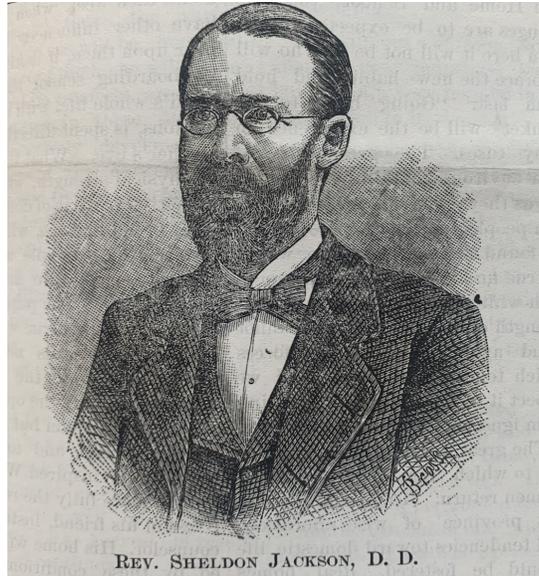


“An Exercise of True Christian Stewardship”:<sup>1</sup> Presbyterian Missionary Sheldon Jackson in  
Alaska (1877 – 1909)



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<sup>1</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “The Outlook Across the Pacific” (unpublished manuscript, 1900), Box 6, Folder 30, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, April 1892, Volume 1, No. 11 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

*“You haven’t seen the world until you have visited this wonderful North Pacific Coast. Bayard Taylor or yourself could adequately describe it, and I think it would tax your ready pen and descriptive powers to the utmost.”*

Letter from Sheldon Jackson to the Editor of the *New York Observer* in 1879<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sheldon Jackson to the New York Observer, 1879, in *Sheldon Jackson: Pathfinder and Prospector of the Missionary Vanguard in the Rocky Mountains and Alaska*, Robert Laird Stewart, (F.H. Revell Company, 1908), 325.

## Introduction

In 1917, a Presbyterian pamphlet on the growth of the Presbyterian Church proclaimed Alaska “the richest and most Presbyterian part of the United States.”<sup>4</sup> Yet just fifty years earlier, under Russian occupation, the only Christian organization in Alaska was the Eastern Orthodox Church. By 1917, the Presbyterians certainly maintained a hold on Alaska, boasting over 40 active missions in the territory.<sup>5</sup> How did Alaska become such a Presbyterian hotspot by the middle of World War I?

The story of Alaska’s religious transition starts with Sheldon Jackson. A Presbyterian missionary, father, orator, politician, and reindeer herder, Jackson is an enigmatic figure. He served as a prominent Presbyterian administrator in Colorado and Wyoming between 1869 and 1882.<sup>6</sup> After one fateful mission trip in 1877, Jackson fell in love with Alaska, and by 1885 Jackson had assumed a government position as General Agent for the Bureau of Education in Alaska. Despite this federal position, Jackson never renounced his ties to the Presbytery, and he often blended church and state in his policymaking. In remote areas of Alaska, Jackson established “contract schools” that were funded by the federal government but administered entirely by missionary organizations. Jackson also routinely corresponded with religious groups, working to staff non-contract day schools with women and men from religious backgrounds. This thesis examines Sheldon Jackson's activities in Alaska after 1877 and aims to understand how Jackson contributed to Alaskan development politically, socially, and religiously.

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<sup>4</sup> Presbytery of Alaska, *Alaska: The Richest and Most Presbyterian Part of the United States*, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Presbytery of Alaska, *Alaska: The Richest and Most Presbyterian Part of the United States*

<sup>6</sup> Bruce David Forbes, “Jackson, Sheldon (1834-1909), Presbyterian Missionary” (Oxford University Press, February 2000), <https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.0800745>.

I plan to elucidate Jackson's views and goals for the Presbytery, Native Alaskans, and white Alaskan settlers. Those scholars who have examined Jackson's time in Alaska tend to assess him in binary terms, either viewing Jackson with admiration or disfavor for the effects his policies had on Native Alaskans. Historian Ted Hinckley described Jackson as the "Preserver of Alaska's Native Culture" and as someone who was dedicated to serving Native populations in Alaska.<sup>7</sup> Other scholars, such as Richard Dauenhauer, have been less kind, seeing Jackson's policymaking as "disastrous" to Native cultural survival.<sup>8</sup>

My thesis aims to avoid the reductive assignment of Jackson to one of these binaries. Jackson was a man bound up in contradictions. His approaches to assimilation paint Jackson as a man unconcerned with the preservation of Native cultures, while other letters and practices paint him as a sympathizer to the plight of Native Americans throughout the United States. Regardless of Jackson's many facets, it is possible to elucidate Jackson's visions for the Presbytery, Native Alaskans, and Alaska overall without boxing him into singular categories. I argue that Jackson did not explicitly aim to eradicate Native Alaskan culture and peoples. Regardless of his intentions, however, Jackson's religious transformation of Alaska was constitutive of American colonial efforts.

By studying Jackson's time in Alaska, I hope to contribute to conversations regarding Alaskan development within the context of American colonialism. Most scholars of colonialism and the settlement of the American West focus on the contiguous United States without attention to Alaska. Alaska's journey to statehood differed from that in the contiguous United States or

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<sup>7</sup> Ted C. Hinckley, "Sheldon Jackson as Preserver of Alaska's Native Culture," *Pacific Historical Review* 33 (January 1, 1964): 411–24.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Dauenhauer, *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Veniaminov Bicentennial Project, 1997), 2.

Hawaii. Purchased in 1867 from Russia, Alaska remained a “customs district” under military and customs collector control.<sup>9</sup> After becoming the “District of Alaska” in 1884, the federal government began to expand its administration of the land, creating a new district court system that followed the laws of Oregon. Even with this expansion, however, Alaska remained without strong federal oversight until it received statehood in 1959.

The Russian colonization of Alaska is unique and noteworthy. Most Russians left following the American purchase of Alaska, but the establishment of an Orthodox Christian community remains one of the largest legacies of Russian occupation.<sup>10</sup> The Russian Orthodoxy sent missionaries throughout Alaska to proselytize and provide healthcare for Native communities, who were treated poorly by Russian fur traders. Unlike American peers, Russian missionaries envisioned Orthodox Christianity as a component of Native life and not as something intended to replace it.<sup>11</sup> Religious figures such as Saint Herman advocated for Native rights and preached in Native languages.<sup>12</sup> The Russian Orthodox relationship to Native Alaskans contrasts to Jackson’s later initiatives and resulted in challenges for him down the line.

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<sup>9</sup> Naih Harring and Sidney L. Harring, *Crow Dog’s Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 212.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Santolaya, “In a Remote Alaskan Town, a Centuries-Old Russian Faith Thrives,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/russian-easter-pascha-photography-old-believers-sect-russian-orthodox-church-smithsonian-journeys-travel-quarterly-180959440/>; “Diocese of Alaska Orthodox Church in Alaska,” *odosa.org*, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://odosa.org/home.html>. There are 91 Orthodox parishes active in Alaska and the Orthodox Diocese of Sitka and Alaska maintains a diocesan council to date. Nikolaevsk, Alaska also remains home to approximately 350 Old Believers. The Old Believers are a Russian Orthodox sect that faced persecution in 17<sup>th</sup> century Russia and fled abroad.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen W. Haycox, *Alaska: An American Colony* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 146.

<sup>12</sup> Lydia Black, “The Light of the Spirit: The Orthodox Church in Alaska,” in *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (University of Alaska Press, 2004), 236.

The United States granted citizenship to any Russians who remained in the territory, but Native Alaskans did not receive the same privilege. Instead, Native Alaskans lived with an unclear status under federal law. The original treaty that signed over Alaska to the United States stated a distinction between “uncivilized tribes” and the “inhabitants of the ceded territory.” “Uncivilized tribes” were to be “subject to such laws and regulations as the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country.”<sup>13</sup> All Native Alaskans were categorized as “uncivilized tribes,” but the treaty effectively left questions regarding rule and administration of Native Alaskans to be decided by later resolutions.<sup>14</sup> The treaty also provided no guidance for Native Alaskan land claims, granting no protections or legal recourse for land possession claims.<sup>15</sup> Unlike most indigenous peoples throughout the contiguous United States, Native Alaskans existed in legal limbo with their rights unstated and unguaranteed. On top of this, other Americans debated the identity of Native Alaskans; some saw them similar to indigenous people in the contiguous United States (and thus worthy of the same federal programs) while others argued that they were “Asiatic” and hence outside of the government’s oversight.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Treaty with Russia*, 15 Stat. 539 (March 30, 1867): 539-544. <https://www.loc.gov/item/lsl-v15/>

<sup>14</sup> David S. Case and David A. Voluck, *Alaska Natives and American Laws*, electronic resource, 3rd ed (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2012), <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14022172>, 24; Harring and Harring, *Crow Dog’s Case*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> The federal government would not formalize tribal lands to Native Alaskans until the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. See Tana Fitzpatrick, “Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 22, 2021), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R46997.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Juliana Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism: Alaska’s Indigenous and Asian Entanglements*, Critical Indigenities (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

Historians of Alaskan history frequently debate whether Alaska has a truly “American” character, or whether its Russian occupation and development on a different timeline sets it apart from other American colonial ventures. Stephen Haycox, one of the foremost scholars on Alaskan history, argues that “Alaska has always been economically, politically, and culturally like the United States as well as dependent on the United States.”<sup>17</sup> The results of colonial subjugation were the same in both Alaska and the contiguous United States, even if Alaska’s Russian presence changed the dynamics of American settlement. The intrusion of capitalist interests, natural resource exploitation, and eventually industrialization played out similarly in the rest of the United States. Thus, Haycox asserts, Alaska is really no different than other American colonial endeavors.

Haycox avoids focusing on specific mechanisms that helped advance colonization though. I propose that Jackson’s work in Alaska is a corollary to Haycox’s thesis, and Jackson’s religious transformation of Alaska was a distinctive part of the American colonization of Alaska. Native Alaskans still faced different issues than some of their peers in the contiguous United States, and not all of Jackson’s methods were the same as other American reformers. Nevertheless, by and large, indigenous populations in Alaska were still subjugated to insidious and far-reaching colonial education efforts that resulted in diminished power and existence, just as their peers in the contiguous United States. In this way, while the methods may have differed, the outcomes remained the same, and thus Jackson helped reproduce an American empire in Alaska.

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<sup>17</sup>Haycox, *Alaska*, 160.

## Historiography and Method

As noted by legal scholars David Case and David Voluck in *Alaska Natives and American Laws*, the federal government's relationship to Native Alaskans differed from their relationship to indigenous peoples in the contiguous United States. This has implications for understanding differences in the machinations of colonization in the two respective locations. The original 1867 treaty provided no legal guidance for what rights "uncivilized tribes" maintained. The federal government had no real plan or understanding of how to handle and treat Native Alaskans as they set out to develop Alaska into settled territory. Legal historian Sidney Harring further advances Case and Voluck's argument in his book *Crow Dog's Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century*, and both works prove useful for understanding the context of Jackson's educational efforts.

Sheldon Jackson was an important figure in establishing Alaska's distinct trajectory, and his life is well detailed within Robert Laird Stewart's *Sheldon Jackson: Pathfinder and Prospector of the Missionary Vanguard in the Rocky Mountains and Alaska* and Arthur Lazell's *Alaskan Apostle: The Life Story of Sheldon Jackson*. Floyd Carr's pamphlet, *Sheldon Jackson: Builder of the New Alaska*, is also particularly useful for biographical details on Jackson. I refer to Stewart and Carr for general biographical information. Ted Hinckley, a prominent historian of Alaska, has also devoted considerable attention to Jackson and written numerous biographical articles on Jackson's time in Alaska.<sup>18</sup> Hinckley argues that Jackson does not fit the "negative stereotypes connected with the conquest of the Americas and Oceania. . .compelled to burn

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<sup>18</sup> A selection of Hinckley's other articles on Jackson follow:  
 Ted C. Hinckley, "Sheldon Jackson and Benjamin Harrison: Presbyterians and the Administration of Alaska," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1963): 66–74;  
 Ted C. Hinckley, "Sheldon Jackson College: Historic Nucleus of the Presbyterian Enterprise in Alaska," *Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985)* 49, no. 1 (1971): 59–79.

everything identified with the Native's way of life." Hinckley argues for a reevaluation of Jackson, seeing his collecting of Native artifacts as a form of admiration and preservation.<sup>19</sup>

Rosemary Carlton has adopted a similar assessment of Jackson in *Sheldon Jackson the Collector*.

Richard Dauenhauer takes a more dour view of Jackson's work and legacy. Dauenhauer, in *Conflicting Visions of Alaskan Education*, compares Jackson to Ioann Veniaminov.

Veniaminov traveled Alaska from 1824 to 1838, spreading the message of Orthodox Christianity to Native Alaskans. Unlike Jackson's English-only approach to education, Veniaminov promoted bilingualism, translating religious texts and preaching to Natives in their own languages.

Dauenhauer argues that the contrast between Veniaminov and Jackson's approaches reveals exactly how Jackson's policies were "disastrous to Native self-image and language survival."<sup>20</sup> I agree with this final conclusion; I similarly argue that Jackson's policies resulted in the destruction of Native practices, languages, and lifestyles, and paved the way for further American imperial efforts in Alaska. However, Dauenhauer's argument is simplistic and overlooks complicating aspects of Jackson, such as his collecting practices, different rhetorical techniques, or the political and social context. Dauenhauer avoids delving into these nuances; hence I see his work as reductionist despite our shared conclusions.

