NAKONA WASNONYA YUHABI/ASSINIBOINE KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS:
INDIGENOUS ARCHIVING FROM THE 19TH INTO THE 21ST CENTURIES

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the ways that Assiniboine peoples have kept bodies of cultural knowledge alive for their people from the reservation period in the U.S. and Canada in the late nineteenth century to the present. I intend to contribute to the archival turn with what I would call a nascent theory of Indigenous archiving. By focusing on Assiniboine people, I describe five Indigenous methods of keeping knowledge alive for their communities, including oral tradition, ceremony, sacred sites and territoriality, written texts, and artwork, as distinct from the Western methodologies of archiving. I contrast Assiniboine perspectives of archiving with what settler society collected and said about Assiniboine culture and history, and then explicate the differences between these settler and Indigenous points of view. This historical investigation of archiving Assiniboine knowledge illustrates relationships that range from animosity to reciprocity between Assiniboine and settlers regarding what it means to archive Assiniboine knowledge.

This dissertation examines archives as bodies of cultural knowledge, archiving as an action of preservation, and Assiniboine cultural practitioners as archivists or what I call keepers of cultural knowledge. Throughout this dissertation I examine Assiniboine archiving as a set of interrelated processes. I suggest that the Assiniboine have employed a constellation of Indigenous archival processes that, in particular instances, worked in synchronicity in sustaining a degree of Assiniboine cultural identities, cosmologies, and a sense of peoplehood that has both undergone change and experienced continuity over time. I show that this constellation of archival processes mitigated previous damage caused by the ways of collecting by settlers, including those methods used in the disciplines of Anthropology and History, the universities that house them, and colonial museums and national archives. I demonstrate that these ways of archiving show the potential for Indigenous peoples to work with settler archives to support their own cultural preservation and to decolonize settler efforts through reciprocal relations (repatriation, managing or working with exhibitions), such as tribally managed archives and museums. This dissertation is based on extensive archival research and oral interviews with Assiniboine people on reserves in Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.
Preface

This dissertation is based on archival research and twenty-two oral interviews conducted entirely by the author, Joshua Ben Horowitz. The oral interviews were approved by the University of British Columbia’s Research Ethics Board [certificate #: H09-01307], under the title Nakona Knowledge Keepers, with the Principal Investigator, Dr. Coll Thrush.

The author conducted archival research in Washington, D.C. in June of 2010 under a fellowship from the Tribal Heritage Research Project, as a Fellow and founding member of the Association of Tribal Archives Libraries and Museums, at the National Archives, the National Gallery, and the Smithsonian Institution Archives, including the Cultural Anthropology Archives and the National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. The author also researched Canadian expedition journals and Assiniboine texts at the Newberry Library during my 2010 Summer Institute fellowship at the Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies.
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The funding fellowships and scholarships from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of British Columbia enabled me to complete my coursework, exams, research, and the writing of this dissertation. My gratitude also goes to the Charles Redd Center of Western Studies of Brigham Young University of Utah for a summer research grant I received in 2012. At the summer institute at the Newberry Consortium of American Indian Studies in 2010, I learned a lot from professors Cary Miller, David Beck, and Scott Stevens as well as the other students in that cohort. It has been my honour to be a founding member of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) since the founding in 2009. Special thanks go to Susan Feller and Melissa Brodt, as well as my colleagues in the Tribal Heritage Research Project from 2009-2012.

Thanks to Assiniboine people, such as Jeff Cummins, Robert Four Star, the late Rudolf Oliver Archdale, Larry Smith, Harry Beauchamp, Jr., Wilma Kennedy, the MacArthur family, the Lonechild family, and many others, this dissertation hopes to serve Assiniboine communities. In large part, I owe my deepest gratitude to all the interviewees who consented to interviews, and also to those that considered this project in conversation, including Kenny Ryan, Joseph Miller, Larry Wetsit, Tommy Christian, and the Medicine Lodge society members, and also David Reed Miller.

Foremost, I am grateful beyond words to the patience and emotional support of my wife Arlene Horowitz, my father, Mardi Horowitz, and my family (including Kui).
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely wife Arlene McMurray Horowitz.

This dissertation is also dedicated to Harry and Dennis Beauchamp, who passed away in the summer of 2010 much too young, and to the Beauchamp family.

Note: In the summer of 2010, while I was researching and participating in the Newberry Consortium of American Indian Studies Summer Institute in Chicago, I received a phone call from an Assiniboine-Mandan friend of mine, David Chase, who lived in Polson, Montana. He told me that his nephews, Harry Beauchamp III, 15 years old, and his brother Dennis Beauchamp, 9 years, drowned in a tragic accident after Harry tried to rescue Dennis, who had fallen into an irrigation canal near a lake in St. Ignatius, Montana. They were both Assiniboine from Fort Peck through their father, and Salish-Kootenai from the Flathead Indian Reservation through their mother. I knew Harry since he was a baby when I lived with his parents in Pablo, Montana, in 1996. His father, Harry Beauchamp, Jr., adopted me as his brother Assiniboine way, and little Harry always called me minekshi (for uncle). Harry was a true inspiration for everyone that knew him. From his earliest age he learned everything he could about his Assiniboine cultural practices and passed that onto others, always respecting his elders. He was a representative of The Youth Tribal Council of Fort Peck Assiniboines and a Firekeeper at the Medicine Lodge. I was very proud of Harry and honoured to be one of his uncles. I dedicate this dissertation in part to their memory and to all the Assiniboine youth that wish to carry on with the important cultural knowledge that their elders may teach them.
Chapter 1: Introduction

There’s a lot of these things that have never been written about the Assiniboine. This history is ours. People of my age now and my brother Carl, we’re preserving this. We’re documenting it. We’re finding out where all our archives are. We’re building a database so that there’s kids down the road, our children, our grandchildren [who will] want to know about our people, it will be there.
– Robert Four Star

Relics of the past cross all the cultural boundaries that lie between past and present, and when they do they are reconstituted in the relations and means of production of each cultural zone they enter…. Their preservation is cultural. I think of institutions: archives and museums are mirrors of power and cosmologies.
– Greg Dening

I first met Rudolph Oliver Archdale, a powerful Assiniboine medicine man (pejuta wichasha or “plants-man”), in June 1996 on the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation in Wolf Point, Montana. The Fort Peck Reservation sits on the high-plain in the northeastern corner of Montana, close to the borders of Saskatchewan and North Dakota. Jeff Cummins, an Assiniboine tribal member, had invited me to drive with him to attend the Medicine Lodge, held annually in June after the first full moon on the Fort Peck Reservation. I knew Jeff as a sweat brother from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and we were fellow members of the Student Alliance of North American Indians (SANAI).

After we had arrived in the town of Wolf Point, we drove to the very small Silverwolf Casino to meet Oliver, where Oliver worked as a security clerk. That day Oliver watched me play slot machines on the monitors in his back-room office before I met him in person. After I played the slot machines for a short while, I entered his office through the scent of fried foods in order to join my friends. He was wearing what I would

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1 Robert Four Star, 2004, accessed 3-2-2013 from website: Turtle Island Storytellers Network, under “Montana” tab (copyrighted 2004). This organization is now housed under the WisdomoftheElders.org. <www.turtleislandstorytellers.net/tis_montana/transcript_r_four_star.htm>
3 See Jeff Cummins’s brief biography in Appendix A: Interview Bios. The car in which we drove was a rented white Cadillac with purple leather upholstery, a gift from Jeff’s wife to honor his recent completion of his master’s degree in social work.
4 I am part Seneca on my mother’s side, and had been involved in the Student Alliance of North American Indians and Native American Studies at UCSC for many years.
come to learn was his signature attire—a precisely folded bandana over his long, black hair which was tied up in a ponytail. He chose a differently coloured bandana each day to match his polo shirt: on this particular Wednesday afternoon, he was wearing a sky-blue, white-striped shirt and a paisley, sky-blue bandana that looked pristinely ironed. He smiled at me in a teasing manner and said, “Who are you? A Freeman?” I laughed because I was wearing a red sweatshirt, a bandana, and desert camouflage, fatigue pants with hiking boots.

The following day, Oliver drove me around the open plains and wheat fields of the reservation, or the “rez,” in his small, black king-cab 4x4 Ford Ranger pickup truck, which he had named “Sheepdog.” He showed me medicinal plants (in which I have a keen interest), we joked around, he asked me a lot of questions, and told me stories. We were good friends right off the bat; as he would say, we were “like two peas in a pod.”

Thus began my induction into Assiniboine society and my interest in practicing and propagating Assiniboine cultural knowledge. After meeting Oliver, his brother, Robert Four Star, and many others during the subsequent four days of the Medicine Lodge, I was invited by one of Oliver’s friends, Larry Smith, to stay and make Wolf Point my home. I took their kindness to heart, relocated from Santa Cruz, and lived there from 1996 to 1998. During that time, I taught vocational and cultural studies and wood-shop in Poplar secondary schools, nearby tribal headquarters for the reservation. Since 1998, I have returned every year, whenever possible, to participate in the Medicine Lodge. This is when and how my interest in perpetuating Indigenous – specifically Assiniboine – cultural knowledge began.

I lived in Wolf Point on the Fort Peck reservation for several years, participated in ceremonies and daily life, and took Assiniboine language and etiquette classes at the Fort Peck Community College with Robert Four Star. In 1998, he adopted me as a son. Robert Four Star’s Assiniboine name is Wamakashka Doba Inazhi, which translates as Buffalo Stops Four Times. He is the Chief of the Red Bottom Band of Assiniboine, one of the last traditional chiefs of Assiniboine in either the U.S. or Canada, and he is a keeper of Assiniboine cultural knowledge. Robert is also a faculty member of the Fort Peck Community College, and my most important consultant, cultural adviser, and

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5 See Robert Four Star’s and Larry Smith’s brief biographies in Appendices A: Interview Bios.
interviewee. I left Fort Peck in 1998 to move to Marin County in California in order to get a secondary teaching credential at Dominican University of California, which I received in 2000. When I left Fort Peck I had every intention of returning as a teacher and to co-founder a non-profit organization dedicated to Indigenous outdoor experiential education.

In the end, although I did not return to Fort Peck to live, I did co-found the non-profit called the Indigenous Learning Institute. Its first project at the Fort Peck reservation was called the Wamakashka Oeti (Bison Camp), which ran from 2001 to 2005. As an outdoor experiential cultural education project, this endeavour brought Assiniboine families together to live outside for one week to practice cultural activities, such as hide tanning and drum making. My thesis for my Master of Science in Education at Dominican, completed in 2003, examines the learning outcomes of the Bison Camp.6

In my somewhat circuitous life journey, between 2000 and 2002 I lived on Oahu in Hawaii, and taught various subjects at a brand-new Native Hawaiian Charter School called the Hakipu’u Learning Center that utilized experiential and Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge as the foundation for its curriculum. The school’s motto, “ma ka hana ka ‘ike” (“knowledge is gained by doing”), illustrates an important idea, namely, embodiment through experiential education; I expand on this idea further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. This was one of the first Native Hawaiian Charter Schools in a network of several throughout the Hawaiian Islands, part of a growing emphasis on Native Hawaiian cultural practices in education, such as tending kalo (taro) fields, the study of political struggle for land rights, and general Native social life. I was truly honoured to be a founding teacher at that school. What I learned from the Native Hawaiian community influences my scholarly interests in archiving the cultural body of knowledge to this day.

