

Mark was targeted by staff at the Catholic school for being an Indigenous person. He shared how this abuse contributed to instilling the belief in these students that Indian people are all the same in that they get “shit on all the time” just for being an Indigenous person. He then explained that if Indigenous students at the school knew any Indigenous practices, such as the language, “you didn’t try and speak.

17 Interview with Pete.

18 Interview with Deperry.

Well, it was kind of frowned on by the non-Indians there.” Staff in the Catholic school looked down on students who engaged in Indigenous practices at school. This led to students not even speaking their language at all due to the shame associated with engaging in Indigenous practices and being an Indigenous person that was fostered by the Red Cliff Catholic school. Mark added to this topic of there being a shame associated with being Indigenous when he recalled how light-complected Indigenous people were “trying to hang with the non-Indians, and pass. There was a lot of that. Yeah, people... will hide the fact that they’re natives just so you wouldn’t get treated differently.” This humiliation for being Indigenous and engaging in Indigenous practices that were endorsed by the Red Cliff Catholic school shows why people in the older generation avoided passing on Indigenous ways to their children.¹⁹

Furthermore, in some cases, people in this older generation could not teach Indigenous practices to their children because they could end up in jail just for teaching them. Morris recalled this when he stated, “They tried teaching it, but you can’t. You couldn’t... If they’d catch you, you’d end up in jail.”²⁰ Morris shared that, during this period, you could not pass down your knowledge of Indigenous spirituality to others. If you were caught teaching these ways you could face jail time for doing so. This again shows why people in this older generation avoided passing down the knowledge of their Indigenous spirituality.

This all resulted in the generation following these people suffering from a considerable loss of their Indigenous spirituality. Many people were not learning Indigenous practices from elders within their community. The fear of being killed by police or even people within local communities led to many not wanting to learn these practices or even to stop practicing if they knew anything. The Catholic Church frowned on these practices and punished Indigenous students who engaged in these practices within the school. Adding to this, Montano shared one tactic used by the Catholic Church to scare children away from learning these practices and participating in them whatsoever outside of school grounds. He remembered that there was this thing called a Devil Dog that would follow you home at night if you engaged in Indigenous spiritual practices. Teaching this to Red Cliff youth proved to be a very traumatic thing for many of them, and it would have likely scared many of them from engaging in

Indigenous practices. Montano shared how traumatic this was for many former students when he stated, “some of the young people who were older when we talked about it would cry about it because it was a very scary and... Traumatic type of a thing that they were afraid would happen.” All these tactics used by the Catholic Church and the belief that people could face dire consequences just for practicing were just some of the things that led to many in this younger generation suffering from a large loss of their Indigenous spirituality.²¹

In the later parts of this period, the younger generations of people began efforts to revitalize their Indigenous spirituality. People in the Red Cliff community were becoming concerned about the loss of their Indigenous spirituality and other customs. In response to that, some community members began efforts to keep their traditions alive. Pete shared that,

There was a concern that our language was disappearing, our culture was disappearing, and people were concerned about that. So, it kind of also started a process where we would have not only our elders in the community help to share and teach what they knew about hunting, fishing, and gathering, what they knew about the language, what they knew about like what’s now called native art. But we’d also have people from other tribes, reservations that would come in and share things with us to help us.²²

Pete noted that the community began efforts to revitalize various aspects of their culture because they were concerned about losing their culture altogether. They then began to organize elders from within their community as well as elders from other tribal communities to begin teaching people aspects of their culture. This shows how the younger generations of people began efforts to revitalize their Indigenous spirituality.

Additionally, Pete participated in many of these restorative efforts. One of these revitalization efforts was through learning and participating in the various customs around powwows. When he was very young, he remembers how encouraging his family was of him learning how to dance at powwows. His family members even made him dance regalia that he could dance with at the community powwows. Years later, Pete came to make his own dance regalia at the age of sixteen. He said he made “the vest and the breechcloth and the moccasin” for his regalia. Later, Pete would learn how to drum and sing

19 Interview with “Mark.”

20 Interview with Morris.

21 Interview with Montano.

22 Interview with Pete.

from Joe Rose. He noted that it was not only he who learned but other youth from the community as well who wanted to participate in learning how to drum and sing. He stated that “there was myself, Marvin Defoe, Ronnie Deperry, maybe a few others” who learned how to drum and sing from Joe Rose. These efforts by Pete to learn how to dance, sing, drum, and even make his regalia all show how the younger generations in Red Cliff made efforts to revitalize Indigenous spirituality.²³