Stephen Haycox has responded to Dauenhauer's *Conflicting Visions of Alaskan Education*, arguing that Jackson believed in acculturation but simultaneously contributed to "the preservation and legitimacy of native culture."<sup>21</sup> Haycox emphasizes that Jackson created contract schools within Native communities— and not distant boarding schools away from said

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<sup>19</sup> Hinckley, "Sheldon Jackson as Preserver of Alaska's Native Culture," 411–24.

<sup>20</sup> Dauenhauer, *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen W. Haycox, "Sheldon Jackson in Historical Perspective: Alaska Native Schools and Mission Contracts, 1885-1894," *The Pacific Historian* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 18.

communities— because he believed that some aspects of Native cultures and communities should remain. However, as my research shows, Jackson did not create contract schools for this reason. Instead, he turned towards the contract school system following a 1885 lawsuit that effectively left him unable to force Native Alaskans to attend boarding schools. Jackson also turned to contract schools and local education out of the belief that it would “civilize” all community members, not just children. Haycox ignores this context and instead presents the contract school system as a benevolent attempt at cultural preservation.<sup>22</sup> Given Dauenhauer’s, Carlton’s and Hinckley’s reductionist arguments and Haycox’s questionable narrative, I avoid incorporating their assessments of Jackson in this paper. Their factual contributions to Jackson’s biography still remain noteworthy and are occasionally referenced.

It is important to note that the voices of Native Alaskans are absent from all of these narratives. There are very few sources that explicitly recount Native life under Jackson’s policies in the late 1800s. Richard Dauenhauer and his wife, Nora Dauenhauer (who comes from a Tlingit background), have attempted to construct these histories through the collection *Haa Kusteeyi, Our Culture* of Tlingit oral history.<sup>23</sup> Yet their work is not exhaustive and barely overlaps with the time period of focus in this paper. Further, they make note that biography is a “un-Tlingit genre” limiting the very process of collecting such stories and the level of detail

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<sup>22</sup> In addition to the issues with Haycox’s narrative, Haycox’s sourcing for his claims is questionable. Haycox includes no quotes from Jackson to back up his claims, instead citing his report *Education in Alaska* passim. Having reviewed this report, I do not glean the same understanding. His only quote to back up this claim originates from Jackson’s friend, John Brady: “I do not think it would be wise to send boys and girls away from here.” Yet this quote is given without context and is not from Jackson himself. Haycox’s source base is dated and limited, and thus I am further hesitant to buy the narrative that Jackson implemented contract schools to help preserve Native culture.

<sup>23</sup> Oddly, Dauenhauer makes no reference to these accounts in *Conflicting Visions of Alaskan Education*.

found within.<sup>24</sup> I include these accounts where relevant, but unfortunately, this paper is just as limited by this lack of Native primary source material as previous scholarship has been. I also did not grow up in Alaska, nor am I of Native heritage. I do not fully know or understand the complexities of the lived Native American experience now or in the nineteenth century, and consequently, my focus is more so on Jackson. I aim to include Native Alaskan perspectives where applicable but I acknowledge my own shortcomings in this regard, both within the limitations of the source material and with my own identity.

This paper makes use of Jackson's correspondence with federal officials, missionary organizations, and reformers as found in the National Archives, Presbyterian Historical Society, and Princeton Theological Seminary. I also use the archives at the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary for their collections of Jackson's circular, *The North Star*. While there still exist gaps, these collections are quite extensive and provide a wealth of insight into Jackson's career.

Jackson crops up in many general histories of Alaska, but most scholarship focused only on Jackson in Alaska was published prior to 2000, and it is due time that Jackson be reexamined under the lens of more contemporary scholarship.<sup>25</sup> This paper aims to take more of a postcolonial approach than previous scholarship has in order to examine the discourse, history,

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<sup>24</sup> Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, eds., *Haa Kusteeyí, Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories*, Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature, v. 3 (Seattle: Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1994), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Jordan Lee Craddick's 2013 master's thesis on Jackson, *Pandering to Glory: Sheldon Jackson's Path to Alaska*, is the only academic paper (that I have found) focused on Jackson written in the past decade. However, Craddick's thesis focuses mainly on Jackson's time in the American West as he made his way to Alaska and is thus less relevant to this project. See Jordan Craddick, "Pandering to Glory: Sheldon Jackson's Path to Alaska" (Fairbanks, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2013), [https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/bitstream/handle/11122/4623/Craddick\\_uaf\\_0006N\\_10050.pdf;jsessionid=CA9D30D063A028691C676BCC0D6CA02D?sequence=1](https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/bitstream/handle/11122/4623/Craddick_uaf_0006N_10050.pdf;jsessionid=CA9D30D063A028691C676BCC0D6CA02D?sequence=1).

and culture that Jackson both participated in and was surrounded by. The essay begins by explaining Jackson's career as a missionary and his initial efforts in Alaska. I then examine his different rhetorical tactics for recruiting missionaries and lobbying government officials to support the expansion of schools for indigenous Alaskans. I argue that these tactics contributed to American imperial efforts and are part of the storytelling component of what Edward Said has termed "the enterprise of empire." Herein, I also explore Jackson's contribution to the Protestant "hierarchies of heathenism." The following section explores Jackson's relationship to Native Americans in order to contextualize and better understand his religious and political efforts. I then examine Jackson's decline in politics and the close of his career. Finally, I conclude with an assessment of the tensions and contradictions that characterized his work on behalf of the territory's indigenous people and how we ought to conceptualize Jackson's legacy in the present day.

## Part I: “A Favorable Opportunity”<sup>26</sup> (1877-1889)

Born on May 18, 1834, Sheldon Jackson grew up in the small town of Minaville, New York. Jackson’s parents, ardent Presbyterians, encouraged him throughout childhood to consider a religious vocation. After matriculating at Union College as a young adult, Jackson avowed his faith in the Presbyterian Church.<sup>27</sup> Following graduation from Union College in 1855, Jackson decided to dedicate his life to ministry, pursuing theological studies at Princeton Theological Seminary that same year.<sup>28</sup> He graduated in the spring of 1858 and became an ordained minister with a wish to be “acquainted with the religious aspects of the world” abroad.<sup>29</sup> Despite his desires to travel, Jackson frequently fell ill, and he failed the physical examinations necessary to voyage abroad. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions instead relegated him to mission work with the indigenous tribes of the United States. After marrying Mary Vorhees, Jackson headed west with his new wife in the fall of 1858.<sup>30</sup>

While the western territories were not his first choice, Jackson took up the job with tenacity. He started at the Choctaw Mission in present-day Oklahoma, but soon moved after falling sick from malaria. He then spent over a decade in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and by the time the transcontinental railroad opened in 1869, Jackson started touring the West to preach.

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<sup>26</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “May 15, 1885 - June 16, 1885 Events,” n.d., RG 239-8-1C, Presbyterian Historical Society, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 18, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Sheldon Jackson to the Executive Committee of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, December 1857, Box 8, Folder 1, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 38 - 39.

At this time, any work with North American Native Americans was considered a “foreign” post, and hence under the purview of the Board of Foreign Missions. Mission work with Native Americans would not be considered a “home” post until 1893. See Michael C. Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 4.

That same year, the Presbytery decided to appoint him superintendent for the territories of Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Washington and Alaska— an enormous area of 1,768,659 square miles. Jackson was tasked with overseeing the Presbyterian missionary project in the western territories by staffing churches, assisting with denominational newspapers, and organizing church constructions. In 1871, Jackson took on a smaller portion of territory when the Presbyterian Church reorganized its missions. He oversaw the Synod of Colorado, which included all Presbyterian churches in Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

By 1878, Jackson had established such a large Presbyterian presence in Colorado that one visitor, Rev. Dr. Theodore Crowl, remarked that “the Presbyterian Church had so completely occupied the field that there was little room left within the limits of the state for the Congregational Church. . .And when he [Jackson] gets to the outermost tip of land in Alaska. . .then he will establish a protectorate upon the opposite coast of China.”<sup>31</sup> Another pastor who worked under Jackson in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Rev. T.H. Cleland, Jr., called him the “Francis Xavier of Protestant America,” while others compared him to the Apostle Paul.<sup>32</sup> As a leader, Jackson preferred to work alongside those ministers who he supervised; and he traveled to faraway missions, preached, and corresponded with ministers and their families. It was a wonder “how enough waking hours could be secured” for Jackson and all that he accomplished.<sup>33</sup>

Alaska was under Jackson’s supervision when he served as superintendent of Presbyterian missions, but he did not step foot into the territory until 1877. That summer, Sheldon Jackson arrived in Fort Wrangell, Alaska with a young woman, Margaret McFarland,

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<sup>31</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 167 - 168.

<sup>32</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 108.

<sup>33</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 139.

who was there for a multi-year stint teaching and educating the nearby Tlingit peoples. Jackson's trip with McFarland sparked a love for Alaska that would later guide his life. Jackson, then a leader of the Women's Home Board for Missionaries, promptly returned back home to advocate for donations and more teachers to be sent to Alaska. Jackson also started a campaign to create a boarding school that provided industrial education for Native children in Sitka, Alaska. The school, originally the Sitka Industrial Training School, opened in 1878 under the supervision of Jackson's friend (and later Alaskan Governor), John Brady.<sup>34</sup> Over subsequent years, Jackson visited Alaska to build other mission homes, churches, and school buildings for Natives, completing trips in 1879 and 1881, and establishing missions in Sitka, Kodiak, Karlisk, Unga, Texikan, Cape Prince of Wales, and Point Barrow.<sup>35</sup> In 1883, Jackson accepted a new position from the Board of Home Missions, officially becoming the superintendent of all missions in Alaska.<sup>36</sup> In addition to any missions in the territory, Jackson became responsible for the Sitka Industrial Training School since it was a Presbyterian enterprise.

These missions aimed to serve mainly an indigenous population. By 1880, Alaska was home to approximately 33,000 indigenous and mixed Native Alaskan-Russian individuals. For census purposes, the federal government divided Alaska into six geographical districts: the Arctic, Yukon, Kuskovim, Aleutian, Kadiak, and Southeastern District. These districts did not fully correspond to the distribution of Alaskan Native

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<sup>34</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 186.

<sup>35</sup> Floyd L. Carr, *Sheldon Jackson : Builder of the New Alaska* (New York City : Baptist Board of Education, Department of Missionary Education, 1929), <http://archive.org/details/sheldonjacksonbu00carr>,

<sup>36</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 340.

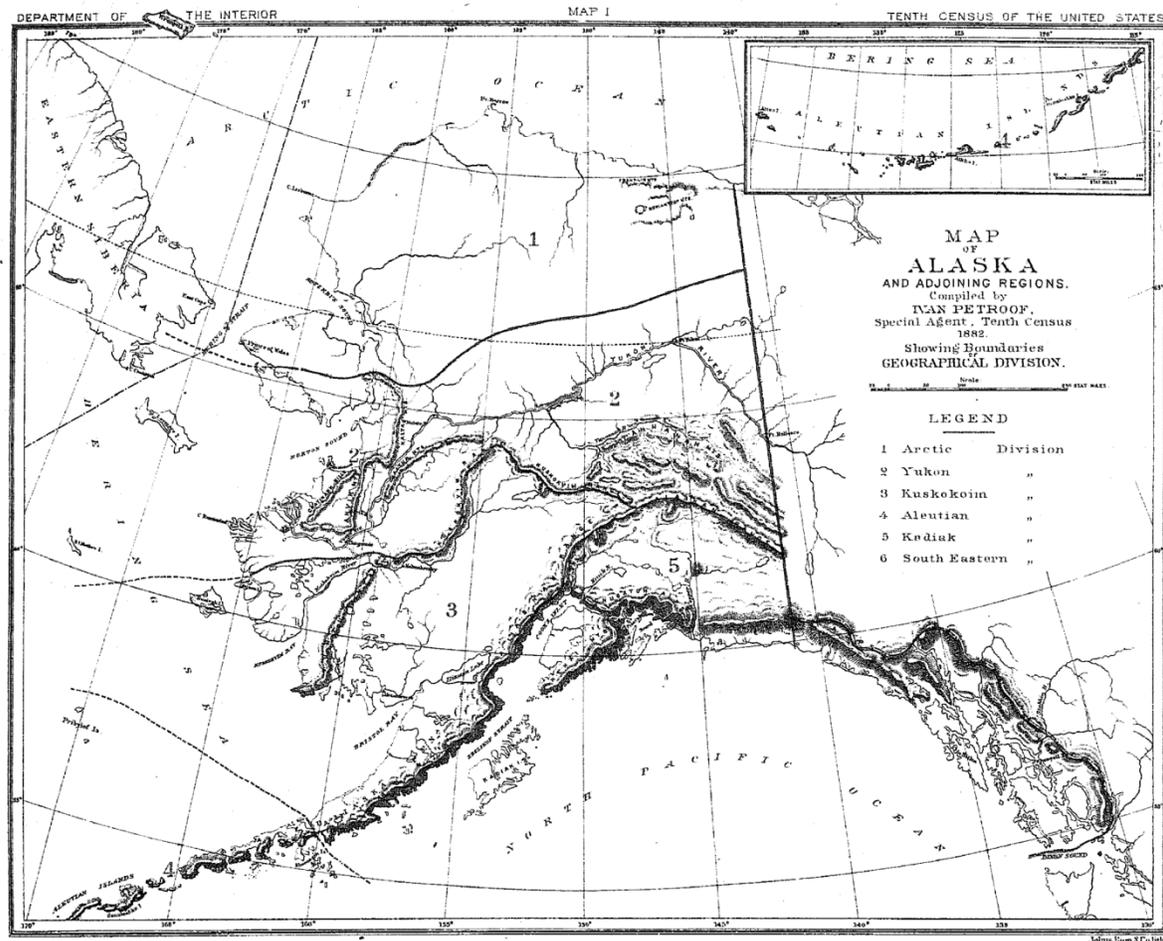


Figure: Early map of Alaska with six districts labeled<sup>37</sup>

cultural groups and linguistic separations and instead were based upon transportation and survey access for the census taker, Ivan Petroff.<sup>38</sup> Many tribes were nomadic and existed outside of these boundaries, but a rough mapping of the general cultural areas follows.