In January 2002, while on a school bus with Hakipu’u students returning from a field trip to the local fishponds, called lo’i in Hawaiian, I received a tragic phone call. Oliver had passed away at the young age of 46. He had had a very rare disease that devastated his kidneys; in addition he suffered from severe sleep apnea, had tremors, and was very overweight, even for a very tall, near six foot, big-boned man. One of the

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wisest, kindest, and funniest persons I have ever known, he also was one of the most important cultural practitioners of the Assiniboine, especially regarding ceremonies, plant knowledge, and the Assiniboine language. He was a living archive of Assiniboine cultural knowledge. The amount of knowledge and experience I personally learned from him goes far beyond the scope of any dissertation or book. When he passed away, vast amounts of specific cultural knowledge that had not been passed onto others went with him.

I flew from Oahu to Montana the next day to attend Oliver’s funeral. People from all over the world also attended his funeral, which was held in a high school gym auditorium after an all-night wake of traditional Assiniboine pipe ceremonies and prayers. Oliver was so important to his people that his funeral included a horse-drawn casket and a slow procession along to the gravesite in Frazer along the single lane, backcountry road called Indian Highway. At the side of his grave, the ceremonial singing could be not only heard, but also felt throughout my body. This was one of the saddest days of my life. This dissertation is dedicated to Oliver’s memory and to remembering him as a truly important cultural archivist: a loving, vital keeper of Assiniboine cultural knowledge.

Through my experiences as a teacher living on the Fort Peck reservation 1996-1998, directing the Bison Camp from 2002 to 2005, participating in Assiniboine ceremonies, teaching Native Hawaiian experiential education from 2000 to 2002, and studying archival theory in Indigenous and cultural history at The University of British Colombia (UBC), I conceived of and developed this dissertation. My academic inquiry in this project would not have been possible without the last 20 years of my personal experience and connections with the Assiniboine people, including Jeff Cummins, Oliver Archdale, and Robert Four Star.

Gaining the trust and respect of people within Assiniboine communities to conduct interviews and research came after years of cultural participation, service, and scrutiny of me by the tribe’s elders. In addition, in order to understand what it means to keep Indigenous bodies of cultural knowledge alive – sustained over time for future generations – scholars studying specific Indigenous peoples, such as my study of the Assiniboine, require an understanding of those Indigenous cosmologies, worldviews, or
cultural systems of thought. From my personal experience with Assiniboine people I learned how to treat Indigenous elders as what storytellers and authors, Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki), have called “keepers” of bodies of knowledge. This precept informs my academic research involving Indigenous peoples. Scholars engaged in archival studies and Indigenous studies, as well as cultural specialists involved in archival work, museums, or tribal government cultural departments of other Indigenous nations might learn from how Assiniboine knowledge-keepers have sustained bodies of cultural wisdom.

Cultural historians can learn from the various ways that Indigenous archival processes reveal unique sensibilities concerning knowledge that differ from Western notions, such as sacred knowledge, and how that knowledge is attained, recorded, and maintained as history for particular communities. For example, in Indigenous peoples’ histories, such as the Assiniboine, they often consider that a spiritual energy, or wakan, is neither good nor evil, but that it permeates reality. As a cultural historian trained in secular Western history, I acknowledge wakan as a belief held by both Assiniboine and Sioux peoples. Further, I am open to the possibility of experiencing a sacred and mysterious force in the Indigenous knowledge I examine in this dissertation.

According to the Assiniboine elders who I learned from, the Assiniboine are a First Nations/Native American tribe of the Nakona (or Nakonabi for plural), or Nakoda or Nakota, all of which translate to “The Friendly People.” The name Assiniboine is a Cree word that means Stone Boilers. In Morley Alberta, Canada, the Stoney, as another way to speak of the Nakona, consider themselves Assiniboine. Robert Four Star taught me that the correct spelling and pronunciation of the word is Nakona, and most Assiniboine I interviewed agree; nonetheless, different people on different reserves have their own opinions on the matter, which are sometimes hotly debated. Anthropologists and linguists

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7 See a series of books with the word “Keepers” in the title by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, such as Keepers of The Earth: Native American Stories and Activities for Children (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1988).
8 Robert Four Star Interview #2, May 30, 2010, in his office at FPCC, Wolf Point, MT.
9 The synonymy or names of the Assiniboine are debated by linguistic anthropologists; Douglas Parks claims that “Stone Boilers” is incorrect: the correct Ojibwa term in historical records assini-pwan means “Stone Enemy.” However, I learned through oral histories that the correct translation of Assiniboine is “Stone Boilers” in Algonquin languages. For a summary of this issue see DeMallie, Raymond J., and David Reed Miller, “Assiniboine,” in Handbook of North American Indians, William C. Sturtevant, ed., Vol. 13, “Plains,” Part I (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 590-592.
consider Assiniboine a Sioux language, but many Assiniboine do not identify themselves as Sioux. This dissertation acknowledges the various assertions of unique Assiniboine identity, language modification, and complexity in its historical analysis.¹⁰

This diversity of opinions regarding how Assiniboine people refer to themselves as Nakona, Nakota, Nakoda, or Stoney and the correct pronunciation of certain words in the Assiniboine language illustrates an important point about Assiniboine identity. Assiniboine people see themselves simultaneously as both a unified people that share a collective sense of peoplehood and as diverse communities that practice similar bodies of cultural knowledge quite differently in relation to each other and to other Indigenous groups. At the same time, they see themselves and their several reserves and multiple communities within those reserves as different peoples, each with individual interpretations of the various bodies of cultural knowledge. For Assiniboine people, this simultaneous sameness and difference seems quite normal: their band, kinship, birthplace, and participation in cultural practices and ceremonies carry more importance for individual Assiniboine communities than the specific reservation in which they are enrolled. In relation to other tribes or to nation-states though, it is clear that Assiniboine people see themselves as one people that share a common legacy of historical colonization with other Indigenous peoples, as well as in their collective efforts to sustain bodies of cultural knowledge. This contrast and simultaneity in sameness and difference amongst and between Assiniboine communities illustrates the inadequacy of the term “tribe” as applied by early explorers, settlers, government officials, and contemporary scholars: a sense of peoplehood seems more appropriate for this dissertation. I have chosen to use the word Assiniboine throughout this dissertation, except when quoting others, because it seems to be the most accepted term across those differences. Self-identification, in terms of naming and use of Indigenous language, reveals an important archival process in and of itself: this dissertation acknowledges and uses Assiniboine language as much as possible in relevant and appropriate instances.

Assiniboine people currently reside on nine different reservations in the U.S. and Canada that were established in the late nineteenth century. On two of these reservations, in Montana, they share their reservations politically and socially with other tribes, yet historically they were not allies. In one instance, at Fort Belknap Reservation, they share the reservation with the Gros Ventre (A’ani), and at the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation they share the reservation with Dakota (mostly Yankton, Wahpeton, Sisseton, and other Sioux groups). In Canada, smaller communities are spread out on seven reserves in Saskatchewan and Alberta. These include two, Stoney Park, or Chief Chinniki, and Morley, in Alberta, and Carry the Kettle, Ocean Man, Mosquito-Grizzly Bear’s Head, and Pheasant’s Rump in Saskatchewan. They also live on other reservations through intermarriage with other tribes, such as Cree at White Bear, Saskatchewan. Similar to other Indigenous Peoples of North America, Assiniboine people also live elsewhere, such as in urban areas, but are still linked through sociocultural networks.

My lens of inquiry in this dissertation focuses on Assiniboine people, even though they share reservations with other Indigenous peoples, such as those that I mentioned above. By focusing on Assiniboine connections across several of their reserves, I attempt to illustrate how these dispersed Assiniboine communities share a sense of commonality, kinship ties, and identity. Archival processes link Assiniboine people between communities and their relationships to places, animals, plants, weather, stars, rocks, water, and other forms of nature, despite the geopolitical constructions of reserves in Canada and reservations in the U.S. Rather than using Indigenous nationhood as a categorical concept to discuss this shared collective identity in relation to nation-states, I draw on Daniel Heath Justice’s construct, “peoplehood.” In “Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative,” Justice states that:

Indigenous nationhood is more than simple political independence or the exercise of a distinctive cultural identity; it’s also an understanding of a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships.11

Justice further defines peoplehood as, “... the relational system that keeps the people in balance with one another, with other peoples and realities, and with the world. Nationhood is the political extension of the social rights and responsibilities of peoplehood.”

The relations between Assiniboine people, other peoples, other nation-states, and non-human beings expressed through stories, ceremonies, and artwork form the assemblage of archival processes that I examine in this inquiry.

Similar to other Indigenous peoples of the North American Plains, Assiniboine experienced major trauma under American and Canadian colonization in the second half of the nineteenth century. American and Canadian colonization had significant negative consequences for Assiniboine ways of life, such as territorial dispossession and the establishment of reservation systems. In this context of American and Canadian colonization and assimilation, Assiniboine archiving became increasingly important at pivotal moments in Assiniboine history. Waves of epidemics from the mid-to late-nineteenth century reduced Assiniboine numbers by almost 85 percent, from an estimated 42,000 to 7,000. Furthering the decimation of Assiniboine cultural knowledge, the establishment of reservations in the 1880s and the assimilation programs in the early twentieth century, such as boarding schools, up to the 1920s in the U.S., and the 1970s in Canada, banned languages, ceremonies, and cultural regalia. Extreme poverty within the confines of reservation boundaries limited the options Assiniboine people had to make a living throughout the twentieth century. These factors, and others, devastated much Assiniboine cultural knowledge and many practices that conveyed that knowledge. Consequently, Assiniboine people engaged in an archiving process to protect their cultural body of knowledge in its various forms.

The idea that human beings desire to protect and preserve specific bodies of knowledge seems almost universal, whether imagining a collection of family recipes or photographs, or retelling familiar stories around a campfire. Either expressed in an Indigenous community or a national archive, this urge to preserve historical knowledge, or the anxious emotional state that Jacques Derrida called “archive fever,” appears to be a

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12 Justice, “Kinship Criticism” in Reasoning Together, 152. I discuss this term further, especially in writing as an archive, in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

13 This is a summary estimate drawing from the “Introduction” by Michael Stephen Kennedy, Ed., in The Assiniboines: From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Larpenteur Long), (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), xlvii.
common intention to sustain a community member’s sense of belonging to a certain peoplehood. National or state archives, such as the National Archives of the United States of America, located in Washington, D.C., which contains records not only of a “national concern,” but also information about Assiniboine ancestors, serves as an example. While doing research with a newly formed cohort of tribal research fellows under the umbrella organization of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) in D.C. in June 2010 I entered the National Archives. This was one of my earliest introductions with conventional archives. One of the first things that struck me was the heavy security.

In the evening, after researching in the National Archives, I had a very interesting conversation with an Assiniboine individual, right after I had photographed several records about Assiniboine families of Industrial Surveys conducted at Fort Peck and Fort Belknap in the 1920s, which also included photographs from the period. A friend of one of the other Fellows of ATALM asked me if I had seen any records of her ancestor at Fort Belknap, a person named Spirit Boy. I affirmed that I had indeed taken some digital photographs of photos and records of this person who had been captured in 1920s. I sent them to her later via an email attachment. She was elated, and even though she grew up far away from Fort Belknap, she was in the process of getting reacquainted with her people.