During these early revitalization efforts, people began to engage in their Indigenous spiritual practices more openly. Pete, for example, recalled a funeral service for a beloved community member that had a combination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous spiritual practices. He stated,

So, when Allan passed away, of course, it was devastating to, you know, not only the family but community and others that knew him when they had the services over at the church here. John Anderson, *Binejaans* (Little Bird), was also asked if he would be a part of that service. So, as they were doing the Catholic part, there was John Anderson. And I think he did a pipe ceremony in church, and he also did a song on a hand drum. And that was like this major step of these two pieces coming together.²⁴

Allan’s funeral service had a combination of these spiritual practices. John Anderson was able to engage in Indigenous spiritual practices in a church for everyone there at the ceremony to see. This more public showing of these spiritual practices again shows how these revitalization efforts led to people in the community more openly engaging in Indigenous spiritual practices.

Furthermore, Pete shared that he was able to participate in and learn Indigenous spiritual practices during this period. Pete was able to participate in a naming ceremony for himself that was initiated by him. He stated,

And so, at that time, when Alan passed away, it was October 1976, and after the ceremony and after the funeral services, again being friends with John Anderson, I asked him if he would give me an Indian name. And so, he wrote back to me, and he said that he would be willing. And he told me the steps... or the process that he would have to go through to get ready for that. And so, two years later, all of a sudden, he

contacts me, and he says, “well, I’m ready.” So, it was July 1978, and we went out to Raspberry, and we had this naming. There was this naming ceremony, and that’s where I got my Indian name of *Gayaashk* or Seagull.

Pete asked John Anderson to have a naming ceremony. John told him the steps needed leading up to the ceremony. Then Pete was able to get his spirit name of *Gayaashk* after having the ceremony in Red Cliff. Pete, however, noted that this ceremony was still done in a more secretive way. Nevertheless, Pete being able to have this ceremony again shows how people in these younger generations began efforts to revitalize their Indigenous spiritual practices.²⁵

Finally, Pete mentioned organized efforts to retain Indigenous practices within the Red Cliff community. In recollecting these efforts, Pete believes these efforts were “through the Bayfield School at the time. Billy Joe Basina was the coordinator for this effort.” Billy Joe Basina was able to coordinate efforts aimed at retaining things such as language, dance, singing, and traditions beginning in the early seventies. Pete noted that they had different cultural events that were led by tribal people from the Bad River Band of Ojibwe. They had asked these people from Bad River to come over to Red Cliff to share their knowledge of various Indigenous practices with Red Cliff youth. They taught Red Cliff youth to dance, and sing, as well as other customs. These efforts also made the supplies for making dance regalia more readily available for community members. This organized effort to retain various aspects of Indigenous culture shows how people in these younger generations began to revitalize their Indigenous spiritual practices.²⁶

In the end, the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe is one of many Ojibwe bands in Wisconsin that was subject to an assault on their spirituality in the period between John Collier’s reforms and AIRFA. Individual members of this community shared how destructive these aggressive American Indian policies were on their community regarding the practicing of Indigenous spiritual practices. What their stories revealed is that there were some Red Cliff Band members, a part of an older generation, that still engaged in their Indigenous spiritual practices, although those who engaged in these practices did so in secret out of fear of being persecuted for engaging in these practices. However, many of these people avoided passing down teachings of their Indigenous spirituality,

23 Interview with Pete.

24 Interview with Pete.

25 Interview with Pete.

26 Interview with Pete.

resulting in younger generations of people having a large absence of Indigenous spirituality. In some cases, people continued their practices despite the restrictive policies; although, many of them did their practices in secret to avoid repercussions for engaging in these practices. Many of those who knew these practices avoided passing down teachings of their spirituality for a variety of reasons such as the humiliation their children faced for performing any Indigenous that was fostered by the Red Cliff Catholic school and the outright fear of being jailed for teaching people these ways. This all resulted in the generation following these people suffering from a considerable loss of their Indigenous spirituality. However, in the later parts of this period, younger generations of people began efforts to revitalize their Indigenous spirituality.

The revival of these Indigenous spiritual practices would continue beyond this period. These early movements during this period started the process of recovering and healing from the considerable loss this community suffered from. They continued well after AIRFA was passed. Tribal governments, community members, agencies, etc. would all pick up the mantle of recovery and healing. More and more people would begin to learn/relearn these spiritual practices. Much has been done, but this community and others acknowledge that there is still much to be done. Recovering and healing is an ongoing process.

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