<sup>37</sup> Ivan Petroff, *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska At the Eleventh Census: 1880*, report prepared at the request of the Census Office of the Department of Interior, August 7, 1882, <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/histpdfs/1880Census.pdf>, vii.

<sup>38</sup> Petroff, *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska At the Eleventh Census: 1880*, 1.



Figure: General map of Alaska Native culture distribution<sup>39</sup>

Petroff, Jackson, and other federal officials used the newer, colonial forms of names for the tribes: the Aleutian tribes refer to the Unanga<sup>40</sup>; Eskimos refer to the Inupiaq; Athabaskan to the Athabascan; the Chugach to the Sugpiaq, and the Western Eskimo refer to the Yup'ik and Cup'ik.<sup>40</sup> All of these tribes lived in generally healthy, self-sustaining communities prior to American incursion, aside from the Unanga<sup>41</sup>, who had been ravaged by Russian incursion.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Alaska Native Heritage Center, *Traditional Territories of Alaska Native Cultures*, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.alaskaNative.net/cultural-knowledge/>.

This map is still oversimplified and omits smaller tribal groups such as the Chugach.

<sup>40</sup> Petroff, *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska At the Eleventh Census: 1880*, 1 - 32; Alaska Native Heritage Center, *Traditional Territories of Alaska Native Cultures*, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.alaskaNative.net/cultural-knowledge/>.

In this paper, I will refer to Alaskan cultural groups by their traditional names, except within quotes and material attributed directly to other speakers. This is based on language guidance from the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. See Lawrence Kaplan, "Inuit or Eskimo: Which Name to Use?" Alaska Native Language Center, accessed March 15, 2022, [https://www.uaf.edu/anlc/resources/inuit\\_or\\_eskimo.php](https://www.uaf.edu/anlc/resources/inuit_or_eskimo.php).

<sup>41</sup> Prior to the American purchase, the Russians "had never tried to force" Alaskan Natives to recognize Russian rule according to Harring and Harring, *Crow Dog's Case*, 210. Most Russians engaged in trade with Natives but let Natives maintain their own autonomy, with the notable exception of the Unanga<sup>41</sup> population in the Aleutian Islands. Russian *promyshlenniki* (fur

Native Alaskans maintained an ambiguous status under federal law and their condition only worsened as more settlers moved north. Indigenous communities did not receive any legal protection from the hundreds of white settlers encroaching throughout Alaska in search of new resources such as timber, gold, and fish.<sup>42</sup> These settlers brought alcohol, creating a problem of alcohol abuse for the military, civilians, and Native Alaskans alike. Arrests for drunk and disorderly conduct soared, and there were instances of violence attributed to alcohol between the Tlingit and white settlers, resulting in deaths on both sides.<sup>43</sup> Others, such as the Unanga, procured alcohol from American whalers, with alcohol abuse affecting many communities where trade and contact with white settlers was common. Technically, alcohol was illegal in Alaska; Alaska was governed as “customs district” and designated “Indian Country” by the Treasury Department. U.S. Revenue Marine Officers regulated the importation and sale of alcohol, with the goal of eliminating Native access to alcohol. However, many Native Alaskans managed to brew “hootch” at home, and customs agents only occasionally seized stills due to fears of violence or retaliation from Native communities. Alcoholism would remain a problem in Native Alaskan communities for decades to come.<sup>44</sup>

Businessmen and missionaries soon “viewed the ‘Indian problem’ as part of a larger ‘law and order problem” in Alaska. Jackson held a similar view, believing that an increased federal

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traders) forced some Unanga men to hunt for sea otters and took women and children hostage—effectively a form of slavery. For more information about the Unanga population in the Aleutian Islands and the results of the fur trade, see Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific’s Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 176.

<sup>43</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 180. For more details of the legal trials resulting from specific conflicts, see “Tribal sovereignty in Alaska, 1867 - 1900” in Haring and Haring, *Crow Dog’s Case*.

<sup>44</sup> Nella Lee, “Impossible Mission: A History of the Legal Control of Native Drinking in Alaska,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 2 (1997): 98-100, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1409209>.

presence would help to deter conflict between Alaskan Natives and incoming white settlers.<sup>45</sup> By 1878, Jackson was writing to officials in Washington D.C. about the lack of American legal structures in the Territory. Without legal provisions, there was no way of establishing educational institutions supported by the government, so to Jackson, establishing formal laws and federal oversight was crucial to advance education and conversion, Jackson's primary causes.<sup>46</sup> He wrote letters and gave speeches, garnering press attention for his activism in both secular and religious publications. The press covered his speeches from Boston and New York and his letters were republished in newspapers such as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* to *New York Evangelist*.<sup>47</sup> In 1881, Jackson sent his first report on the "Condition of Education in Alaska" to John Eaton, the head of the Bureau of Education for the Department of the Interior. He detailed travels around Alaska and included a variety of letter excerpts and quotes from Alaskan officials, former Presidents, and various Congressional and Senate officials that cited the derelict state of education in Alaska.<sup>48</sup> S.J. Kirkwood, the Secretary of the Interior, distributed the report to the 47<sup>th</sup> Congress, solidifying Jackson's position as the voice of Alaska in Congress.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Haring and Haring, *Crow Dog's Case*, 230.

<sup>46</sup> Telegraph to the Tribune, "ALASKA CALLS FOR SCHOOLS: THE SAVAGES ANXIOUS FOR EDUCATION--WHAT A MISSIONARY THINKS SHOULD BE DONE," *New York Tribune*, January 14, 1878, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Tribune.

<sup>47</sup>"ALASKA: State of Affairs in Our Arctic Territory--Habits and Needs of the People--Their Educational Condition.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 1879, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Sheldon Jackson, "ALASKA: HOME MISSIONS AROUND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE," *New York Evangelist*, December 20, 1877, American Periodicals Series II, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>48</sup>S.J. Kirkwood and Sheldon Jackson, "Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Transmitting, in Compliance with a Senate Resolution of the 15th Instant, a Copy of the Report of Sheldon Jackson, D. D., upon the Condition of Education in Alaska" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 19, 1881), [//catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009568493](https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009568493).

<sup>49</sup> Kirkwood and Jackson, "Letter from the Secretary of the Interior," 1-2.

By 1882, Jackson and the House of Representatives' Committee on the Territories led a slow and steady movement for increased federal oversight in Alaska. Bill H.R. 5900, introduced to the 47th Congress in 1882, called for "a Territorial government" in order to protect growing industries such as fisheries, iron mining, timber. While these economic interests were motivating factors, Jackson's work advanced the idea that Natives should be part of the Alaskan development plan. The accompanying report to the bill cited Jackson's report "Condition of Education in Alaska" and made reference to the missions he had established. Bill H.R. 5900 would later serve as the foundations for the First Organic Act, which passed in Congress on May 17, 1884 and established the "District of Alaska."<sup>50</sup> This statute granted Alaska a district court system that enforced the laws of the State of Oregon and implemented a governor, judge, clerk, commissioner, and marshal. The act also explicitly instructed the Secretary of the Interior to "make needful and proper provision for the education of the children of school age in the Territory of Alaska"—evidence that Jackson's campaign had not fallen upon deaf ears.<sup>51</sup> On April 11, 1885, the Bureau of Education officially appointed Jackson as General Agent of Education, granting him responsibility for the education of all school age children "without reference to race" in Alaska.<sup>52</sup>

This directive to provide instruction "without reference to race" speaks to the racialization of Native Alaskans by government officials. To some federal officials, Alaskan

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<sup>50</sup> Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson*, 346.

<sup>51</sup> *An act providing a civil government for Alaska*, Public Law 48 - 53, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 48 (1884): 24 - 28.

<sup>52</sup> John Eaton, "Sheldon Jackson Appointment As General Agent," April 11, 1885; Roll 1, January 1, 1878 - May 31, 1888, pgs. 88-89; Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BAUXNZ307951612/GDCS?u=columbiau&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=fc6333a0&pg=88>.

Natives appeared to be of “Asiatic origin” and a separate “race” from Native Americans in the contiguous United States.<sup>53</sup> While Jackson did not view Native Alaskans as “Asiatic,” and he differentiated Native Alaskans by tribes at times, he certainly saw them as different from other Native Americans.<sup>54</sup> In his 1886 “Report on Education in Alaska,” he wrote, “And this native population, with perhaps the exception of the Tinneh, is not Indian. . . The Government has never treated them as Indians and it would be a national calamity at this late day to subject them to the restrictions and disabilities of our Indian system.”<sup>55</sup> The edict to provide education “without reference to race” is reflective of these discussions surrounding the racial identity of Native Alaskans. By issuing orders to educate anyone in the territory, the government effectively again tabled discussions surrounding Native Alaskan identity and their relationship to the federal government. Jackson then created integrated schools in Alaska— a marked difference from the segregated schools present in the contiguous United States.

Regardless, the debates surrounding Native Alaskans’ race created debates surrounding the usefulness of Native education and fostered difficulties for Jackson. Some, who either agreed with Jackson’s conceptions of the distinctive race of Native Alaskans or saw Native Alaskans as

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<sup>53</sup>Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism*.

<sup>54</sup> Jackson differentiated between tribes of Native Alaskans. His annual reports for the Bureau of Education reported on education progress often by tribe, giving demographic and geographic details on tribes such as the Inuit, Tinneh, Chilkat, Hoonah, Auke, Taku, Hoochinoo, Kake, Sitkine, Tongass, Hydah, Hanegah, and Sitkas, to name a few. In correspondence, Jackson was not always so detailed, but generally used tribal names when specifying groups of Native Alaskans. For examples, see Sheldon Jackson to the Territorial Board of Education, June 30, 1887, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Sheldon Jackson to N.H.R. Dawson, May 2, 1887, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>55</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “Report on Education in Alaska, with Maps and Illustrations” (Census Office, Department of Interior, February 1, 1886), Proquest Congressional, 10 - 11, [https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t47.d48.2339\\_s.exdoc.85?accountid=10226](https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t47.d48.2339_s.exdoc.85?accountid=10226) (hereafter cited as *Jackson*, “1886 Report on Education”).

Asian, believed that because they were a separate race from Native Americans, they were not the government's responsibility. Some officials already disapproved of Native education altogether (including that of Natives in the contiguous United States), seeing the project as a wasteful use of government money. Further, Congress was hesitant to invest in Alaska as they were unsure of the longevity of the territory's economic potential.<sup>56</sup> Jackson frequently battled Congress to appropriate more money, and much of Jackson's correspondence concerns the delays in getting the appropriations to school teachers in the field in a timely manner.<sup>57</sup> Jackson often cited these difficulties as reason for why "I sometimes almost get discouraged trying to do anything for Alaska."<sup>58</sup>

Debates surrounding the usefulness of Native education further crystallized in a legal battle surrounding land claims at the Sitka Industrial Training School just as Jackson started as General Agent. While the Sitka Industrial Training School was initially a Presbyterian effort, in 1884, it became a contract school with the government. The District Attorney at the time, E.W. Haskell, was one of the federal officials upset with the allocation of funds to education. Haskell managed to convince some Russians and Russian-Native "Creoles" of Sitka that the Sitka Industrial Training School had unfairly seized their rightful land. Haskell pursued legal action against Jackson and the school, placing the Russians on a Grand Jury and procuring injunctions against all teachers and employees from working at the school. Jackson would later be arrested (and promptly released) for violating this injunction, disrupting his plans to visit Washington

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<sup>56</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 187.

<sup>57</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Dr. Kendall and Dr. Irving, May 18, 1887, Series I, Box 5, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>58</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Karl Koebler, February 11, 1887, Series I, Box 5, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

D.C. to officially accept the title of General Agent in that summer of 1885. Haskell further disrupted Jackson's work by egging on Russians to physically stake out land claims. Jackson described a courtroom scene in a letter petitioning for help from the Indian Rights Organization:

In his drunken and incendiary harangues, he assured them as a lawyer that the school had no control of the land where their buildings were and that if any Russian wanted any of the land claimed by the school, all he had to do was go and occupy it. As a consequence, one of the simple minded Creoles went into the front yard of the school, staked out the corners of a house, and commenced getting out the foundations of a dwelling for himself.