To me, this archival experience revealed that those records about Assiniboine people found in national or state archives may be important not only to historical researchers but also to their descendants. Furthermore, descendants of Assiniboine people should be informed regarding records about their ancestors when possible, otherwise these photographs, letters, or other records may be forgotten or worse, lost. Yet, storage lockers alone only control limited forms of information for particular audiences. The Office of Indian Affairs, which eventually became the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), held these records to assist in the management of federal obligations with Native

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15 The Office of Indian Affairs conducted Industrial Surveys on Native American reservations in the United States to assess degrees of “progress.”
Americans within the jurisdiction of the United States. At the same time, reading those records through the eyes of Assiniboine, I found photographs that were very personally meaningful for Assiniboine descendants. The stories that may come from seeing the information contained in those locked archives’ shelves seem to hold more relevant political, cultural, and historical importance than the actual documentation itself. As Michel Trouillot claims: “The storage model assumes not only the past to be remembered but the collective subject that does the remembering. The problem with this dual assumption is that the constructed past itself is constitutive of the collectivity.”

Archives and the holdings – narratives, documents, and objects they house – will likely be interpreted differently by various audiences, whether a government official or an Assiniboine individual looking for information about his or her ancestors.

During my research trip to Poplar, Montana in the summer of 2012, I observed the construction of a new “state of the art” archive in Poplar, which was to be managed by the Fort Peck Community College. This was funded in part by a grant from the National Institute of Libraries and Museums. Robert Four Star conducted a blessing ceremony in August to inaugurate the official opening of this archive. For Assinibones living across the nine reservations, this was a major accomplishment. The Fort Peck Community College, utilizing the Western archive model of storage lockers, exemplifies a fairly recent relationship of reciprocity between Indigenous peoples and Western archives’ methods and techniques. One of my aims throughout this dissertation is to highlight the historical instances of what I call “reciprocity” found between Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine in terms of methods of archiving – the synergistic working together to help sustain bodies of Assiniboine cultural knowledge and inform non-Assiniboine audiences.

This new archive at Fort Peck Community College emerged partly as a result of Native American struggles for greater self-determination in the 1970s and partly through recent Indigenous political assertions: non-Indigenous archivists, anthropologists, historians, and museum curators working together with Indigenous cultural practitioners, knowledge keepers, and Native American archivists on their own terms. The construction of the Fort Peck Community College archive exemplifies recent efforts and accomplishments by other Indigenous peoples on a world scale. This was evidenced by

17 Trouillot, Silencing, 16.
my participant observations at the “Pupukahi i’ Holomua: Unite to Move Forward Conference,” in Honolulu, Hawaii held in September 2011, produced by the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, Western Museums Association, Hawaii Museums Association, and Pacific Islands Museums Association. Native American, First Nations, Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian), Maori, Aboriginal Australian, Fijian, and other Indigenous organizations presented papers and participated in this conference, which had museum, library, and archival management as one of its central themes. This nascent international movement to construct and maintain Indigenous archives shows that Indigenous nations take cultural preservation through conventional archives seriously.

Previous to the construction of the Fort Peck Community College archives, I asked experts on Assiniboine history, such as Dr. David Miller, where locally stored documents, photographs, records and other items pertinent to Assiniboine history were kept. I was told that these records were in “plastic storage boxes sealed with duct tape” that were held in a garage attic across from the Poplar high school. Though it would seem that the conservation of these items for posterity is important, some Assiniboine and Sioux that I spoke to had mixed opinions about this archive. While some want as much Assiniboine and Sioux history as possible to be preserved and protected by the college at Fort Peck or their tribal governments, others felt that these documents and other items belonging to their families should stay within their families. Nonetheless, the majority of the people I spoke to about this particular archive at Fort Peck, and other potential archives like this one for other Assiniboine reserves, stated that they felt this was an important way of protecting and preserving Assiniboine history, even though it was insufficient to sustain the vast array of Assiniboine cultural bodies of knowledge.

Both the concept and materiality of archives and the process of archiving, as well as the role of archivist in relation to various audiences, needs to be redefined. This is because the meaning of “culture” and its cultural preservation is complex; these ideas lie at the heart of the power that can shape and preserve historical narratives. In this dissertation I define archiving as a process, both in the experiential sense and in its

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18 Cultural objects, specific to both Assiniboine and Sioux, are held separately in the cultural center managed by the Fort Peck Tribes under the direction of Curley Youpee (Sioux). I had a conversation with Curley over the phone during my research, which I need to consider further before I make this discussion public.
material sense. I intend to expand the definition of archives – the noun, or the physical objects – as well as what it means to “archive” an object or objects – the verb, or the action of archiving – and what an “archivist” does for particular audiences or communities.

In the material sense, the term “archive” as a noun may be used as the storage-locker model, such as rows of boxes of filed documents organized by categories in a basement in the National Archives. I define an “official archive” in the noun form in the conventional Western sense of the word: the boxed storage lockers organized by categories and preserved through temperature control, and fire and water abatement. Throughout this dissertation I examine “official archives” as storage lockers that come with a power to control knowledge, and I seek to understand what official archives have done both to and for Assiniboines as an example of this cultural housing for a particular Indigenous group. In addition, I clarify how archives as storage lockers function in relation to the additional methods of archiving discussed in subsequent chapters, such as oral tradition, ceremony, territoriality, text, and art. By weaving together these other ways of keeping knowledge alive, vis-à-vis the storage-locker model of archiving, my intention is to further clarify scholarly understanding of a nascent Indigenous theory of archiving.

I use the broad term “Western” to distinguish colonial, national, state, or local settler archives from Indigenous-driven archiving. Western, in this sense, includes nations with histories of colonization, imperialism, and nationalism, particularly for my case, America and Canada, but also other European nations, such as Britain, France, and Germany. While I do not wish to draw a false binary distinction between Western versus Indigenous archives or archiving techniques, this dissertation does examine relationships of power between Assiniboine-driven archival processes and Western ones. When I viewed photographs of the various Medicine Lodges of the early- and mid-twentieth century held in the National Museum of the American Indian and in the Newberry Library in Chicago, both prime examples of Western-style archives, I wondered what contemporary cultural practitioners who practice the Medicine Lodge would think of these facilities and how accessible the photos housed in these buildings have been to Assiniboine cultural practitioners. The various perspectives expressed about those photos
would potentially reveal interesting and conflicting insights into what is appropriately and inappropriately contained in official archives, whether tribally managed or not.

Material objects, from an Indigenous perspective, a rock or a dance staff or a star-quilt, may also be thought of as an “archive” through their active use via storytelling, ceremony, or other practices. Assiniboine storytellers often refer to or use physical things, places, or artefacts, such as a dance staff, to tell their stories. The stories themselves concerning material objects, such as a specific painting of an Assiniboine, are as important as any material object found in an archive’s repository. When Assiniboine practitioners employ material objects through stories or performances they bring bodies of cultural knowledge alive. These material objects may include living Assiniboine bodies performing cultural actions, ceremonial objects and artefacts, historical sites or places of memory, written histories, photographs, or artwork. Thus seen, material objects are archives, too, in the noun-form of the word “archive,” whereas stories about them should be seen as a way of archiving those objects, in the verb-form of the word “to archive”: both are addressed in this dissertation as important ways of sustaining cultural knowledge from one generation to the next.19

I define “archiving” as a process of preserving, maintaining, and sustaining knowledge. The concept of the action “to archive” is commonly understood by scholars such as Ann Stoler as a means to control, order, regulate, discipline, and organize knowledge in order to maintain power over or to rule subjects or dominated groups.20 Inquiry into what it means to archive as a nation-state or colonial power reveals significant tension, and further, stands in contrast to what archiving represents for Indigenous peoples. Through a focus on the act of “archiving” as meaning to protect and preserve objects and information over time, I emphasize what it means to keep knowledge alive for Assiniboine cultural practitioners. In each chapter of this dissertation I will add to the definition of “archive” to include oral tradition, ceremony, territoriality, text, and art as methods of archiving.

19 Please see an insightful introduction to terminology regarding archives as a process or action to perform and also as things in Diana Taylor’s The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 14-15.
At the heart of this archival process, the subjectivity of Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine archivists pulses. By the term “subjectivity” I mean the lived experience, embodied emotions and thoughts, described by individuals in various mediums, such as oral histories, ceremonies, written documents, and artwork. An Assiniboine might report an embodied experience from his or her participation in a ceremony at a sacred site, such as the Medicine Lodge. An Assiniboine cultural practitioner, as an archivist, might use a physical object, such as a medicine pipe, to transmit a body of knowledge, such as the giving of a name to a person, the meaning of that name, or its use in a healing ceremony. These representations of subjectivities are expressed through stories found within symbolic systems where Assiniboine ontologies dwell. Assiniboine ontologies, or ways of being Assiniboine, need to be understood in relation to Assiniboine epistemologies, or ways that the Assiniboine people acquire knowledge. For example, an Assiniboine cultural practitioner might physically and verbally refer to the six directions starting from the sky above and moving south to the west, north, east, and to the earth, each direction having a specific color, season, animals, and Grandfathers or Grandmothers. Thus, Assiniboine stories understood within Assiniboine symbolism about historical experiences function as windows into Assiniboine subjectivities. Throughout this dissertation I attempt to give the reader a basic understanding of Assiniboine ways of being and their manners of acquiring knowledge. These ways of being and bodies of knowledge are like the internal architecture that gives shape to Assiniboine concerns about sustaining Assiniboine values and cosmology. Cultural practices, such as the Medicine Lodge, carry those values from one generation to the next.

Distinct Indigenous subjectivities should be understood within Indigenous symbolic systems. One example of an Assiniboine symbolic system is the act of naming: Assiniboine personal tribal names – often several – usually identify a person’s relationships to people, animals, plants, weather patterns, stars, or other forms of nature, such as one of Robert Four Star’s names mentioned above. I draw upon Hayden White as he describes subjectivity as a concept in relation to symbolic systems of societies and the production of history: “The purpose of the canonical representational practices of a given society, then, is to produce a subjectivity that will take this symbolic structure as the sole criterion for assessing the ‘realism’ of any recommendation to act or think one way and
In this dissertation, I analyze stories, in oral, written, and visual form, to get a partial view regarding the various subjectivities concerning the act of archiving. For the purposes of this dissertation, then, stories house what I call Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge, and therefore should be understood within Assiniboine symbolic systems.

Archives, in whatever material form, shape the kinds of historical narratives that historians write. For Assiniboine across their several reserves and between the multiple and distinct tribes that inhabit those reserves, a uniform set of protocols for producing and archiving Assiniboine histories that is applicable to all reserves and tribes is currently being scrutinized. Officials such as Courley Youpee (not interviewed) the Cultural Center Director for Fort Peck Tribes, and enrolled as a Minicoujou Hunkpapa, is one of a number of Northern Plains tribal curators who are pushing for standardized protocols for producing and archiving Indigenous histories. These protocols are currently being hotly debated by both tribal members and by university academics. Are protocols going to be administered by band councils or tribal governments?

This is just one of many open-ended questions that also involves financial support and professional training as well as vastly different opinions regarding assessing, recording, and preserving historical documents, and more generally speaking, cultural knowledge.

This may be why Robert Four Star thinks there should be a central and international Assiniboine archive, which all Assiniboine people could access regardless of individual tribal council jurisdictions. The many answers to my last interview questions regarding official, tribally managed archives (cf. Appendix B, “Interview Questions,” #45-47) varied widely. There were those who felt that neither the college nor the tribe would be effective in protecting the documents and artefacts, and therefore those items should remain with families. Others asserted that the current archive being constructed at Fort Peck Community College should be as modern and professionally managed as possible. All seemed to agree, however, that Assiniboines should be

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22 I had a phone interview with Courley Youpee during my summer 2012 research.
23 Note to the reader: in Canada, First Nations’ governing councils are typically called band councils, whereas in the United States, they are typically called tribal governments.
24 Robert Four Star, Interview #3, July 9, 2012, in the home of Larry Smith, Wolf Point, MT.
managing their own archives of documents, digital recordings, and artefacts rather than having them housed in large American or Canadian repositories or at other foreign institutions.

Archives are sites that reveal contested power relationships between groups and individuals; these sites determine both controlling authority and methods of preservation. In Archive Stories (2005), Antoinette Burton organized and edited an anthology of informative essays that examine archives as sites of unequal power relationships in regards to claims of “truth” found by evidentiary sources. Some of these essays address Indigenous sovereignty claims against nation states, from British Columbia to New Zealand. In her introduction, Burton states that the essays in her anthology discuss archiving and archives, with the intention of having them raise “… provocative questions about the nature and use of archives and the stories they have to tell, not just about the past, but in and for the future as well.”25 Burton argues that there are multiple ways of examining the “… limits and possibilities of the archive as a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history,” because political, social, and cultural outcomes for living people and future generations are at stake: what counts as evidentiary truth is embedded in diverse cultural contexts or contested systems of meaning.26 Following Burton’s ideas about archival power, this dissertation examines who is sufficiently qualified to be an archivist for the Assiniboine people.

Indigenous peoples, broadly speaking, have various reasons for maintaining their own histories. For Indigenous peoples, such as the Assiniboine, alternative reasons for telling their histories are apparent in what Assiniboine call Coyote or trickster stories. These stories are usually told to explain what happened before, during, and after the earliest encounters with European and American settlers from a uniquely Assiniboine perspective. For Assiniboine, the point of many of their stories (and historical narratives) is an open-ended sacred mystery called dagu wakan shka shka (what moves-shakes sacred). Stories about the past often have spiritual significance to Assiniboine communities, because they contain values about their origins and future possibilities. For

26 Burton, Archive Stories, 2.
example when Assiniboine veterans return from a war, such as the recent war in Iraq, they tell their stories in ceremonies in order to both heal and to promote the importance of culture and life from an Assiniboine perspective.

“Bodies of cultural knowledge,” a phrase I use throughout this dissertation, also requires a definition. Bodies of cultural knowledge are conveyed for particular audiences through stories: narratives that emanate from, and inform, Assiniboine communities. What makes stories vehicles for cultural knowledge necessitates an explanation of the concept of “culture” in relation to Assiniboine communities. In the “Introduction: Partial Truths” to Writing Culture (1986), James Clifford argues for multi-vocal and hybrid narratives that reflect on the authorial role of the narrator. Clifford’s approach to writing historical cultural narratives considers “culture” as a relational process in constant flux. Clifford describes the concept of culture as, “an inscription of communicative processes that exist, historically, between subjects in relations of power.”

Who controls the narrative is important in relation to both the subject of the narrative and the narrative’s intended audience – the communities of the author, as well as the communities that the author’s narrative informs and from which it emerged. This precept may also be applied to rethinking what archiving does for a people in terms of cultural continuity. To consider a more complex Indigenous cultural perspective, rather than thinking of Assiniboine culture as a fixed, bounded, or uniform way of being, the research here centers on multivalent, – to use Clifford’s terms “polyvocal” – Assiniboine voices in regards to their perspectives on archiving bodies of cultural knowledge.

In one example discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I describe an observation of an Assiniboine individual who exchanged a digitally recorded song in return for the gift of an eagle feather bonnet. This event exemplifies the multiple layers of what it means for an Assiniboine person to archive. In this example, the physical archives existed as well as the meaning conveyed by those archives. The archives as objects in this example included the living physical bodies of the person singing the song as well as the listeners, and the physical objects such as the bonnet and the recorder. The meaning


28 Clifford, Writing, 15. Clifford calls these multiple, often contrasting views “polyvocal” narratives.
archived by this exchange included the immaterial body of knowledge conveyed by the meaning of the song as well as the affective experiences and memories of the people who did the exchange.

I describe the archiving examined in this dissertation as a process of having the power, ability, and authority to keep bodies of knowledge both maintained and made accessible over time for a community of people who share common cultural values and practices. Jim Shanley, the recently retired president of Fort Peck Community College, was one of the main leaders that supported the construction of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Archive. Even so, he stated that even though literally tons of paper from the tribal government would be stored there, this archive could not preserve everything: “not everything can be saved … ‘X’ number of tons of paper per year will go into that archive.”

Just as histories cannot be written about everything that happened in a peoples’ past, archives cannot preserve everything or contain all information about all events; just as historians select the documents and evidence they examine for their narratives, documents and artefacts undergo assessment and accession by archivists.

Anita Scheetz, the Director of the Fort Peck Community College Library, and who manages the new archive, also stated that there was a lot of controversy about what should or should not be stored in the new tribally managed archive, as well as who should be in charge of it. While it is important for Assiniboine and Sioux to have a state of the art tribally managed archive, however, the power to manage, store, and preserve tribal records and cultural bodies of knowledge will continue to be contested and necessarily remain incomplete for very practical reasons. Even so, having a “state of the art” archive, according to Scheetz, is critical for Indigenous peoples, in this case Assiniboine and Sioux at Fort Peck. As Derrida explains the etymology of archiving in the introduction to *Archive Fever* (1998):

> … the meaning of “archive” … comes to it from the Greek archaios: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent law.

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29 Interview with James Shanley, June 19, 2012, at his home in Poplar, Montana. See James Shanley biography in Appendices A.

30 Interview with Anita Scheetz, June 26, 2012, at the Fort Peck Community College Library. See Anita Scheetz biography in Appendices A.

Derrida claims in his first footnote: “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”

Derrida discusses the genealogy of how people think about archiving, their mentality as a process, the question of why they choose to archive, and the how they archive, in terms of secured storage lockers in buildings: the institutions of archives and the law. Though this dissertation is not hyper-focused on the political implications of national or state run storage lockers as archives as Derrida laid out, it does follow Derrida’s suggestion to explore the mentality of archiving: I examine alternative methods of why and how Assiniboine have chosen to archive, as well as when and where they have chosen to do so in the past.

Settler societies collected information about Assiniboine in order to organize land dispossession, the fur trade, and national expansion; this was an attempt to understand, assimilate, and dominate Assiniboine (and other Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains). Underlying this investigation of archiving, I conceive of the first wave of ethnographers and cartographers, and their historical productions, as well as the settler archives and museums that contain Assiniboine objects, as an attempt to capture, comprehend, and manage Assiniboine cultural beliefs and practices in relation to the modern American and Canadian nation states. These objects demonstrate how settlers came to know Indigenous people of what is now called the North American Plains through art, maps, journals, photos, but also how they were unable to understand or see what these “signs and symbols” meant for the Assiniboine themselves.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the late-twentieth century American, Canadian, and other Western explorers, artists, fur traders, government agents, ethnographers, and settlers collected, archived, and exhibited Assiniboine artefacts and

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information. Prior to the nineteenth century, from the first contact with European powers, such as in present-day Peru by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, colonial explorers collected artefacts and information about the Indigenous peoples they colonized. Even a brief review of this history shows many instances of animosity: a historical legacy of extraction, exploitation, and misinformation exercised on Indigenous peoples by colonial regimes, national states, and collectors.34

Historical narratives – the productions of histories – are shaped in part by how archives and bodies of evidence were originally created, accessed, and controlled over time. As asserted in Trouillot’s deconstruction of the historiography regarding the Haitian revolution, *Silencing the Past* (1995): “Historical narratives are premised on previous understandings, which are themselves premised on the distribution of archival power.”35 Trouillot argues that historians should recognize that the facts “reflect differential control of the means of historical production at the very first engraving that transforms an event into a fact.”36 He goes on to highlight four “crucial moments” in producing a history, from the creation of a source, the placing of that source into an archive – including the construction of that archive – the transmission of that source into narrative form, and the retrospective importance placed on that narrative by a community – “the making of history in the final instance.”37 Dale White, one of my consultants, informed me that he researched Charles Larpenteur’s (May 8, 1803 – November 15, 1872) journal records in the Fort Union archives in order to get a sense of how his ancestors conducted ceremonies, interacted between bands and with other tribes, and dealt with the new settlers in their territory.38 Throughout this dissertation I show several examples of how Assiniboines have engaged with settler archives to find connections between their own oral histories and written texts and the histories collected by fur traders, photographers,

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36 Trouillot, *Silencing*, 49.
government agents, and ethnographers housed in national, state, or local archive repositories.\textsuperscript{39}

As I focus on Indigenous intentions to keep their bodies of cultural knowledge alive, in order to archive those bodies in different ways, I draw from the work of scholars who have analyzed settler archival power. Following Trouillot’s critique of the archived past, Ann Stoler, in her \textit{Along the Archival Grain} (2009), examines the Dutch East Indies colonial archive.\textsuperscript{40} Stoler reveals colonial Dutch anxieties regarding archiving “facts” versus “fictions” about the Indigenous peoples they colonized, their concerns over the mixing of races, and the suppression of potential insurrections. She discusses the limits of examining archives as mere collections of historical “facts.” Stoler defined “archiving-as-process rather than archives-as-things,” regarding archives as “condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety.”\textsuperscript{41} Stoler applies a cultural analysis of archives to show the frailties in colonial knowledge production; for example, officials’ marks written in the margins of documents reveal hesitancy, fragility, and urgency. In sum, Stoler shows the historical uncertainty of colonization found in colonial produced “facts” and “knowledge.” In this dissertation, I address a similar concern over the retention of bodies of cultural knowledge, or archival processes, not regarding colonial methods of control, but as it is specifically found in Assiniboine community contexts. Similar to Stoler, I inspect the “archival grain,” though the woods that I examine are distinctly different from those of Stoler: the woods that I study are not only documents, but also oral stories about sacred sites, ceremonies, and also the material possessions of artworks and ceremonial objects. I discuss Assiniboine cultural practitioners who wished to maintain bodies of cultural knowledge, not for power over another subordinate group, as was the case in the Dutch colonial archives, but for Assiniboine future generations of cultural practitioners. Thus seen, Assiniboine “epistemic anxieties” are distinctly different from colonial concerns over knowledge management because they operate within categories of knowledge that are informed by the unique ways that the Assiniboine look at the world. Many contemporary Assiniboine cultural practitioners would like to see future

\textsuperscript{39} This includes what may be found on the Internet, a lot of which is pretty amazing to witness.
\textsuperscript{41} Stoler, \textit{Along}, 20.
Assiniboines practice ancient Assiniboine bodies of wisdom about their relationships to animals, plants, the weather, moon, stars, and other human beings. In order for that to happen, they wish to transmit that knowledge from one generation to the next utilizing a pantheon of Assiniboine categories of knowledge and ways of being.