The act inspired others to stake out claims on school land, resulting in the placement of fences, buildings, and pathways all on school property.<sup>59</sup> Jackson appealed to government officials, the Indian Rights Association, and even President Grover Cleveland for assistance.

Haskell was eventually removed from his position, and the Sitka Industrial Training School regained the full land rights in 1886; but trouble with the Russian population continued throughout Jackson's tenure. While few Russians remained following the purchase of the territory, the American takeover of education and missionary work drew the ire of some Russians and mixed Russian-Native individuals, especially of those in the Aleutian Islands.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Herbert Welch, August 12, 1885, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to discern exactly how many Russians remained in Alaska following the sale, but most sources agree that one hundred or so Russians remained in the territory. The U.S. Army conducted a census of Alaska in 1870, but they duplicated many tribes and falsified tribes, so it is considered inaccurate. As Stephen Haycox states, many Russians "found themselves unable to cope with their changed circumstances" and fled the territory. This was exacerbated by "confusion over what was public and private property," leaving many Russians upset or confused about their status in the United States, despite being considered citizens by the Treaty of Cession. See Haycox, *Alaska*, 192.

Eric Sandberg, Eddie Hunsinger, and Sara Whitney, "A History of Alaskan Population Settlement" (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2013), <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/pub/pophistory.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau, "Getting to Hard-to-Reach Villages Before Spring Thaw and Start of Hunting Season," Census.gov, accessed March 27, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/07/alaska-remote-areas-always-first-counted-decennial-census.html>.

Many Russian missionaries taught Russian to Native peoples and believed that Russia would regain possession of Alaska. These Russian missionaries looked “upon the Americans as barbarians” and attempted to frighten children by claiming they would be drafted into the U.S. Army if they learned English.<sup>61</sup> In Nushagak, an American missionary reported that Russian missionaries had beaten a boy caught attending an American missionary school.<sup>62</sup> The issue of Russian influence and language was yet another problem Jackson had to work around in order to establish schools.

The legal battle between Haskell and Jackson illustrates that not all Alaskan Natives were pleased with American education efforts. Concurrent with Jackson’s fight with Haskell, two Tlingit parents, Con-a-clan-et (father) and Hulch-cha-see (mother), filed a lawsuit against Jackson, arguing that he was holding their five-year-old daughter hostage at the Sitka Industrial Training School.<sup>63</sup> Writs of habeas corpus were soon issued on the behalf of other Tlingit families who wanted to remove their children from the school. Judge Ward McAllister ruled against Jackson in favor of the Tlingit families, issuing an opinion that stated that Native Alaskans could not enter into formal contracts with whites and that the school had no legal grounds for keeping students at the school.<sup>64</sup> This ruling also reinforced the idea that Native Alaskans were a separate category of peoples from Native Americans.

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<sup>61</sup> Sheldon Jackson to the Territorial Board of Education, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1888, Vol. 1, No. 7 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>63</sup> United States vs. Sheldon Jackson (Alaska District Court First Division. 1885), Criminal Case #9, Box AS 32893, Alaska State Archives.

The Alaska District Court case file is handwritten, so it is difficult to discern the accuracy of the parents’ names.

<sup>64</sup> Harring and Harring, *Crow Dog’s Case*, 232.

This legal decision explains why Jackson did not establish any more boarding schools throughout Alaska as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) did in the contiguous United States.<sup>65</sup> Jackson instead created integrated day schools. However, in remote areas away from Southeastern Alaska, it was difficult to administer schools or find people willing to reside and work there. As a result, Jackson created “contract schools” in which the federal government contracted with missionary societies to create schools in remote regions. Jackson established over twenty contract schools that were funded by the federal government but fully administered by religious groups, with the idea that the contract schools system “extend[ed] the school system in Alaska more rapidly and more economically than would have been possible if it had depended solely upon its small Congressional appropriations.”<sup>66</sup> The Sitka Industrial Training School remained the only true “boarding” school Jackson established.

Jackson appealed to a wide variety of religious organizations in attempts to establish and staff contract schools, writing letters to both missionary societies and women’s auxiliaries. Groups such as the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant and the National Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church soon took up a presence in Alaska.<sup>67</sup> By 1886, Jackson had divided Alaska up by religious denomination, granting the Aleutian Islands to Methodist missionaries and Kodiak to the Baptists. The Moravians were allowed along the Kuskokwim River, and

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<sup>65</sup> Sitka Industrial School remained a boarding and day school however.

<sup>66</sup> Harlan Updegraff, “Education in Alaska,” in *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1907*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 373–74.

<sup>67</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Mr. David Davies, January 6, 1892, Volume 4, June 1, 1891 - April 14, 1892, pp. 195 - 196, Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BJWHSV483429889/GDCS?u=columbiau&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=3e6a7e90&pg=195>

shared the Yukon territories with Episcopal and Roman Catholic missionaries. Jackson claimed the most populated part of Alaska, the southeastern “Alaskan Panhandle,” for the Presbyterians.<sup>68</sup>

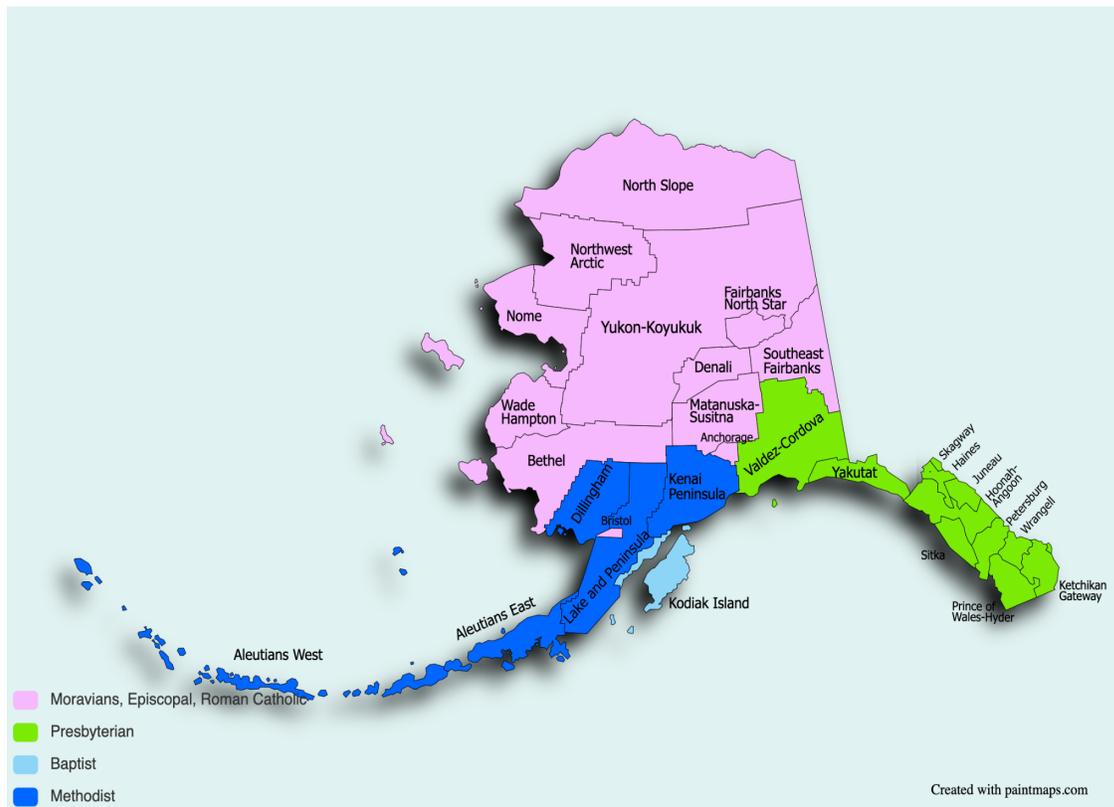


Figure: Approximate Distribution of Religious Groups in Alaska<sup>69</sup>

Contract schools were supposed to provide “nonsectarian” instruction to students, but this did not mean an absence of Christianity from the classroom. Jackson explicitly encouraged teachers to imbue Christianity into their academic and industrial lessons. His instructions to newly hired teachers in 1886 follows: “Government schools in the United States are necessarily unsectarian, and teachers will very properly avoid special denomination instruction in day schools. But as morality and godliness are the formulation of good citizenship, and are so held by

<sup>68</sup> Black, “The Light of the Spirit: The Orthodox Church in Alaska,” 247 - 248.

<sup>69</sup> Figure generated by author from information found in Black, “The Light of the Spirit: The Orthodox Church in Alaska,” 247-248.

Protestants, Roman and Greek Churches alike, your teaching should be pervaded with the spirit of the Bible.”<sup>70</sup> Jackson certainly held a bias towards Protestant societies— after all, he granted the most populous parts of Alaska to the Presbyterians— but he still envisioned any form of Christianity as beneficial to education and “civilizing” the Native population.<sup>71</sup>

Even with the establishment of contract schools, transportation and oversight between schools, towns, and missions was lacking, and Jackson sought to remedy the issue with reindeer. In 1888, members of the ship, the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear, reported starvation amongst Natives on the coast. Jackson heard these reports, and troubled by what he heard, concocted a plan to introduce reindeer into Alaska from Siberia as both a food source and form of transportation. Congress, after many letters and petitions from Jackson, eventually agreed to establish a fund for reindeer in 1890. Over the summer of 1892, Jackson worked with members of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear to bring 171 reindeer and five Siberian herders from Siberia to Port Clarence, Alaska.<sup>72</sup> Over the following years, Jackson would take annual trips on the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear to both Siberia and Finland to procure reindeer for Alaska— trips that were all funded by the federal government.

Reindeer served as replacements for sled dogs between stations, but Jackson also promoted reindeer as components of education. As part of his education efforts, “industrial education” was just as important as learning to read and write, as it included a focus on skills that would allow indigenous peoples to hold jobs and perform tasks integral to survival and

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<sup>70</sup> Sheldon Jackson to 1886 New Hires, September 1, 1886, Series I, Box 5, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>71</sup> This will be further explored in Part III: Jackson and the Natives.

<sup>72</sup> Darell Blodgett and Erin Carr, “Reindeer History in Alaska,” University of Alaska Fairbanks Reindeer Research Project, June 21, 2021, [https://reindeer.salrm.uaf.edu/about\\_reindeer/history.php](https://reindeer.salrm.uaf.edu/about_reindeer/history.php).

employment in white society. Reindeer became crucial to Jackson's industrial education program; he employed reindeer in "the instruction of Natives in the arts of herding, harnessing, driving, etc."<sup>73</sup> Some boys became reindeer herding apprentices at schools while Native girls learned sewing and harness upkeep for the creatures.<sup>74</sup>

It is evident that Jackson cared deeply about education within Alaska and the territory's development. Despite these concerns, his larger goals and vision for Alaska cannot be elucidated fully from his writings. He produced hundreds of letters, reports, memos and other documents throughout his life, but most provide little insight into his personal life or larger reflections upon his work. Even his journal concerns itself more with day to day minutiae instead of reflections upon his guiding philosophy. Although his introspection was minimal, Jackson's relationship to Christians, the government, and Natives reveal something of his overall vision for Alaska.

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<sup>73</sup> Sheldon Jackson, "Fifteenth Annual Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, with Maps and Illustrations, 1905," *Bureau of Education, Department of the Interior* (Washington D.C.: Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior, 1906), Education Resources Information Center, 8, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED613635>.

<sup>74</sup> Darell Blodgett and Erin Carr, "Reindeer History in Alaska."

## Part II: Different People, Different Faces

Alaska remained over 1,000 miles by steamship away from San Francisco and knowledge of the land's geography or peoples was limited in the first three decades of purchase.<sup>75</sup> Initially, a few hundred entrepreneurs flocked to Alaska to pursue commercial fishing, but without large capital investment, these ventures were not initially successful.<sup>76</sup> Others left in search of gold after initial gold discoveries on the Alaskan coast and in British Columbia, but mining interest would not pick up until the early 1890s.<sup>77</sup> In order to draw up support for his Alaskan cause, Jackson disseminated his writings, speeches, and reports on Alaska to religious organizations and political officials. Jackson adopted his language to fit specific narratives for certain groups in order to market Alaska as attractive for settlement and administration. Through these tailored rhetorical techniques, Jackson constructed a narrative of both religious and political expansion that reinforced the imperial American project.

Jackson became a fanciful storyteller to secure the cooperation of church and state leaders. He spun the narrative that Alaska would be a site of personal development and God's beauty to Christians. Simultaneously, for political leaders, he framed Alaskan development as patriotic, morally necessary, and requested by Native Alaskans. Both narratives served as a form of imperial storytelling. Edward Said describes this phenomenon in *Culture and Imperialism*: "For the enterprise of empire depends upon the idea of having an empire. . . all kinds of preparations are made for it within a culture; then in turn imperialism acquires a kind of

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<sup>75</sup> Richard E. Welch, "American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian America," *American Slavic and East European Review* 17, no. 4 (1958): 481–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3001132>.

<sup>76</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 177.

<sup>77</sup> Haycox, *Alaska*, 188 - 189.

coherence."<sup>78</sup> While Said cites Western novels as part of this “coherence” of imperialism, the idea that storytelling contributes to the construction of empire also rings true for Jackson.

Jackson projected an Alaska where both the government and Christians would determine its future, and in many ways, Jackson’s articulation of his vision for Alaska functions as a form of storytelling. Through his language that projected an American-Protestant hegemony in Alaska, Jackson actively shaped the “enterprise of empire.”

### *To (Protestant) Christians*

The concept of manifest destiny is perhaps overused in analysis of American settler colonialism, but it is important to highlight the religious component of manifest destiny in Protestant missionary work. Proselytizing the gospel was already a large component of the Protestant faith, and missionary activity increased exponentially with the opening of the Western frontier in the nineteenth century. Following the Civil War, many Christian denominations expanded missionary boards to staff conversion efforts in the West. A sermon from Jackson regarding the Presbyterian Church’s “Position, Opportunity and Responsibility” illuminates the Presbyterian expansionist philosophy: “And this is the land which God has given His Church to possess --- to take and to hold a base of operations for the conquest of the world. Hear His voice saying to the American Churches, ‘I give you from Ocean to Ocean. . .’”<sup>79</sup> In his sermon, Jackson admonished listeners to “lead and control” the settlement of the West and Alaska.<sup>80</sup> The sermon

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<sup>78</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, First Vintage Books Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 11.

<sup>79</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “The American Presbyterian Church, Its Position, Opportunity and Responsibility” (ca. 1897 - 1898), Series I, Box 12, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Jackson, “The American Presbyterian Church,” 17.

was geared towards Presbyterians, but a similar impulse pervaded other Protestant denominations. The general conviction that God designated the United States to become a Christian kingdom of the faith justified and inspired many Protestant missionary societies to expand their work westward.<sup>81</sup>

Jackson wrote a variety of reports intended to build interest in Alaska for a Protestant audience. “Alaska and Missions on the North Pacific Coast” presented Alaska as untamed and in need of missionaries. These reports presented a seemingly objective view of the Alaskan situation but were often accompanied by high-handed letters with dire warnings. In one 1884 letter to the Moravian Church and Mission Agency in England, Jackson admonished church leaders that “If you refuse [to send missionaries to Alaska], these heathen must go down to ruin in the dark.”<sup>82</sup> Other missionary groups wrote to Jackson to request such reports, ask questions about Alaska, or solicit a visit from Jackson to speak to their congregations regarding Alaska.<sup>83</sup>

Between 1887 and 1892, Jackson published a monthly newspaper out of Sitka entitled *The North Star*, which functioned as Jackson’s primary tool of propaganda. *The North Star* published photographs, sketches, letters, dispatches, and even poetry on Presbyterian (and occasionally other Protestant) missionaries and missions throughout Alaska. The paper was distributed to subscribers across the United States and in Alaska and edited by W.M. Kelly, the

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<sup>81</sup> Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians, 1837-1893*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> G. Norman and Son, “Moravian Missions” (London, England: Brethren’s Society For the Furtherance of the Gospel, ca. December 1, 1884), Periodical Accounts Relating to the Foreign Missions of the Church of the United Brethren, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CC1903191534/GDCS?u=columbiau&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=8a660fd6>.

<sup>83</sup> John W. Wood to Sheldon Jackson, February 14, 1903, Roll 25, February 1, 1903 - April 30, 1903, p. 130, Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BATVYZ221857879/GDCS?u=columbiau&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=ce91828e&pg=130>.

principal of the Sitka Industrial School, and Jackson. Jackson was the main editor and writer however. The editions included everything from accounts of the lives of missionaries at work in remote areas, to detailed updates of children's progress at the schools around the territory.

Jackson even published a section entitled "Pictures From Far Away" in which Native children's illustrations of Alaskan life appeared alongside updates from missions on the Yukon River.<sup>84</sup>

Other missionary teachers sent in lesson plans, providing excerpts from completed children's classroom assignments.<sup>85</sup> Subscribers would occasionally write in letters to provide "comforting" thoughts to missionaries alone in the wilderness.<sup>86</sup>

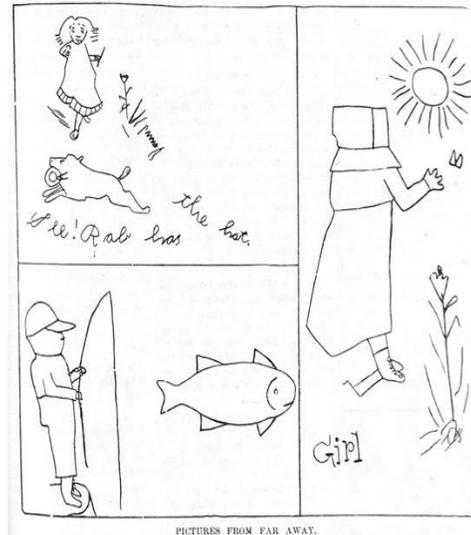
AN EXERCISE AT THE SITKA SCHOOL.—[The lesson was to put the italicized words into sentences.]

SIXTH GRADE.

- 1.—I want to *changing* my sentences, ma'am, before we stop the school.
- 2.—Well, dear friend, keep your food from *poison*.—A. U.
- 3.—I saw the miner was anxious to see if the yellow ones *remain* in the gold spout.—A. T.
- 4.—Everything has a *gas*; living creatures have a *gas*, and the *gas* comes from the earth is used to light the inside of houses.—P. S.
- 5.—If four gallons contained in one barrel, and three men want one gallon each of them, I know one gallon must *remain* in the barrel.—PETER SIMPSON.

FOURTH GRADE.

- 6.—A lady last Saturday evening came to speak to us about not to drink, not to swear and not chew the baker. Of *course* we will be good if we don't do it.—MAX (aged 11 or 12.)
- 7.—In *course* of time the boys will work sleds for winder.—ROBERT H.
- 8.—Judas been *hanged* himself in the trees because he sell Jesus. This is why he punish *himself*.—ATWELL, (aged 10 or 11).
- 9.—*Alcohol* is the badest thing in the world.—BEN.



Left Figure: Sample of assignment progress  
updates printed in *The North Star*, March 1889<sup>87</sup>

Right Figure: "Pictures From Far Away" section of  
*The North Star*, June 1889<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1889, Vol. 2, No. 7 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>85</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, September 1888, Vol. 1, No. 10 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>86</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, October 1888, Vol 1, No. 11 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>87</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, March 1889, Vol 2, No. 4 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>88</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1889.

Reports from missionaries were not always favorable, with many detailing the difficulties of supply issues, violence, and disease. For example, in the June 1888 issue, Jackson published excerpts of a letter from L.W. Currie, a missionary in Klawack, Alaska. Currie described “the lawless acts of the Natives” and a violent dispute between two tribes, the Hanegahs and the Hydahs over a young girl.<sup>89</sup> Other dispatches recounted outbreaks of pleurisy, pneumonia, and other diseases in schools and missions, or even the obituaries of missionaries who died due to exposure, violence, or disease.<sup>90</sup>

Jackson espoused his view that Native Alaskans were different from indigenous peoples found in the contiguous United States to missionaries, just as he did to government officials. One description in the February 1888 issue of *The North Star* stated:

The ALASKANS are a very different and higher type of p ople [sic] than the wild Indians from Montana to Old Mexico. When we think of Indians we think of a subject race, held down and retarded in their upward movement towards civilization by the disabilities placed upon them by the Indian laws of the land. Those laws have never been extended over the Natives of Alaska, and it is not desirable that they ever should be. As a help in preserving them from the evils of the Indian laws, and to show our humanity towards them let the term “Indian” no longer be applied to them. . .in speaking of them, use the term “Alaskan.” There is power in a name.<sup>91</sup>

This framing helped cultivate the idea that the settlement of Alaska was unique and exciting, and language that associated the Alaskans as a “higher type of people” also identified Native Alaskans as more similar to white Americans than “wild Indians.” This elevation helped to build

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<sup>89</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1888, Vol. 1, No. 7 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>90</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, July 1888, Vol. 1, No. 8 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary; Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, November 1888, Vol 1, No. 12 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>91</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, February 1888, Vol 1, No. 3 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

compassion for the Alaskans and foster the sense that Native Alaskans needed protection and education.

Jackson also wrote ethnographic descriptions of different tribes that emphasized their “progress” towards “civilization.” In the October 1888 issue of *The North Star*, Jackson described the Gwich'in tribe: “They are described by the Missionaries as an athletic and fine looking race, above the average stature and well proportioned. . .Of late years many have adopted the moccasins, leggings, and fringed hunting shirts of buckskin introduced by Hudson Bay traders.”<sup>92</sup> In an April 1891 issue, Jackson provided an overview of the “The Eskimo of Arctic Alaska,” stating that “They are naturally intelligent and ingenious in extricating themselves from difficulties, and quick to adopt American ways and methods when these are an improvement on their own.”<sup>93</sup> Alongside descriptions of tribes’ lifestyles, clothing, and homes Jackson often remarked on how tribes had been picking up traditionally white practices, clothing and culture. *The North Star* also occasionally featured a column that detailed the number of new communicants, baptisms, and sabbath school attendees per missions with different tribes.<sup>94</sup>

Jackson’s discussion of certain tribes’ progress towards conversion to Christianity and American practices or their differences from other Native Americans speaks to what religious historian Emily Conroy-Kurtz has termed “hierarchies of heathenism.” Conroy-Kurtz writes:

This hierarchy ranked the different cultures and peoples of the world with an eye to their level of civilization or depravity, with the ultimate goal of determining who would be most likely to be converted by missionary evangelism. . .The ideal mission location

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<sup>92</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, October 1888.

Jackson refers to the Gwich'in as the “Loucheaux Indians,” but the Gwich'in today prefer the use of the traditional name. See Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis, “Loucheaux Language and the Loucheux Indian Tribe,” *Native Languages of the Americas*, 2009, <http://www.native-languages.org/loucheaux.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, April 1891, Vol. 4, No. 5 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>94</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1888.

would occupy a certain point on that hierarchy somewhere in the middle range. To begin with a culture that ranked too low (as with most Native American tribes) would be an impossible endeavor, Board members felt, while those places nearly or fully “civilized” did not seem to have the same need for missionary efforts.<sup>95</sup>

By positioning Native Alaskans as distinctly different from Native Americans, Jackson framed the opportunity in Alaska as a new endeavor for missionaries separate from the “low” opportunity of most Native Americans. Further, in writing ethnographies that emphasized similarities to whites, or a tribes’ progress towards Christianity or white practices, he illustrated the “potential” that Native Alaskans had for being fully converted by missionaries. His rhetorical techniques fostered compassion, but also played into the Protestant racial ranking of the world.

Jackson’s efforts to foster compassion for Alaskans, however, could seemingly collide with his emphasis on the “strangeness” of non-Christian indigenous life. *The North Star* featured ethnographic illustrations and descriptions of Alaskan tribes. Yet the descriptions were frequently unflattering or presented the Alaskans as savage and uncontrolled. Images depicted both Alaskan and British Columbia Natives as grotesque, inhuman, and untamed. Other written descriptions characterized the Natives as “lawless” people who lived lives of “queer practice.”<sup>96</sup> These unfavorable characterizations further played into the “hierarchies of heathenism” however, and co-existed with more positive commentary on Native Alaskans. Through such seeming contradictions, Jackson helped position the Alaskan missionary opportunity somewhere in the ideal “middle range.” He needed to frame the Alaskan opportunity as abundant with potential for *successful* “civilizing” efforts and thus he needed also to illustrate Native Alaskans’ “depravity” alongside their “progress.”

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<sup>95</sup> Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 20.

<sup>96</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1888.

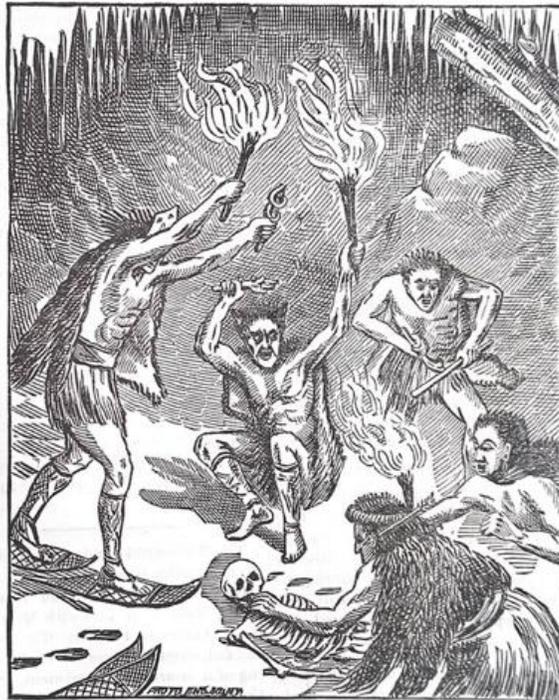


Figure: Illustration of “The Indians Of British Columbia” printed in the June 1888 issue of *The North Star*<sup>97</sup>

Jackson also appealed to the same romantic sensibilities that guided westward expansion in the contiguous United States. Just as painters like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran created vivid images of Western landscapes, Jackson constructed a beautified view of Alaskan nature in order to pique his white readers’ interest.<sup>98</sup> *The North Star* frequently included dramatic sketches of Alaskan landscapes, often featuring mountains framed by water or sunlight.<sup>99</sup> Other sketches

<sup>97</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1888.