To better understand Indigenous methods of archiving as distinct from the Western methodologies of organizing and sustaining histories, I draw from postcolonial debates about “subaltern pasts.” According to Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* (2000), subaltern pasts are explained with the terms of a supernatural, non-secular dimension defined by distinct cultural contexts. The stories that cultural historians have used to write their narratives often contain different perspectives. Western secular perspectives often contrast with the sacred views of marginalized peoples, or what Chakrabarty calls “subaltern pasts,” which are distinct from minority histories. I avoid assimilating Assiniboine sacred views, such as the power of prayer, into the Western linear secular model of thinking. Instead, I describe Assiniboine archival intentions with an emphasis on their own voices, speaking from within their own cultural frameworks, such as the importance of transmitting a song from one practitioner to another.

Chakrabarty defines Western history as a discipline as “History 1,” and subaltern pasts as “History 2.” He argues that subaltern pasts are told within distinct cultural meaning systems, such as spiritual beliefs, and those spiritual beliefs cannot be entirely explained by the logic of Western history as a discipline. Yet, contemporary cultural historians are trained to follow certain rules maintained by the Western historical discipline. For instance, in order for historical narratives to be understood as more than mere fictions, historians examine the verifiability of bodies of evidence to analyze cultural transformations in societies over time. A cultural historian might study evidence that is informed by spiritual beliefs of a cultural system that contradicts other bodies of

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43 Chakrabarty *Provincializing Europe*, 106. Chakrabarty describes “subaltern pasts” as, “constructions of historicity that help us see the limits to modes of viewing enshrined in the practices of the discipline of history.”
44 Chakrabarty’s “History 1” (the discipline of Western history) and “History 2” (subaltern pasts) are quite different from Trouillot’s “History 1” (the past) and “History 2” (narratives about the past). For a comparison between the concepts of “History 1” and “History 2” see Trouillot’s *Silencing*, 29.
evidence that he or she analyzes. Therefore, Chakrabarty claims that subaltern pasts show “plural ways of being” in the world that resist the hegemony of modern Western historical consciousness. I agree with Chakrabarty regarding how subaltern pasts often resist Western logic concerning what counts as “real” history. Nevertheless, I part ways with Chakrabarty’s assertion about the “mutual incomprehensibility” between subaltern pasts and Western history to instead claim that a historian immersed for several years experientially in particular subaltern communities may be better equipped to interpret and translate the two different systems of meaning. This assumption implies that a “History 3” may exist – a space between History 1 and History 2, where there exists some degree of mutual comprehension between the two very different ways of being, and their respective methodologies of constructing knowledge about the past.

Supernatural explanations of how events of the past happened, and why they matter, seriously contrast with contemporary Western secular logic practiced in the discipline of history. My approach to Indigenous pasts as different “historicity(s),” as demonstrated in this dissertation, assumes that different local cultures have different ways of acquiring, creating, and sustaining knowledge about the past. Simply put, I resist a flattening of diversity by an over-application of Western logic to explain why Assiniboines acted as they did in the past.

I use Chakrabarty’s idea of History 1 and History 2 to posit Archiving 1 as the Western sense of storage processing, and Archiving 2 as alternative Indigenous methods. Different from Chakrabarty though, I assume that the Assiniboine ways of preserving their perspectives of the past for present and future Assiniboine communities are not incommensurable with Western methods; instead, potential modes of reciprocity exist. Through years of ceremonial participation, the study of Assiniboine history and language, unique Assiniboine methods of archiving are fully examined and discussed in this dissertation.

I seek to understand and interpret what the Assiniboine say about settlers’ paintings, maps, collected objects, and texts, as well as the archives that contain them, in order to expose the tension, but also the potential reciprocity with settler historical

47 I call these different ways of thinking, experiencing, and writing (or producing) narratives about the past different “historicity(s).”
construction and archival concerns. The colonial/settler discourse about Assiniboine history contrasts with how Assiniboines were keeping their knowledge of these events through their own oral traditions, rock drawings, tibi covers, and ceremonial activities, such as the Medicine Lodge. Assiniboine cultural practitioners as knowledge-keepers and activists, along with their allies, transformed this antagonistic relationship into one that has supported efforts by Assiniboine communities to keep their bodies of knowledge alive for future generations.

My dissertation addresses the conflicted dynamic between cultural loss and continuity by looking at collections of Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge and how Assiniboine cultural practitioners sustained some bodies of cultural knowledge while others were lost. I place emphasis on what Assiniboine say about their historical experience with American and Canadian colonization. I also focus on their particular ways of archiving historical and cultural knowledge: I contrast Assiniboine perspectives of archiving with what settler society has collected and said about Assiniboine culture and history, and then explicate the differences between these recounting. This historical investigation of archiving Assiniboine knowledge illustrates relationships that range from animosity to reciprocity between Assiniboine and settlers regarding what it means to archive Assiniboine knowledge. My work fully acknowledges the existence of multiple audiences, internal and external, for the telling of Assiniboine histories. I use the term reciprocity, rather than auto-ethnography or transculturation, to identify the moments of giving and receiving bodies of knowledge in a two-way direction found between settlers and Assiniboine people. These moments of mutual exchange stand in stark contrast to the more violent instances where settlers engaged in extractive archiving of Assiniboine bodies of knowledge without their consent.

Assiniboine have their own ways of understanding their past, sustaining their cultural practices, and archiving their systems of knowledge. From the reservation period in the late nineteenth century to the present, the Assiniboine have produced textual and visual representations of their past and engaged in embodied practices as an Indigenous

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48 In Assiniboine the word for lodge or tipi is “tibi”; on the lodge’s hide covers, Assiniboine artists would use pictographs to record important events and personal stories; I discuss this in Chapter 6.
49 See Mary Louise Pratt’s definitions of auto-ethnography and transculturation in “Arts of the Contact Zone,” in David Bartholomae and Tony Petrosky, eds. Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2005), 517-534.
form of archiving cultural knowledge through ceremonial gatherings. These gatherings have occurred in specific places across nine reservations on the North American Plains before, during, and since American and Canadian settlement.

My intention here is to contribute to the field of Indigenous studies and histories by clarifying our understanding of archival processes in both the conventional Western sense and in diverse Indigenous epistemologies. This dissertation examines archives as bodies of cultural knowledge, archiving as an action of preservation, and Assiniboine cultural practitioners as archivists or what I call keepers of cultural knowledge. I intend to reveal more about how archives, ways of archiving, and archivists shape historical narratives and cultural practices for particular audiences in the complex relationships of power found between Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine people.

While Indigenous management of conventional libraries, museums, and archives are integral for cultural sustainability and sovereignty for Assiniboine, and Indigenous Peoples more broadly, the conventional storage model is inadequate as a sole device to preserve cultural knowledge. Throughout this dissertation I examine Assiniboine archiving as a set of interrelated processes. This is an important lens into this period of Assiniboine history because it reveals how some cultural bodies of knowledge were sustained. I seek to understand how the Assiniboine sustained and archived their cultural knowledge from the reservation period at the end of the nineteenth century to the present in order to contribute to a nascent theory of Indigenous archiving.

In each chapter, I apply a three-pronged argument. First, I suggest that the Assiniboine have employed a constellation of Indigenous archival processes that, in particular instances, worked in synchronicity in sustaining a degree of Assiniboine cultural identities, cosmologies, and a sense of peoplehood that has both undergone change and experienced continuity over time. Second, I show that this constellation of archival processes mitigated previous damage caused by the ways of collecting by settlers, including those methods used in the disciplines of anthropology and history, the universities that house them, and colonial museums and national archives. Third, I demonstrate that these ways of archiving show the potential for Indigenous peoples to work with settler archives to support their own cultural preservation and to decolonize
settler efforts through reciprocal relations (repatriation, managing or working with exhibitions), such as tribally managed archives and museums.

**Methodology**

In the summer of 2012, while shopping in Foodland, the local grocery store at Wolf Point, I ran into an old friend from the Medicine Lodge and Bison Camp, Lucy Reddekopp. She asked me what I was doing there, and I told her my story. That summer I conducted the main body of my research, recording and transcribing oral history interviews. Several individuals have a trusting relationship with me regarding what and how I research, and how I go about writing Assiniboine cultural history. These individuals had given their consent to be interviewed because of their strong interest in keeping Assiniboine cultural knowledge alive for future generations. I was not an unknown newcomer doing research on the Assiniboine. After reading my consent forms and introduction letter, Lucy Reddekopp also agreed to be interviewed; she invited me over to her home at the northern edge of town in Wolf Point for a delicious dinner made from scratch. This familiarity, trust, and generosity shown to me by interviewees was essential to my research, and made possible from my involvement in Assiniboine communities since the invitations in 1996.

In addition to my 16 years of experience while immersed in Assiniboine cultural practices as a participant and in my work in education including as a teacher in Native schools, I completed two masters’ theses, one in Education about the Bison Camp project, and another in Humanities about Assiniboine history and self-identity. Over the last five years I have conducted extensive archival research and oral interviews, the main body of research for this current dissertation. I carried out research in Washington, D.C. in June of 2010 under a fellowship from the Tribal Heritage Research Project, as a Fellow and founding member of the Association of Tribal Archives Libraries and Museums, at the National Archives, the National Gallery, and the Smithsonian Institution Archives, including the Cultural Anthropology Archives and the National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. I also researched Canadian expedition journals and Assiniboine texts at the Newberry Library during my 2010 Summer Institute fellowship at the Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

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50 Interview with Lucy Reddekopp, June 27, 2012, in her home at Wolf Point, Montana.
In order to represent multiple and diverse Assiniboine perspectives on cultural knowledge and practices, history-making, and archival practices, by September of 2012, I had conducted 24 interviews of 22 individuals.\textsuperscript{51} Two of these interviews were video recorded, while the rest were audio recorded with a digital recorder. I designed 46 questions for my interviews that touched upon the various themes of the chapters (see Appendix B). The individuals who I interviewed came from at least five different reservations as well as others who were living off the reserves. They included eleven men and nine women, and multiple generations ranging in age from their 30s to the 90s. My aim was to emphasize oral history and oral traditions alongside documentary archival research as one aspect of Indigenous ways of archiving historical and cultural knowledge.

Almost all of the people that I interviewed stated that the Assiniboine language was the most important cultural practice to preserve and maintain, and should be incorporated in schools as much as possible. In addition, my Assiniboine consultants advocated for literacy in English and other European or foreign languages, which they said should be acquired within their own self-determined educational models. Though language revitalization programs have emerged at Fort Peck and Fort Belknap and on Canadian Assiniboine reserves, Assiniboine as a vibrant language has been in danger of becoming extinct in recent decades. Paradoxically, education and literacy, the tools used to “kill the Indian and save the man” in the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{52} became the weapon to protect cultural knowledge for future generations when put in Indigenous hands in the late twentieth century. Assiniboine language programs are currently taught at the tribal colleges and in schools in varying degrees.