<sup>98</sup> Bierstadt and Moran are associated with the Hudson River School art movement, which focused on landscape painting. Angela Miller explores how painters of the Hudson River School movement conveyed “American ideas of wilderness.” See Angela Miller, “The Fate of Wilderness in American Landscape Art: The Dilemmas of ‘Nature’s Nation,’” in *American Wilderness: A New History* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 91–112.

<sup>99</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, July 1888.

included overviews of villages or men against the backdrop of mountains.<sup>100</sup> Poetry similar to the following excerpt also regularly appeared in *The North Star*:

Alaska! Wondrous Northern land,  
Whose mountains rise on either hand,  
We bring thee unmixed homage now,  
And low in adoration bow  
As on each lofty snow-clad height,  
We watch the evening's ruddy light,  
Or see the mist, – like bridal veil, – . . .<sup>101</sup>

Such poetry and descriptive language blended Christianity with imagery of nature (i.e. “bridal veil”) just as art from the contiguous United States did. Jackson’s own prose was similar as well. He included hyperbolic descriptions of the landscapes throughout his reports and letters, for example: “No lover of the grand and beautiful in nature has feasted his eyes on the best, that has no looked upon the marvelous coast of the ‘Land of the Sundown.’”<sup>102</sup> Such descriptions intended to inspire a sense of the sublime, where one was overwhelmed with the full scale of God’s work.<sup>103</sup>

Further, Jackson appealed to a broader nineteenth century impulse towards adventure, mystique, and personal development. Life in Alaska was both challenging, yet beautiful and abounded with God’s handiwork, and Native Alaskans were simultaneously savage yet refined. These seeming contradictions in the descriptions of people and life in Alaska were part and parcel of the intrigue and romance of adventure. Historian Jimmy Bryan Jr. describes this

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<sup>100</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, January 1889, Vol. 2, No. 2 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>101</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, March 1889.

<sup>102</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “A Reading Journey in Alaska” (ca. 1902), Box 8, Folder 1D, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>103</sup> For more on the religious “sublime” in American landscape art, see Barbara Novak, “Sound and Silence: Changing Conceptions of the Sublime,” in *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825 - 1875* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 29–38.

phenomenon: “The romantic adventurer of the early nineteenth-century United States, then was an individual who intentionally sought perilous encounters in the elsewhere in order to excite emotional stimuli. . .they anticipated that their careers would transform them.”<sup>104</sup> Just as trappers and traders went west to feed their passion for adventure and personal development, missionaries were to do the same. Alaskan lands were portrayed as evidence of God’s providence, where individuals would find both themselves and God in nature and missionary work amongst “strange people.” The “mysteries” these men would encounter was captivating and alluring, and in this way, Jackson followed trends that occurred in the settlement of the contiguous frontier.

Thus, Jackson’s rhetorical techniques were crafty and served to intrigue the religious audience from multiple angles. He played into common cultural romantic sensibilities that emphasized strength, adventure, and personal development. Simultaneously, he placed the Alaskan Natives within the middle range of the “hierarchies of heathenism.” He appealed to the religious sensibilities of the Board of Home Missions and its missionaries, but also to larger trends in American culture. Through this, Jackson effectively interested Protestant religious folk in the Alaskan cause.

### ***To the Government***

Jackson’s heavy-handed religious imagery and romantic overtones are absent from his writing to government officials. Jackson framed Alaska as abandoned in both a moral and administrative sense. Following his initial trip to the territory in 1877, Jackson returned home to start his campaign for increased American governance and educational efforts in Alaska. He wrote numerous letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and to the Commissioner of the

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<sup>104</sup> Jimmy L. Bryan Jr., *The American Elsewhere: Adventure and Manliness in the Age of Expansion* (University Press of Kansas, 2017), 14.

Bureau of the Education, offering his help, perspective, and argument for why Alaska needed greater American intervention. In these efforts, Jackson pointed to the lack of government action as a moral “failure.” In a January 1, 1878 letter to John Eaton, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Education, Jackson wrote: “the United States have [sic] failed to continue schools carried on by Russia. . .it will be a popular patriotic + humane thing for your Department to lead this rising sentiment by presenting this to Congress.”<sup>105</sup> By identifying Native education as both “humane” and patriotic, Jackson constructed the view that there was a moral imperative to federal support for Native education in Alaska.

Jackson also tried to “shame” government officials for the current state of affairs. In an 1881 report to the Secretary of the Interior and the Senate, Jackson wrote: “It was reasonable, however, to suppose that 30,000 people would be much better off and have better schools under American than Russian rule. It was but reasonable to expect that the United States, which bases its continued existence upon the intelligence of its citizens. . .would replace the disbanded Russian schools with those of a higher grade and improved methods.”<sup>106</sup> This sort of scolding language is common in Jackson’s testimonies and letters to government officials prior to his 1885 appointment as General Agent. Beyond presenting education as a moral necessity, Jackson also framed the United States as falling short and worse than Russia—effectively playing into nationalist rhetoric.

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<sup>105</sup>Sheldon Jackson, “Letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs,” ca. July 1883, Volume 3, 1878 - 1916, pp. 25 - 26 Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BAUXNZ307951612/GDCS?u=columbiau&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=fc6333a0&pg=26>

<sup>106</sup> “Condition of Education in Alaska” (Senate Committee on Education and Labor, December 19, 1881), Proquest Congressional, 4-5.

In other pieces of writing, Jackson claimed Native Alaskans themselves demanded education from American teachers. Jackson recounted his 1877 visit to Fort Wrangell in a 1878 letter to John Eaton, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Education: “I found upon my visit there, a remarkably strong desire for an English education. . . They claim that they have not been able to secure competent teachers for their people, they have themselves entered the school to secure such an education as they can + then return to their own people to import what they have learned among them.”<sup>107</sup> The veracity of such a statement is dubious; Jackson would recount the same visit to the Senate in 1881 with a different story. Then, he made no note of any direct statement from any Native Alaskan demanding a school. Instead he cited a soldier, Captain S. P. Jocelyn’s belief in the “anxiety of the people to learn” and request for teachers in Fort Rangell.<sup>108</sup> Jackson likely made up other stories and statements to build interest in Alaska.

### **Jackson’s Tactics in Perspective**

Jackson’s language appealed to both the government’s and Protestants’ general goals. Just as the First Organic Act cited interests in lumber, fish, and other resources, the federal government wanted to establish a foothold in Alaska and ensure that white settlers in search of these resources would be met with little indigenous resistance. For the Presbytery and other Protestant organizations, proselytizing and being a missionary was part of their faith. Alaska served as a new, untouched area for their faith’s expansion. While he used different rhetorical tactics in appealing to each party, he crafted a narrative that overall painted Alaska as destitute and in need.

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<sup>107</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Bureau of Education,” January 1, 1878, Roll 1, 1878 - 1916, pp. 4-6, Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America,

<sup>108</sup> “Condition of Education in Alaska,” 4-5.

Jackson was strategic and he recognized that his appointment as General Agent granted him the official power to meld church and state. He had already won over the support of government officials through his work and advocacy for the First Organic Act. Plus, the BIA had already turned towards employing missionaries throughout the contiguous West, so interesting the federal government in missionary teachers was not a tough task.<sup>109</sup> For the Presbytery, Jackson framed the potential in a joint Government-Protestant project as a matter of economics. His strategy is apparent in a 1887 letter to Presbyterian officials regarding contract renewals:

I scarcely need write you, that I can supervise your work in S.E. Alaska + also that of the Govt schools to advantage. . .my continuing the joint agent of the Board + the government enables me to relieve the Board of the salaries of all the teachers of day schools in Alaska, thus saving the Board several times more than their share of my salary. . .if I am forced to resign on account of insufficient support [from the Board and the government], the strong probabilities are that my place will be filled either with a southerner who will feel no special interest in your work, or a Roman Catholic who will antagonize it. In either case the govt will withdraw from such schools. . .you will have teachers [sic] salaries amounting to several thousand dollars thrown back upon you besides greatly increasing difficulties of missionaries.<sup>110</sup>

Jackson presented himself as someone uniquely positioned to support Presbyterian interests in the government.

In sum, Jackson succeeded in piquing the interest of both parties, and then capitalized on that interest in his appointment as General Agent. He told a narrative of a disregarded Alaska in need of assistance from both Christians and the government, but tailored his language to convey that message. This serves as what Said refers to in the idea of “preparations” for an empire. From there, Jackson was able to capitalize on this narrative in his position as General Agent, creating a

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<sup>109</sup> Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933*, *First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 57.

<sup>110</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Dr. Kendall and Dr. Irving, May 18, 1887.

coherent vision of combined Christian and state interests. Both parties would work together in “civilizing” the native population, serving as a formal expansion of American empire in Alaska.

### Part III: Jackson and the Alaskan Natives

Correspondence, speeches, and interactions with Native Alaskans from this time period are extremely limited within Jackson's archives. There are select glimpses at Jackson's direct interactions with Native Alaskans, such as a series of correspondence with Edward Marsden, the first Native Alaskan ordained minister, or with children whose education at Carlisle Boarding School Jackson sponsored. These letters reveal little about Jackson's attitudes towards Alaskans in comparison to his engagement with government officials and Christian organizations. It thus becomes necessary to examine Jackson's policies and philosophies regarding assimilation and his limited correspondence with Natives in order to understand Jackson's relationship to and conception of Native Alaskans.

Despite the peculiar nature of Alaskan acquisition and settlement, Jackson resembles other Indian reformers from this time period. Following the Civil War, some Northerners argued that the United States' treatment of Native Americans was a blot on America's honor just as slavery was. These reformers, such as Helen Hunt Jackson or William Pratt, believed that the United States needed to uphold its treaties and promises to Native Americans. Reformers formed advocacy groups like the Women's National Indian Association and the Indian Rights Association. While originally focusing on upholding treaty stipulations, advocacy groups later emphasized the importance of assimilation and "civilization" programs amongst tribes.<sup>111</sup> Many reformers came together annually at the Lake Mohonk Conference for the Friends of the Indian starting in 1883. Frequent attendees included individuals such as university professors, government officials, ministers, missionaries, journalists, and other well-connected people. Reformers argued for the appropriation of funds to go towards social programs that would aid

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<sup>111</sup> Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 22-24.

the integration of Native Americans into white society. They supported allotment (where land was distributed into private family plots for farming) and education programs intended to “teach Indians how to use their newly allotted lands efficiently.”<sup>112</sup> In order to save the government money, many reformers proposed that religious organizations would carry out educational activities after the government mandated and established a school in an area.<sup>113</sup>

Jackson frequently attended the Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian Conference, and he maintained close ties with reformers like Herbert Welch. Jackson echoed many of these reformers’ beliefs when it came to Native American policy, seeing the purpose of the government to civilize Natives through education.<sup>114</sup> Just as reformers in the American West emphasized the need for instruction in a more sedentary lifestyle dependent on modern industries, Jackson advocated for industrial education that taught skills that would allow Native Alaskans to be self-sufficient in the American economy. Jackson stated these beliefs in his 1886 annual report to Congress:

As instruction necessarily creates new wants, and is so intended by the Government, it is but proper that instruction should go farther and so train the hand that the newly created wants can be supplied. Or, in other words, the work of the Alaska school system is not only to teach reading writing, and arithmetic, but also how to live better, how to make more money in order to live better, and how to utilize the resources of the country in order to make money.<sup>115</sup>

Jackson’s Sitka Industrial School instructed women in typical women’s home activities, such as sewing, knitting, ironing, cooking, and cleaning, and men in carpentry, painting, blacksmithing boat building, shoe making, and other trades-related crafts. Jackson also advocated for such

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<sup>112</sup> Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 30.

<sup>113</sup> Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 31.

<sup>114</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Herbert Welch, August 12, 1885.

<sup>115</sup> Jackson, “1886 Report on Education,” 10 - 11.

instruction in other mission schools.<sup>116</sup> These skills were directly tied to the capitalist economy, with Jackson envisioning Alaskan Natives as both consumers of and providers for white industrial interests. Jackson believed that this would be crucial to Native survival, often phrasing industrial education as life or death needs for Natives.<sup>117</sup>



Image of Boys Working in the Shoe Shop of the Sitka Industrial Training School<sup>118</sup>

Part of this civilizing process also included the dismantling of Native practice and language. Jackson's Sitka Industrial Training School disallowed students' use of Native languages and only permitted English starting in 1885. Transgression of this policy resulted in beatings, having students' mouths taped over or washed out with soap, or humiliation with a

<sup>116</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Womans [sic] Executive Committee of H.M., May 3, 1886, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>117</sup> Sheldon Jackson to F. H. Pierson, ca. 1900, Box 8, Folder 1C, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>118</sup> William A. Kelly, *Boys Working in Shoe Shop, Sitka Industrial Training School*, ca. 1885 - 1904, William A. Kelly Photograph Collection, Alaska State Library, <https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg21/id/599/rec/5>.

dunce cap.<sup>119</sup> By 1886, this prohibition on Native language became official for all missionary schools after the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, J.D.C. Atkins, dictated that “In all schools conducted by missionary organizations it is required that all instructions shall be given in the English language.”<sup>120</sup> The Department of Interior’s “Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Schools and Education in the Territory of Alaska” followed the charge in 1888, officially ordering that all school books and instruction appear in English.<sup>121</sup>

Scholars largely see Jackson as a harsh enforcer of English-only policies, and while that is largely true, Jackson did not fully ban the use of Native languages in all settings after 1888. Since he was responsible for missionary appointments in Alaskan outposts, he generally maintained control over the missionaries he hired. Many missionaries in Alaska permitted the usage of Native vernacular in religious and practical capacities. Accounts note that interpreters were often present at church services to allow for the participation of adults and other community members.<sup>122</sup> Some missionaries took to learning Native languages in order to communicate with Native community members. Rev. John W. Chapman, stationed at Anvik, Chapman reported the Deg Hit’an Athabascan “are talking English a little, and are of the greatest service to us in picking up the Ingilik language.”<sup>123</sup> Some missionaries also noted that teaching

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<sup>119</sup> Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, *Haa Kusteeyi, Our Culture*, 86, 171.

<sup>120</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, electronic resource, 3rd ed (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 174 <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14063903>.

<sup>121</sup> Mary M. Juzwik et al., “Regulating Language: Language of Early American Christian Missions in Alaska,” in *Legacies of Christian Language and Literacies in American Education: Perspectives on English Language Arts Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>122</sup> Sheldon Jackson and WM. A. Kelly, *The North Star*, February 1889, Vol. 2, No. 3 edition, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>123</sup> Jackson and Kelly, *The North Star*, June 1889.

in Native language often assisted the translation and teaching of English.<sup>124</sup> Missionaries also accepted the legacy of Russian occupation; in a June 30, 1887 letter to the Bureau of Education, Jackson noted James A. Wirth “is making rapid progress in learning the Russian which is the Language [sic] of his district.”<sup>125</sup> Jackson’s reporting of the language progress of these missionaries in *The North Star* reveals that he did not oppose their choices.

The allowance of Native vernacular in religious settings reveals that Jackson and other Presbyterians saw the transmission of Protestant church practice and Christianity as more valuable than just English teaching alone. This reflects the Protestant reformer view of the day; many saw Christianization as a key step towards “civilization.” The viewpoint is aptly summarized by scholar Tammy Heise:

Protestant understandings of conversion as a spiritual transformation that manifested its reality through specific cultural practices aligned with the interests of American colonialism and helped to support its continued expansion. . . Their inward embrace of Christian religion (understood by American Protestants as inherently individualistic and democratic) would result in a speedy transition from traditional to new customs.<sup>126</sup>

By embracing Christianity, reformers thought that Native Americans would adopt American family structures, clothing, and labor practices. Christianization was thus a twofer for missionaries like Jackson: spreading God’s Word for the establishment of an American Kingdom of God and bringing Native Americans into the folds of American society.

While Jackson may have exaggerated his claims to the government that Native Alaskans were clamoring for education, it is true that some of Jackson’s schools were welcomed by Native

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<sup>124</sup> Mary M. Juzwik et al., “Regulating Language.”

<sup>125</sup> Sheldon Jackson to the Department of the Interior Bureau of Education, June 30, 1887, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>126</sup> Tammy Heise, “Religion and Native American Assimilation, Resistance, and Survival,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, November 20, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.394>.

communities where schools were already established. School attendance varied, but some communities saw the attendance of both children and adults in schoolhouses.<sup>127</sup> It seems counterintuitive that these communities welcomed missionaries, but William L. Iggiagruk Hensley, an Iñupiaq politician from Upper Alaska, described the impetus for Native Alaskan school attendance in his memoir, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow*:

Why did our parents permit this? In large part, it was due to an inferiority complex that had grown among our people ever since the beginning of trade with Russia in the late 1700s. Our ancestors recognized clearly superior technology in the goods that arrived from Siberia. Metal knives, pots, matches, nails, axes, saws, and rifles all made life easier. . . Some of the missionaries brought with them medicines that helped cure certain ailments. However, even that basically benign change had consequences that rippled widely though Native culture, challenging the influence of the *anatkut*, our shamans, who traditionally handled healing.<sup>128</sup>

Hensley speaks to the wide-spread cultural changes invoked by merely the presence of new goods. The arrival of new technologies sowed doubt in traditional Native tools, spirituality, and practices, leading to a more ready embrace of newer, American systems and practices. Of course, Hensley's perspective for his Iñupiaq community may not apply to all Native Alaskan communities—recall the Sitka Industrial School lawsuits—but Hensley provides insight for why some communities embraced American education.

Some Natives consequently envisioned Jackson as a sort of father figure. Jackson sponsored the education of some Tlingit children back east, sending both girls and boys to attend institutions like the Carlisle Boarding School or day schools with families in Philadelphia.<sup>129</sup> In a

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<sup>127</sup> Jackson, “1886 Report on Education.”

<sup>128</sup> William L. Iggiagruk Hensley, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People*, 1st ed (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2009), 72-73.

Hensley attended a BIA school in the 1940s, and while he writes from a later time period, he accounts for perspectives held by ancestors who may have attended Jackson's schools.

<sup>129</sup> Sheldon Jackson Letter to James R. Rogers, April 22, 1891, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Sheldon Jackson to

letter from one of Jackson's sponsored students at Carlisle Boarding School, Healy Wolff recounted his progress in education and affection for Jackson: "You do not know but I hate to keep calling you 'doctor,' can't I call you 'papa' and Mrs. Jackson, 'momma' and the girls 'sisters.' I think you have done so much for me and have acted as my father for such a long time. . . I am thankful to God though that he allowed me to fall into your hands because you have been more than some fathers are to their own children."<sup>130</sup> Other children frequently corresponded with Jackson, expressing thanks for their education and experiences outside of Alaska. These are not necessarily representative accounts and are predicated on Jackson's "civilizing" efforts, but the accounts reveal a distinctly paternalistic dynamic in the relationship between Jackson and some Natives.

As some Native communities moved onto newer forms of technology and embraced newer, American lifestyles, Jackson sought to collect Native tools, clothing, and ritual objects. As early as his time as superintendent in the West, Jackson collected items such as pottery or blankets to sell or gift to collectors and other missionaries across the United States. These objects were frequently used to interest potential missionaries, with the objects displayed as curios intended to educate and intrigue laymen and clergy in life out West. Many objects were frequently employed as props during speeches given to potential missionaries.<sup>131</sup>

This collecting practice picked up as Jackson established himself in Alaska. He continued to collect for the purpose of sending materials back east, eventually working with his alma mater,

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Miss Lablok, October 31, 1898, Box 8, Folder 1C, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>130</sup> Healy Wolff to Sheldon Jackson, September 13, 1904, Series II, Box 28, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>131</sup> Rosemary Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson the Collector* (Alaska State Museums, 1999), 14, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED441639>.

Princeton Theological Seminary, to establish his own display cabinet at the seminary in the 1870s.<sup>132</sup> He was not always the one directly procuring the items; Jackson frequently wrote to missionaries and friends throughout Alaska offering payment for “anything of historical or ethnological value” to be sent to him.<sup>133</sup> He sought items such as baidarkas (a traditional indigenous kayak), clothing, beads, axes, and even kitchenware from Alaskan communities.<sup>134</sup> At times, Jackson differentiated the origins of the objects; some shipping lists indicate objects’ tribal origins or traditional names (i.e. “Idl-hok,” “Aranagok doll,” or “Gossbruk”).<sup>135</sup> In 1887, Jackson created the “Alaskan Society of Sitka” with the “purpose to collect and preserve information in regard to the arts, history, language, religious and folklore of the native population of Alaska.”<sup>136</sup> Jackson’s collecting practice would eventually increase and serve the basis of what is now the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka, Alaska.

Jackson’s collecting practice seems antithetical to his missionary work. At the same time he espoused an overhaul of Native life and adoption of American practice, language, and dress,

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<sup>132</sup> Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson the Collector*, 16.

<sup>133</sup> Sheldon Jackson to John Duff, January 27, 1891, Box 8, Folder 1B, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>134</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “Curios for Omaha Exposition,” ca. 1897, Series I, Box 12, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>135</sup> A.E. Karlson, “Shipping List from A.E. Karlson to Sheldon Jackson,” ca. 1897, Series I, Box 12, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey; Moravian Mission, “Shipping List from Carmel, Alaska,” Series I, Box 12, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey; W.T. Lopp, “Shipping List from W.T. Lopp,” Series I, Box 12, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>136</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “Founding Articles of the Alaska Society of Sitka” (Sitka, Alaska, 1887), Series II, Box 28, Folder 3, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

Jackson and other members occasionally referred to the society as the Alaska Academy of Sciences and Museum of Ethnology. See Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson the Collector*, 32.

he simultaneously collected objects representative of Native tradition. While contradictory, this stands as a form of “salvage ethnology”—a form of ethnology prominent amongst missionaries in the nineteenth century that blended “scientific interest, wistfulness, and guilt.”<sup>137</sup> Salvage ethnology focused on capturing Native culture amidst its demise, expressing, in the words of anthropologist Jacob Gruber, “This sense of urgency, this notion of an ethnographic—indeed a scientific—mission, not to stem the tide of a civilization’s advance but to preserve what was about to be destroyed.”<sup>138</sup> Jackson expressed such impulses; he collected objects but never made any meaningful attempt to halt the destruction of Native culture. He viewed Native objects as only things of “historic or ethnographic” value to white audiences, not to Native cultures themselves.

This collecting practice juxtaposed with Jackson’s programs for acculturation encapsulates the paradox of his work. Jackson was captivated by the lives and cultures of Native Americans; he saw their objects and lifestyles as intriguing and sought to preserve their “history” in museums while simultaneously working to eradicate Native practices, languages, and traditional ways of life through Christianization. Jackson never once reckoned with these incongruities in his writing, and these contradictions would only become more apparent as Jackson reflected upon his work in his later years.

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<sup>137</sup> Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 23.

<sup>138</sup> Jacob W. Gruber, “Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 72, no. 6 (1970): 1294.

#### Part IV: The Later Years (1890 – 1909)

As much as Jackson advocated for the inclusion of Alaskan Natives in the growing Alaskan economy, by the 1890s, Jackson's advances began to backfire. Discovery of gold in the late 1880s prompted the movement of prospectors throughout Alaska, and by 1890, the population of white individuals in the territory increased to 4,208— a nearly ten-fold increase from the 430 white individuals present in 1880.<sup>139</sup> By 1900, this population wildly increased to 30,493 whites following the Klondike Gold Rush.<sup>140</sup> The influx of white settlers brought even more diseases and alcohol, which proved further dangerous for Native health and existence.

On top of these troubles, the federal government stopped contracting with missionary societies in the early 1890s. Protestant missionary societies had grown jealous of Catholic missionary societies in contract with the federal government after Catholics received more than half of all federal contract school funding in 1886. Protestant societies thus pulled out of the system in 1891 and 1892, and Catholic societies followed suit. By 1895, the federal government formally eliminated the contract school system.<sup>141</sup> Jackson still sought the appointment of Protestant missionaries to teaching positions throughout Alaska though after this change, albeit in a more informal manner. Jackson took special care only to hire teachers interested in “civilizing” the natives through *both* mission work and education. An excerpt of a 1905 letter to Lowell McAfee, the President of Park College in Missouri, particularly illuminated this agenda:

I have been disappointed during the last year at some of the past graduates. . . They made no attempt whatsoever to do mission work. While as government teachers they cannot be

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<sup>139</sup> Ivan Petroff, *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska At the Twelfth Census: 1890*, report prepared at the request of the Census Office, Department of Interior, 1893, <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/histpdfs/1890census.pdf>, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Census Office of the Department of the Interior, “Population by Sex, General Nativity and Color, By States and Territories: 1900,” 1900, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/histpdfs/1900char.pdf>.

<sup>141</sup> Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 42 - 43.

required to do mission work, I had hoped that the Park graduates would be anxious to do mission work without being required, and in recommending your graduates to me for appointments in Alaska, I hope you will bear this feature in mind.<sup>142</sup>

Even if the government prevented Jackson from formally working with missionary societies, he still envisioned a missionary teacher as the only one able to “do this extra work” to succeed at “lead[ing] parents to Christian civilization.”<sup>143</sup> As a result, Jackson solicited Presbyterian colleges and missionary societies for teacher applications in order to circumvent the new federal guidelines.

In a speech at the 1899 Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian Conference, Jackson recognized the increasing loss of Native Alaskan culture and people to white settler intrusion:

There is a transition in population. In my early addresses at the annual conferences of the friends of the Indians I congratulated myself that I had found a region where the white man would never want to go and the Native would never be displaced; but the time has come, and the transition has commenced. The Native is fading away before the thousands and tens of thousands that are coming rapidly into that country.<sup>144</sup>

Ironically, what Jackson witnessed was partly his own doing. It was Jackson’s role in English-only policies and promotion of Alaska that attracted white interests to the territory. White missionaries brought their own diseases to Native communities. He was not directly responsible for the Gold Rush, but in promoting assimilation and “civilizing” initiatives, Jackson cannot be extricated from the destruction of Native Alaskans. Unfortunately, Jackson never recognized the irony embedded in his speech, nor in other future correspondence or statements.

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<sup>142</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Lowell McAfee, June 14, 1905, Series I, Box 2, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>143</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Lanora Easter, June 14, 1905, Series I, Box 2, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>144</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “Alaska,” in *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian* (Boston: Lake Mohonk Conference, 1899), 32.