Many interviewees also reported that some bodies of cultural knowledge, about specific places or ancestors or ceremonies, were not to be exposed in order to avoid exploitation. In several instances – before, during, or after the interviews I conducted – interviewees would tell me things “off the record.” In this work I have remained true to my word: I do not expose any confidential information without expressed permission.

\textsuperscript{51} Brief biographies of the interviewees, interview questions, introduction letters and consent forms are included in Appendix (A-C) of this dissertation.

In addition to digitally recording interviews and taking digital photographs, I also took field notes about my observations of certain cultural practices, such as gathering medicine (plants), of ceremonies that were allowable to be documented, or social gatherings, such as tribal meetings or local powwows. I also recorded daily life routines, such as gathering firewood, mending fence, or socializing in peoples’ homes in my notebooks.

While recording interviews I took notes about the location, time of day, and what the interviewees said; I also had a separate section for my own thoughts regarding each interview, so as to discriminate between what I subjectively observed and what I described objectively. This was helpful in distinguishing between inside and outside understandings of symbolic meanings. My interviews often took place in-between participation in activities, such as a Medicine Lodge, or more simple social visits while sitting around a kitchen table in someone’s home. After each day of interviews I summarized my experiences and observations, describing the people, places, and homes I visited.

In the summer of 2012 I conducted the main body of my research and recorded 22 additional interviews. I rented a small, white Ford Fiesta in Billings, Montana. From June 11 to July 11 I covered over 3,000 miles from Wolf Point, Montana at Fort Peck Reservation, and visited five additional reservations, including Carry the Kettle, Pheasant’s Rump and White Bear in Saskatchewan, and Fort Belknap in Montana. Coincidentally, I also visited three Medicine Lodges along the way. On the trips that I took from Wolf Point to Canada and Fort Belknap, Robert Four Star traveled with me as my guide. As Robert is respected throughout Assiniboine country, he was an essential connection for my research. He helped me connect to people and often allowed us to find the quickest routes—often on gravel roads—between reservations. Robert was often asked to share songs at reservation ceremonies. In fact, traveling with Robert to conduct research and visit relatives was the highlight of my trip: it was both an honour and a privilege. Traveling between reservations and reserves remains one of my most

informative practices and favourite things, just as we often had done with Oliver, Larry Smith, and others when I lived at Wolf Point between 1996 and 1998. I refer to these trips and the interviews throughout the chapters that follow.

I draw several principles from Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), which informs my research regarding specific Indigenous knowledge tied to sacred or spiritual or religious understanding, in my case, with the Assiniboine. Doing research as both an insider and outsider both complicates and focuses this dissertation. Dealing with sacred matters requires special caution. Smith clarifies that:

Many indigenous researchers have struggled individually to engage with the disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other indigenous communities, with whom they share lifelong relationships on the other side. 54

Keeping this in mind, it is still important to address the non-dualistic sense of sacredness found in Indigenous worldviews.

Sometimes Indigenous values expressed as “sacred” in their worldviews are incommensurable with Western secular views, while at other times they are mutually reinforced and understood. In either circumstance, the importance of taking Indigenous sensibilities of sacredness seriously stands firm, as is the case with Assiniboine perspectives: wakán means to be sacred and mysterious. As Smith asserts:

The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept…the different world views and alternative ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the indigenous world. Concepts of spirituality which Christianity attempted to destroy, then to appropriate, and then to claim, are critical sites of resistance for indigenous people. 55

Throughout my experiences of becoming an Assiniboine cultural practitioner, before I would learn something new or ask a question to seek advice, elders like Robert Four Star would first ask me, “Do you respect these ways?” My answer has always been, and shall always be, an affirmative hã (yes).

54 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1999), 5. Smith goes on to say something that could not be closer to the truth: “indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity” (v).

55 Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 74.
For the Indigenous researcher, this idea of “respect” is a central principle, as Smith also highlights in “Ethical Research Protocols,” when she translates the first of seven Maori phrases that inculcate Maori values: “Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for the people).” Further, Smith states that, “The term ‘respect’ is consistently used by Indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity.”

When analyzed for research purposes, these Indigenous relationships to a sense of sacredness or territory, according to Smith, must be understood from Indigenous-centered worldviews—Maori in her case, and Assiniboine for my work here. As Smith states: “Although many people would argue that, under the influence of the colonial society, much of this tradition has been eroded, there is still a strong belief held by many Maori people that there is a uniquely ‘Maori’ way of looking at the world and learning.”

As is the case for the Maori, Smith’s point holds true for the Assiniboine. There are several words for “respect” in Assiniboine: ahógipa means to have religious respect for ceremony, wakan means sacred, snonya means to know, and wachaga means a way of life, or way of doing things.

One of the ways that this dissertation takes Assiniboine worldviews seriously is by respecting nondisclosure and their own unique protocols. From Smith’s work I have learned that Indigenous research (whether the researcher is Indigenous or not) requires a critical approach to the relationship between Western assumptions, specifically regarding knowledge acquisition, and Indigenous systems of knowledge formation, particularly in terms of who has the authority to determine degrees of validity. As Smith states, “The different ways in which knowledge is perceived by Indigenous and non-Indigenous is complicated further by the intersection with imperial power.”

The attention on power over knowledge production, preservation, and maintenance is another principle that I draw from Smith. The issue is not just incommensurability, but rather, that dominant Western historical research must both respect and acknowledge the validity of Indigenous world views, often including a sense of sacredness, from Indigenous-centered perspectives.

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56 Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, 120.
57 Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, 174.
58 Ibid
59 I am going to expand on the idea of “archival power” using the work of Michel Truillot and Ann Stoler, Jacques Derrida, and others.
Assiniboine individuals express perspectives of sacredness that are also dispersed, shared, and dependent on specialists within communities not confined by reservation boundaries. As Smith states for the Maori:

By asserting the validity of Maori knowledge, Maori people have reclaimed greater control over the research which is being carried out in the Maori field. ‘Traditional’ world views provide an historical example of the complexity of Maori beliefs and understandings of the world. They also provide ample examples of Maori efforts to seek knowledge, to organize it and to learn from it.  

In this dissertation I use this principle to represent Assiniboine-centered perspectives. At the same time, this dissertation acknowledges that different perspectives between insiders and outsiders do exist. And further, different people within Assiniboine communities may not see eye to eye. Tensions between different notions of archiving Indigenous cultural bodies of knowledge are found in the past and will most likely continue into the future.

What follows is a brief narrative outline of the chapters, structure, and organization of my dissertation. In each chapter, I focus on an artefact, object, or event and how that represents a larger discourse. Each section below gives a brief description of what I examine in that chapter, and explains how that chapter supports my central argument.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the stories told about Azana (In The Light), an Assiniboine leader who traveled to Washington in 1831, contrasting Assiniboine oral histories about him with those of non-Native narrative histories, including the journals and paintings by George Catlin. Catlin’s painting of Azana is the cover of Robert Berkhofer’s *The White Man’s Indian* and is still in circulation in textbooks and courses of Native American history. The records and paintings about Azana by non-Assiniboines and the oral histories told in the present about Azana by Assiniboines present different stories with divergent importance to Assiniboines and public audiences. Descendants of Azana still

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60 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 175.
tell stories orally and in writing (as some interviews have revealed, and as I discuss in Chapter 5 with Fire Bear, who wrote about his ancestor, Azana, in *Land of Nakoda* in 1942). Catlin’s painting of Azana, and the remembrances of him by Assiniboines, continue to produce historical knowledge about the Assiniboine, by the ways that the Assiniboine communities and the archives and museums of settler society record and promote this historical knowledge sits in contrast with one another. As I first started to unpack and write about Azana’s story, from the oral history to the written and art history about him, the chapters that follow seemed to organically grow and take on a life of their own.

In Chapter 3, I examine how Assiniboine archive, or preserve their cultural knowledge, through the embodied action of ceremonial practices while specifically focusing on the concept of performativity. This chapter focuses on how the Assiniboine Wiotijaka (Medicine Lodge) archives cultural knowledge. I analyze the kinaesthetic qualities of embodiment as a way to sustain memory by performing stories in order to show how ceremonial practices are a vital way of preserving cultural knowledge. I argue that ceremonies are internal performances that keep knowledge alive for Assiniboine people. Bodies in motion have specific meanings within Assiniboine cultural systems such as what direction a practitioner may face in a ceremony. I draw upon the archival theory that pertains to performativity from such scholars as Diana Taylor in her work *The Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), and Greg Dening in his book *Performances* (1996).

Even though the creation of reservations, land dispossession, and settlement was devastating for Assiniboine people, in Chapter 4, I explore how cultural knowledge preserved for the Assiniboine is archived in places both on and off reservations. When Assiniboine perform ceremonies, songs, stories, or gather plants, minerals, waters, or animals in specific locations, they bring cultural knowledge to life through embodied actions. For Assiniboine, places are living archives. This chapter explores Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock, two granite boulders on Highway 2 near Malta, Montana, as a place-based archive, focusing on territoriality as a theoretical concept. For archival theory as seen through the lens of territoriality, I draw on scholars such as Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among The Western Apache* (1996),
Thomas Thornton’s *Being and Place among the Tlingit* (2008), and Paul Nadasdy’s *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (2003).

In Chapter 5, I discuss how Assiniboine people have produced textual and visual histories as a way of archiving their cultural knowledge since 1942. This chapter examines the differences between textual historicity from Assiniboine perspectives compared to settler textual historicity, and how literacy informs, and is informed by, other mechanisms of Assiniboine archiving. Assiniboine individuals have used literacy in the form of written historical texts to record histories and cultural knowledge preserved in the other ways of archiving I discuss, such as oral tradition, ceremony, and place-based practices. These historical productions have countered the early- to mid-twentieth century American and Canadian goals of erasing Indigenous cultural knowledge through education and English literacy, as well as the misrepresentations and misappropriations by settler ethnographies and historical narratives. In some instances, these productions have worked in reciprocal relationships with settler archives, museums, libraries, and other institutions. Assiniboine-authored books demonstrate how Assiniboine scholars and cultural leaders have worked with non-Indigenous people and institutions to represent Assiniboine perspectives.

In Chapter 6, I investigate how, for Assiniboine, artwork is a profound way to keep cultural knowledge alive through its distribution and its storytelling locally, nationally, and globally. Some of those mediums of distribution include giveaways or powwows, but are also dispersed through the art-markets, galleries, books, and in museums, such as the National Museum of the American Indian. In this chapter, I will show how Assiniboine artists have archived their cultural knowledge, when they have chosen to present their artwork to other Assiniboine people internally, and also when they have shown the work to the general public. I focus on the concept of cosmopolitanism as a lens into how Assiniboine artists engage in archival work.

In Chapter 7, the Conclusion, I discuss how I imagine the constellation of archival methods to work. In addition, I discuss the significance of this project for Assiniboine peoples, other Indigenous peoples, and scholars of Indigenous studies. Finally, I highlight
my hope that this project might serve the interests of Assiniboines, and my wish that it may contribute to a nascent theory of Indigenous archiving.

Assiniboine management of their own archives is vital to their long-term goals of sustaining historical and cultural knowledge for future generations. Assiniboine tribal governments on the nine reserves (including the tribes that share those reserves, such as the Sioux at Fort Peck) will most likely gain significant power over their own historical materials and information by managing their own official archives. At the same time, throughout this dissertation, I argue that the storage-locker model archive is not fully sufficient to sustain the multiple bodies of cultural knowledge integral to being Assiniboine and in engaging in Assiniboine practices. The constellation of Indigenous ways of archiving that I describe throughout this dissertation —oral tradition, ceremony, territory, texts, and art— in relation to official archives-as-storage-lockers, serve particular Assiniboine audiences in different and unique ways, depending on a person’s gender, age, economic and political power, and their geographical location. There are gains and losses to each way of keeping knowledge alive for the Assiniboine people. The relationships between these different ways of archiving reveal moments ranging across a spectrum, from tension to synchronicity. I highlight these uncommon synchronicities, because they bolster one another, whereas alone they are each insufficient to sustain Assiniboine cultural knowledge.

As this dissertation attempts to show, Assiniboine oral tradition often takes place in ceremonies, sometimes about or in specific places, and these events are occasionally recorded in written texts and artwork. In this way, these ways of archiving work together. Despite the tremendous negative impact of poverty, disease, and neglect caused by American and Canadian colonization, Assiniboines resisted the loss of cultural knowledge and practices through several kinds of archiving. These various ways of sustaining knowledge under duress should be considered alternative ways of archiving, such as through oral tradition, ceremonies, conducting ceremonies in specific places, writing histories, and artwork. These ways of archiving were used in various combinations by Assiniboine to keep cultural bodies of knowledge alive for future generations.
Chapter 2: Azana (The Light), 1832, and the Present

The Nakonabi are a people that have lived in this region for generations, and live by origin stories that help them relate to the world around them and to their own cultural existence.
- Robert Four Star, 2002.63

Indigenous stories of contact recenter familiar stories of discovery, conflict, acculturation, and resistance. The line between myth and history can no longer be drawn along a border between Western and non-Western epistemologies.
- James Clifford.64

As part of my initial induction into Assiniboine societies, when I first moved in 1996 to Wolf Point on the Fort Peck Reservation, I listened to elders tell oral histories about their ancestors. After living there for several months, Robert Four Star told me one of these important histories that provided me with cultural knowledge as to whom the Assiniboine were and how they saw their role in the larger history of North America.65

This story was about an important Assiniboine leader named Azana (In The Light), who journeyed to Washington, D.C. in 1831. He witnessed the rise of American power due to industrialization and returned home to tell his people what he had seen.66 Robert Four Star and I were driving north to a family ceremonial gathering at Carry the Kettle, an Assiniboine reserve in Saskatchewan, when he told me Azana’s story. In the following narrative I am paraphrasing Robert Four Star’s version from memory as he originally conveyed it to me.67

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63 In 2002, the traditional chief of the Red Bottom (a band of Assiniboine, self-identified as Nakona or Nakonabi), Robert Four Star, declared this to a gathering of his people. He is a keeper of traditions, such as songs, history, language, and ceremonies. He is also an instructor in Native American studies and the Assiniboine language at Fort Peck Community College.
66 Azana or Azan-zan-na (Ah-jon-na or Ah-jon-jon-na) means ‘In the Light’ or ‘The Light’ in Assiniboine, though there are different names and translations used by various people in my examination. Robert Four Star told me that the correct name is Azana. As you read through this chapter it will become clear why I chose Azana or Azan-zan-na.
67 There is no way to tell for certain how much of this story he remembered from the oral tradition passed on from his elders or from the history written by his predecessors. I argue that this is not important, because what they are doing when they tell their stories is being in the world on their own self-determined terms. I will examine the significance of this action elsewhere in this dissertation.
In 1831, 27 years after Lewis and Clark’s expedition, 68 Azana left Fort Union, in present day North Dakota, and journeyed to Washington, D.C. He met with and received gifts from President Andrew Jackson. Azana was a tribal leader, but not a chief. He was, however, the son of an important Assiniboine chief named Iron Arrow Point. Azana had a reputation for restoring order around the Fort Union Trading Post, and was respected for his good deeds by the fur trader Edwin Thompson Denig, as well as by his Native people. 69 As a result of this respect, he was selected by a U.S. military official to be escorted to Washington to see the capital and to meet President Jackson. On his journey to Washington, Azana and company travelled south by a mackinaw boat toward St. Louis, down the winding Missouri River, or as some Indigenous people called it, the Mini-Shoshu (Muddy Water). 70 Along the way, Azana made notches on his staff for every settler’s house he saw. After he had marked the full length of his staff along the four sides, he gathered sticks from the shore to continue to keep count. As they approached the city of St. Louis there were so many houses, thousands in fact, that he finally gave up and threw all of his sticks into the river. From St. Louis he travelled by train to D.C. Once there, the Americans showed him around the capital, where he saw their cannons, ships, horse-drawn carts, massive buildings, and streets. He wore his finest Assiniboine buckskin regalia. President Andrew Jackson, the famous “Indian Fighter,” gave him many gifts, including a presidential medallion. After several weeks in the capital he returned home along the same route by which he had come.

When Azana arrived home he told his people about his journey and his encounters with the “White Man.” The things he described to them seemed beyond their belief. In fact, after hearing his stories, some of his people thought he had become a “wakan sija wichasha” (bad medicine-man). Eventually, a few individuals decided that he was just a

68 With the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the Americans bought a huge tract of land from the French that spanned lands from the Mississippi River west to the Continental divide, and from New Orleans north to present-day Canada.

69 I tell this story as I heard it the first time, so, in addition, I also include both primary and secondary evidence in footnotes that support the oral history. These are primary sources that give contextual history from the non-Assiniboine perspective, and for the purposes of the trading fort at the time on behalf of the American Fur Company. See Edwin Thompson Denig, The Assiniboine: Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928-1929 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). See also Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, John C. Ewers, ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

70 The mackinaw boat, used in this period of the river based fur trade, was modeled on the Native American canoe and designed with an additional small sail, mast, and removable centerboard in the hull for stability.
lier. After several months, a young warrior, who was jealous of Azana, decided to test whether or not Azana was a true medicine man. In the dark of night, the man fired a pistol loaded with a broken panhandle from outside of Azana’s “tibi” (lodge) at his the shadow cast by Azana by the firelight inside while he was smoking his pipe. The panhandle shot through the walls of the tibi into the back of his head, killing him instantly. The tribe buried him inside a tree. According to John C. Ewers, writing in the 1960s, at some point the traders at the fort cut off his head and shipped it to St. Louis, probably for scientific study. No one seems to know what happened to his skull after that.

When I heard this for the first time, I imagined an adventurous Assiniboine traveller, acquiring knowledge of strangers’ ways, and returning home to tell his people about the marvels he had witnessed. I imagined his experiences while in D.C. Being a tourist there was the opposite experience of tourists visiting Indian Country. When Azana saw the ships with the cannons, the artillery, and the city of Washington itself, possibly – even probably – it was a kind of foreign wonder to him. He was a free agent to take the gifts given to him, and when he came home, he simply told what he had seen; perhaps he bragged about his achievements. He seemed to be an intelligent man who gained foresight when seeing American power firsthand, and then understanding its implications for his people. This oral history told to me by Robert Four Star was unlike the descriptions I would later read in the history texts written about him. He was an Assiniboine ambassador, ethnographer, and dignitary who told his stories about American settlers long before America engulfed Assiniboine lands. A decade after originally hearing the story about Azana from Robert Four Star, I read non-Assiniboine historiography and narratives about Azana and the Assiniboine people. In the course of my research I discovered that non-Assiniboine historians and ethnographers had archived Assiniboine history in quite a different way than the Assiniboine oral tradition.

My impressions after hearing this story for the first time contrasted with the non-Assiniboine-produced images of Azana and the historiography about him. These non-Assiniboine images and texts became part of the non-Indigenous archived bodies of

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knowledge about Assiniboine history. This non-Assiniboine body of knowledge emphasizes the role of American westward expansion on Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains, rather than the agency of Azana, and the Assiniboine person. Early non-Indigenous ethnographers, explorers, and artists who collected and fed colonial and national archives with interpretations, images, and information about the Assiniboine people felt they had a moral need to archive based on their assumption that Indigenous peoples’ original cultural knowledge would ultimately not survive. Yet, even today, Indigenous peoples keep stories about their ancestors alive through the oral tradition, as an on-going process. This way contrasts starkly with the non-Indigenous purpose of archiving images and texts as products about Indigenous people and their cultural objects for non-Indigenous audiences, and for posterity.

The differences between the two archival aims have implications for how scholars think about Western-style archiving when compared to the oral tradition, which is one Indigenous way of archiving. The non-Assiniboine’s process of collecting, archiving, and historicizing Indigenous knowledge, such as their “facts” about Azana, and Assiniboine history more broadly, portrays a narrative perspective that tends to focus on declination or elevation within larger national, American or Canadian discourse. The Assiniboine (or Indigenous) oral tradition, as one of a number of ways of keeping their bodies of cultural knowledge alive, serves the purpose of sustaining their agency, and their collective community identity alive, from one generation to the next. Non-Indigenous archiving, on the other hand, seems to focus on static products that are preserved and controlled for posterity, so that they can be read and interpreted by individual scholars. In contrast, Indigenous knowledge keeping through the oral tradition seems to focus on the processes between storytellers and audiences in specific community cultural contexts, so that stories take on a less controlled life of their own. Examining the settler form of archiving in contrast with the Indigenous oral tradition gives a more nuanced and broader view of Indigenous histories. I am convinced that beyond categories of race and blood, without bodies of cultural knowledge and the practices that sustain those bodies, the Assiniboine may cease to exist as a distinct people. As confirmed by the majority of my interviewees, this is why it is so important that the Assiniboine language and their historical stories need to be voiced by storytellers and absorbed by their peers and the youth.
Indigenous peoples continue to tell their own versions of history through the oral tradition as a way of keeping cultural knowledge alive. Oral tradition depends on a teller, a listener, a context, and a story that merge together in a specific moment of time. Stories require listeners in a locational context, such as in the teller’s home, or out on the land, where the stories first originated, for the story to take on a life of its own. When oral history works with either non-Indigenous or Indigenous art or texts, the storyteller maintains a body of cultural knowledge, even more so than using the oral tradition, a piece of art, or a text by itself.

A comparison of Western archived knowledge, in the form of historical documents, and Indigenous oral accounts reveals issues of difference in interpretations that are embedded in dissimilar symbolic systems of meaning. The Assiniboine oral tradition, as a shared process of telling and listening in specific locational contexts, informs what the Assiniboine people did to shape history, rather than what was “done to them,” as archived in texts and images produced by non-Assiniboine. While Western historians still privilege the written record and archeological and ethnographic data over Indigenous oral traditions, there remains much to be gained by using all possible available sources. In her essay “Discovery of Gold on the Klondike: Perspectives from Oral Tradition,” (2003), Julie Cruikshank argues:

Both [oral and written sources] have to be understood as windows on the way the past is constructed and discussed in different contexts, from the perspectives of actors enmeshed in culturally distinct networks of social relationships. All societies have characteristic narrative structures that help members construct and maintain knowledge of the world.