By 1900, Jackson's health was in steep decline, and he completed what would be his last tour of Alaska that year. From then on, Jackson worked from Washington, D.C., screening applicants for teachers positions and directing Alaskan affairs remotely. The influx of Gold Rush settlers had increased the financial strain on schools, affecting Jackson's ability to expand educational efforts. Further, new communities desired more autonomy for their school systems, so in response to this, Congress enacted the Nelson Act in 1905. This policy ended integrated schools for both white and Native children by placing Native Alaskan education under supervision of the Bureau of Education and white schools under purview of the territorial government.<sup>145</sup> This fundamentally changed the federal government's relationship to Native Alaskans and created a segregated school system, but did not greatly alter Jackson's responsibilities. He continued to work from Washington, D.C. to staff schools with religious personnel and ensure the functioning of Native schools across the territory.

Even though his job responsibilities were unchanged, for the remainder of Jackson's tenure he fought against bureaucratic barriers. Congress reduced funding for Alaska schools administered by the Board of Education from \$145,000 to \$50,000 per year after the Nelson Act.<sup>146</sup> This resulted in multiple school closures in locations such as Kenai, Council, Ellamar, Hope, Chignik, among others.<sup>147</sup> With these changes, Jackson's time became less focused on

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<sup>145</sup> Carol Barnhardt, "A History of Schooling for Alaska Native People," *Journal of American Indian Education* 40, no. 1 (2001): 11; Case and Voluck, *Alaska Natives and American Laws*, 204.

<sup>146</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Dr. E. O. Campbell," March 3, 1906, Series I, Box 24, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey, 5.

<sup>147</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Mr. John M. McDowell, June 30, 1905, Vol. 45, Roll 23, June 20, 1905 - October 10, 1905, pg. 46; Letters Received by the Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. National Archives; Digitized for Gale Primary Sources, Indigenous Peoples of North America,

Alaska administration and more on Presbyterian matters across the United States. He continued to advocate for the appointment of religious teachers in government day schools, but turned his attention towards distributing pamphlets, reports, and other knowledge related to Presbyterianism in the United States at large. Jackson also began to focus on improving the Presbyterian presence in Utah to fight against growing Mormon influence, working to establish the school that would become present-day Westminster College in the territory.<sup>148</sup>

In 1908, Jackson filed his resignation letter. “I have recently passed my seventy-fourth birthday and completed fifty years of strenuous work for the public welfare. With advancing years and failing health, I feel the necessity of withdrawing from public life,” he wrote.<sup>149</sup> Jackson remained in Washington, D.C. with his family for the remainder of his years before passing away from a surgical operation in Asheville, North Carolina on April 27, 1909.<sup>150</sup>

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<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BAUXNZ307951612/GDCS?u=columbia&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=fc6333a0&pg=88>.

<sup>148</sup> Sheldon Jackson, “Has the Presbyterian Church Sufficient Zeal for the Triumph of Christianity to Give Utah a Christian College?,” ca. 1904, Box 8, Folder 1D, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Sheldon Jackson to Mrs. D.R. James, January 17, 1903, Box 8, Folder 1D, Sheldon Jackson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A great amount of Jackson’s correspondence after 1898 is devoted to establishing the college in Utah and drumming up support for the “defense in Utah.”

<sup>149</sup> Sheldon Jackson to Dr. Elmer Ellsworth Brown, June 13, 1908, Series I, Box 26, Sheldon Jackson Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey, 5.

<sup>150</sup> Carr, *Sheldon Jackson*, 19.

## Conclusion

Today, the Sitka Industrial Training School grounds remain open to visitors as a National Park Service Historic Landmark. Following Jackson's death, the school became a high school in 1917, then a college in 1966, before eventually shuttering in 2007.<sup>151</sup> Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001, the school grounds now house the Sheldon Jackson Museum, the Sitka Sound Science Center, and the Sitka Fine Arts Camp.<sup>152</sup> The Sheldon Jackson Museum displays many of the objects Jackson collected. Ironically, what once was intended as a place to dispel Native cultural practices now serves as a home to institutions devoted to preserving Native Alaskan culture and practice.

Despite these reclamation efforts, residents of Sitka continue to struggle with Jackson's identity and the role the school has played in their family's lives. Following the recent discovery of hundreds of graves at former Native residential schools in Canada in 2021, many Alaskans have increasingly grappled with the legacies of Native boarding school education. Many Native Alaskans acknowledge the value of the education the Sitka Industrial Training School provided, but also resent how it functioned as a "tool of assimilation."<sup>153</sup> On the one hand, the school equipped generations of Native Alaskans with skills that allowed them to maintain an existence in a changing world. Conversely, the school also erased native culture by replacing traditional practices with industrial skills and forced children and young adults to convert to new ways of

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<sup>151</sup> Jerry L. Van Marter, "Promises to Keep: Sheldon Jackson College Dissolves, but Legacy Continues," *The Presbyterian Outlook* (blog), July 24, 2015, <https://pres-outlook.org/2015/07/promises-to-keep-sheldon-jackson-college-dissolves-but-legacy-continues/>.

<sup>152</sup> National Park Service, "Sheldon Jackson School National Historic Landmark," accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/places/sheldon-jackson-school.htm>.

<sup>153</sup> Katherine Rose. "Sitka Vigil a Chance to Mourn, Reflect on History of Residential Schools." *KCAW*, June 5, 2021. <https://www.kcaw.org/2021/06/05/sitka-vigil-a-chance-to-mourn-reflect-on-history-of-residential-schools/>.

life. These dualities were present for the entire existence of the school from when it was the Sitka Industrial Training School until it became Sheldon Jackson College.

Given this complicated legacy, then, how ought we view Jackson, the man who started it all? Jackson cannot be removed from this narrative and his work in Alaska mirrors the same paradoxes of his school's legacy. On one hand, Jackson acted in line with his Protestant brethren, and truly intended goodwill to Native Alaskans. He viewed his work as crucial to securing Native Alaskans citizenship and a continued existence in a changing society, with this also being part of the pursuit of a "Kingdom of God" in the United States. He even decried the influx of white settlers. However, he simultaneously failed to reckon with how he aided in the destruction of Native cultures through education or the prohibition on Native languages. These are not resolvable contradictions in the archives, however, and formulating a categorical assessment of Jackson as "colonizer" or "ally" is not possible or a rewarding intellectual project. Even if Jackson's contradictions are unresolvable, understanding how Jackson contributed to the destruction of Native Alaskan cultures can help elucidate an assessment of him.

For one, it is evident that Jackson helped to encourage more white settlers to the territory. He cannot be credited for starting the Alaska Gold Rush of course, but arguably, he helped make white settlement in Alaska possible, promoting Alaska around the country in newspapers and magazines. He wrote thousands of letters to clergymen, families, teachers, government officials, among many others, all in promotion of his work in Alaska. He received considerable press attention, garnering interest from papers around the country. These efforts certainly contributed to knowledge about Alaska, and hence, people's settlement there. In addition to alcohol, white settlers— whether it be missionaries or miners— brought diseases that Native Alaskans had never encountered before. By 1912, some estimated that 36 percent of the Native Alaskan population

was infected with tuberculosis, and whole majorities of tribes, such as that of the Copper River Natives, had died.<sup>154</sup>

Secondly, Jackson contributed to the destruction of Native cultural practice, both through his work when alive and the foundation he built for Alaska education. While the English-only policy for all Native Alaskan education did not fully originate from Jackson, and he did not ban English in all forums, his English-only policies at the Sitka Industrial Training School alone resulted in the dismantling of Tlingit and other Native language practices. By merely prohibiting Tlingit, students associated their own culture with punishment. One Tlingit elder reminisced that “Whenever I speak Tlingit, I can still taste the soap.”<sup>155</sup> Tlingit is only one language group in Alaska, but similar practices were present across the territory. English would remain the sole language of educational instruction, and to date, Native Alaskan languages remain endangered, with multiple already extinct.<sup>156</sup> Curricula omitted any mention of traditional knowledge, music, art, dance, or history too.<sup>157</sup>

School officials also performed duties that eroded Native medicine, worship, and other cultural practices. School officials both before and after Jackson’s death worked to indoctrinate Natives in “correct” behaviors. This indoctrination sometimes took the form of social control and policing. William L. Iggiagruk Hensley detailed how this occurred in his Iñupiaq community:

In some [Iñupiaq] villages, school officials conducted inspections to see if parents were keeping their homes clean. They sent students over to the hospital and lined us up for shots for this disease or that, took urine samples to check for venereal disease. . . I have no

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<sup>154</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Territories, *Conditions in Alaska*, (HRG-1912-TER-0002; February 23, 1912), text in ProQuest Congressional Hearings Digital Collection; <https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1912-ter-0002?accountid=10226>.

<sup>155</sup> Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, *Haa Kusteeyi, Our Culture*, 86.

<sup>156</sup> Michael E. Krauss, “Alaska Native Language Center Research Papers” (University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1980), <https://epub.sub.uni-hamburg.de/epub/volltexte/2009/3652/pdf/53.pdf>.

<sup>157</sup> Hensley, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow*, 72.

idea whether our parents were ever asked permission for all this activity. I doubt it. And even if they had been asked, the notion of civil liberties was unknown to us.<sup>158</sup>

Jackson tasked his appointed teachers with more than just education, specifically hiring teachers to perform mission or reindeer work outside of teaching obligations. Similarly, following Jackson's death, the Bureau of Education assigned community duties beyond teaching to teachers to employ teachers as holistic "civilizing" agents. In these efforts, Christianity and newer forms of medicine replaced many indigenous belief systems, leaving traditions and beliefs untold to younger generations.

Jackson's informal practice of sending Native children to distant boarding schools also became an official policy of the Bureau of Education following his death. Students that wished to pursue a high school education in remote areas were sent to faraway boarding schools such as the Carlisle Boarding School in Pennsylvania or the Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma. The BIA created three new boarding schools in Alaska in the 1920s, but the experiences of children at boarding schools both outside and within Alaska were dismal and violent.<sup>159</sup> Epidemics frequently emerged, with diseases like tuberculosis, trachoma, measles, mumps, and influenza sweeping through the dormitories and resulting in many deaths.<sup>160</sup> Schools were also associated with physical punishment; attendees of the Wrangell Institute in Wrangell, Alaska recall extreme physical punishments that ranged from spanking to being stripped naked and forced to run.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Hensley, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow*, 74 - 75.

<sup>159</sup> Dianne Hirshberg and Suzanne Sharp, "Thirty Years Later: The Long-Term Effect of Boarding Schools on Alaska Natives and Their Communities" (Anchorage, Alaska: College of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, September 2005), ii - iii, [https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy\\_publication\\_links/boardingschoolfinal.pdf](https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy_publication_links/boardingschoolfinal.pdf).

<sup>160</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 124 - 125.

<sup>161</sup> Lex Treinen, "I Thought My Name Was My Number': Survivors Recount Alaska Boarding School Experience," *Alaska Public Media*, June 25, 2021,

Administrators employed strict discipline and students stuck to a regimented, quasi-military schedule. Boarding schools explicitly sought to sow doubt in Native cultural traditions, effectively pitting children against their own families and culture. At home, the practice of removing children from villages disrupted Native kinship networks and weakened the transmission of language and traditional knowledge amongst generations. Students recognized these tensions at times, but being in an environment far from home, it was hard to fight back against the indoctrination, and thus Native cultural practice fell by the wayside.<sup>162</sup>

Entire books could be filled on the destructive BIA boarding school system that enrolled Native Alaskans, but the point remains: Jackson created the foundations for the federal school system to incorporate and abuse Native Alaskans. The abuse was not just physical, but also mental, and the mental health effects of such an education also greatly contributed to the destruction of Natives and their cultural practice. Students recount their difficulty sharing their experiences with their families and wanting to “keep a wall up” so they “wouldn’t ever get hurt again.”<sup>163</sup> Some even credit these experiences as reasons why they were driven to drugs or alcohol and struggled with substance abuse throughout adulthood.<sup>164</sup>

Through this brief overview of education since Jackson’s death, it is clear how Jackson abetted the expansion of the American empire in Alaska. Jackson recognized this to some extent; in a 1899 speech, he argued that “these twenty-five years’ work of the churches in Alaska. .

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<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/06/25/confronting-the-legacy-of-boarding-schools-in-alaska-2/>.

<sup>162</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 140-146.

<sup>163</sup> Lex Treinen, “I Thought My Name Was My Number”

<sup>164</sup> Dianne Hirshberg and Suzanne Sharp, “Thirty Years Later: The Long-Term Effect of Boarding Schools on Alaska Natives and Their Communities” (Anchorage, Alaska: College of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, September 2005), [https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy\\_publication\\_links/boardingschoolfinal.pdf](https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy_publication_links/boardingschoolfinal.pdf), iii.

.made it safe for whaler or miner” throughout the territory.<sup>165</sup> The unfortunate truth is that this self-congratulatory statement was partly true: Jackson’s efforts eroded Native existence and this allowed for the development of economic and political involvement in Alaska. Starting with Jackson’s advocacy for greater federal oversight through the First Organic Act, Jackson’s work later expanded to include the creation of schools that explicitly sought to diminish Native practices and culture. Promoting Alaska around the country only led to greater interest in the region for both political and economic actors. White settlers were able to capitalize on resources like timber, gold, or fish because Native populations were diminished due to disease and a changed existence. As such, Jackson will forever remain a part of the story of American imperialism in Alaska.

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<sup>165</sup> Jackson, “Alaska,” in *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian*, 36.

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