Cruikshank counters the assumption that written documents support “official history” on the one hand, and that the oral tradition is merely an ingredient in “collective memory.”

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73 Cruikshank’s analysis of a late-nineteenth century Klondike gold rush reveals divergent purposes between Euro-Canadian archival documents and oral tradition practiced by local Indigenous groups, such as the Tagish. Specifically, she emphasizes the agency of Tagish stories maintained about family claims to Skookum Jim. See Julie Cruikshank, “Discovery of Gold in on the Klondike: Perspectives from Oral Tradition,” in Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History, Jennifer S. H. Brown, and Elizabeth Vibert, Editors, (Peterborough, Ont. [u.a.]: Broadview Press, 2003), 438.
What is true is that non-Indigenous archival structures that serve the purpose of control over knowledge contrast with Assiniboine oral tradition, as the latter is an archival process that circulates within a living structural system of meaning. My attention to this contrast in archival structures, or purposes, parallels Cruikshank’s comparison of narrative structures between Indigenous oral history and Canadian written history.

Non-Assiniboine historiography about the tribal leader Azana, and Assiniboine people in general, has enmeshed several assumptions about Indigenous peoples in the mid-nineteenth century that were perpetuated as archived knowledge until the late twentieth century. These assumptions included the Enlightenment era idea of pre-contact Indigenous peoples as “noble,” or “savage,” or “authentic,” and that this “truer” way of being subsequently vanished or was corrupted by European colonial civilizations. Exposed to scrutiny and the prevalent evidence of Indigenous oral histories, these assumptions appear incorrect.

More significant for Assiniboine, though, is that through the power of the oral tradition, Azana, the historical individual, has come to represent Assiniboine continuity. He serves as a means of perpetuating their own interpretation of their role in history. Assiniboine narratives about Azana told from Assiniboine perspectives convey a different story: it stresses a sense of peoplehood.74 Azana’s descendants continue to talk about his significant role in informing Assiniboine communities about imminent American expansion into their territory in the late-nineteenth century.

Assiniboine oral tradition, as a way of keeping bodies of cultural knowledge alive for future generations, in other words, as a way of sustaining their history, is quite different from the settlers’ ways of maintaining history. A comparison of the Assiniboine oral tradition, and specifically, the historicity centered on Azana, with non-Assiniboine narratives and paintings used to represent him demonstrates how the Assiniboine oral tradition has differed from non-Assiniboine archived knowledge from 1831 to the present day. This comparison is meant to evaluate differences in non-Assiniboine narrative perspective that have become archived, and hence, “made history” for non-Assiniboine

audiences versus representations by Assiniboine authors for their Assiniboine audiences. Through this comparative examination of Azana, I evaluate the oral tradition as a process: a way of being and archiving for the Assiniboine, rather than being a fixed and static product.\footnote{See Antoinette Burton, \textit{Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5, 6, 12. In particular, within this volume, see Adele Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in \textit{Delgamuukw v. British Columbia},” where she discusses the Indigenous oral tradition in terms of power relations with the colonial archive over “credible” knowledge: (p. 326). Also, for a discussion of oral history and its relationship with courts and archives, see Bruce Miller, \textit{Oral History on Trial: Recognizing Aboriginal Narratives in the Courts} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 68, 69, 70, 132.}

Oral tradition for the Assiniboine, as for other Indigenous peoples, carries integrity and validity as evidentiary information in contested archival and political arenas. In the early 1990s, anthropologist Triloki Nath Pandey was an expert witness in a Zuni land claims case.\footnote{Pandey was my professor at U.C. Santa Cruz, where I wrote my senior thesis on “The Rising Zuni Generations: Finding the Middle Ground in the Educational Context,” in 1994. Pandey also argues this in his chapter “Zuni Oral Tradition and History” in \textit{Zuni and the Courts: A Struggle for Sovereign Land Rights}, E. Richard Hart, ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992). Peter Nabokov cites this land-claims case in his \textit{A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18.} He asserted that the Zuni oral tradition regarding sacred places and sites located off of reservation land, which had been used for generations of Zuni, were as valid as written documents and could be used as evidence. He argued that each individual Zuni cultural practitioner had been given specialized knowledge. Zuni practitioners bound this knowledge to memory and through its oral repetition, via rigorous discipline in ceremonies about places, petroglyphs and pictographs, and particular plants, animals, minerals, water sources, and so on, and this knowledge was passed on from one generation to the next. Pandey argued that:

There are all kinds of groups in Zuni society, and one of the responsibilities that all these groups had was to have knowledge of their ecology, to have knowledge about themselves, to have knowledge about others, and to preserve that knowledge for the sake of their children, to preserve that knowledge for the sake of their descendants.\footnote{An unknown author quoted Triloki Nath Pandey in Section 2 of \textit{Zuni History: Victories in the 1990s} (Seattle, WA: The Institute of the North American West, 1991), 10.}

As a result of this case in New Mexico, the Zuni were able to reset some tribal boundaries and protect their sacred places. Thus, similar to the Zuni, the Assiniboine oral tradition also has enabled the protection of integral sacred places. I discuss this more fully in
Chapter 4. For now, Pandey’s description clarifies the oral tradition as a process, rather than as a product. In this light, the oral tradition links an Indigenous community of people to places and other living beings across generations, as it connects the community to their ancestors as well as to future progeny. It also links the community across gender, race, and economic lines. Seeing the oral tradition as a process between people, frames my definition of oral tradition as an Indigenous way of archiving bodies of cultural knowledge. Furthermore, oral stories seem to live on when people tell their stories in particular places and with specific intentions. The oral story about Azana, for example, was originally told to me in locations where Azana once lived, and was recounted to me from one of his people, specifically in order to introduce me to Assiniboine ways of sustaining knowledge and history of this people.

This chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I discuss the first non-Indigenous descriptions of Azana in written and painted form, used as examples of products of non-Indigenous archived knowledge. In the second section, I discuss how non-Indigenous scholars, collectors, and archivist used these products to tell histories about the Indigenous peoples who occupied the North American Plains. In the third section, I compare the purposes of Assiniboine oral history to non-Indigenous archived knowledge about Azana to demonstrate that non-Indigenous assumptions about Assiniboine ways of keeping their knowledge alive are largely incorrect.

Non-Indigenous descriptions of Azana in the form of written documents or paintings are held in National archives as products of knowledge. While oral traditions differ from conventional Western ways of archiving, it is not always inimical to the storage-locker model of archives mentioned in the Introduction. Instead, as this chapter shows, the Assiniboine oral tradition, such as oral stories about Azana, works to foster community by making use of official archives, such as those in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.; Assiniboine ceremonies, such as naming ceremonies; important places within Assiniboine territory, such as Fort Union; Assiniboine texts, such as Land of Nakoda; and Assiniboine artwork, such as by the artist Errol Standing, one of Azana’s descendants. Thus, the archived knowledge by non-Assiniboine about Azana is still important to Assiniboine people. Conventional archived knowledge in the form of
documents, recordings, and images may reveal how Assiniboine individuals shaped history when evaluated by Assiniboine people.\footnote{78}

A brief description culled from archival products about the historical context before and after Azana’s trip helps to understand how Assiniboine had an active role in responding to and, in turn, shaping the transcontinental networks of power that influenced Assiniboine people. Centuries before the early 1600s, different Indigenous cultures amalgamated to form the Assiniboine. As Eric Wolf claims in \textit{Europe and the People Without History} (1997), the “. . . multilingual, multiethnic, intermarrying groups of Cree and Assiniboin [sic] that grew up in the far northern Plains of North America in response to the stimulus of the fur trade . . .” were certainly not fixed, uniform, or singular in their cultural or biological constitution.\footnote{79} By the late-eighteenth century, Assiniboine people transformed in response to a global phenomenon—namely, the fur trade\footnote{80}—along with neighboring tribes and other European nations.\footnote{81} After 1787, various indigenous tribes and British, French, and American participants actively negotiated over economic and political domination of a broad territory, and competed over the Northern Plains region between the upper Missouri and the Assiniboine Rivers—a major center of trade connecting the continent.\footnote{82} These territorial negotiations and disputes sometimes became physical battles. That is why Fort Union was an important place of Assiniboine power, and why Azana’s diplomacy was essential to Assiniboine agency.

The Assiniboine first took notice of the Americans in 1804, when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led their mapping exploration into the territory after the

\footnote{78}{For an informative study that looks at ways of archiving through oral history practiced by an Indigenous community and authored by an anthropologist, see Leslie A. Robertson’s, \textit{Standing Up with Ga`gysta`las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), xvi, 12-13, 110, 406.}
\footnote{79}{Eric Wolf, \textit{Europe and the People Without History} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 17.}
\footnote{81}{Loretta Fowler, \textit{The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 17. Fowler affirms that European imperial desires and indigenous groups were already on the move and transforming each other during the period from the sixteenth century through the eighteenth centuries, when the Assiniboine engaged with the French and British, as well as with other Indigenous tribes as intermediaries through trade (see Appendices C, D: Maps).}
Louisiana Purchase in 1803: the Assiniboine saw Lewis and Clark but Lewis and Clark did not see the Assiniboine. By 1828, the American Fur Company established what would become Fort Union in order to foster trade with the Assiniboine, Cree, Crow, Ojibway, Blackfeet, and Hidatsa. This was desired by the Assiniboine, so that they could access American goods, such as rifles, pans, alcohol, and so on; simultaneously Americans wanted animal hides, such as beaver and buffalo. The American Fur Company engaged in actively competing with the Hudson Bay Company, who had been trade partners with the Assiniboine since its establishment in the area. Consequently, the Assiniboine probably wanted to examine the “wasichu,” or the Assiniboine word for the Anglo-Americans that means “takes the fat”: Azana’s journey was an expedition in the reverse direction of Lewis and Clark’s exploratory journey. The American incentive was clearly to compete in the fur trade and to set up forts to support westward American expansion. The Assiniboine neither supported American expansion nor did they engage in all-out war to resist them. Therefore, Azana’s acceptance of the American invitation to travel to Washington was a cultural, economic, military, and political tour for both sides: it was international diplomacy by both parties, one of which held unequal power.

One of the first non-Assiniboine people to archive knowledge about Azana and the Assiniboine through the forms of the written narrative and paintings was a prolific American artist, collector, and explorer named George Catlin. On his way to Washington in 1831, while at St. Louis, Azana met George Catlin, who, in addition to taking many

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83 My source for this information comes from conversations with Robert Four Star, and is also dramatized in the film Chief Rosebud Remembers Lewis & Clark (2004) and In the Land of The Assiniboine (2009) produced by Mary Helend, Valley County Historical Society. Assiniboines already had previous contact with Europeans, such as French and British fur traders since the seventeenth century; see Arthur Ray’s Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974; 1998). Assiniboine also had origin stories about the coming of the White man, and wrote these oral histories down, which I examine in Chapter 5: Land of Nakoda in the present dissertation.

84 Around the time that Fort Union was established, it was estimated that there were between 33 to 42 bands, and between 28,000 and 42,000 Assiniboine. Yet, by 1843, according to the first U.S. Indian Report (1843) they were only a quarter of that population at best, after they survived severe small pox epidemics probably acquired from Fort Union. See Michael Stephen Kennedy, ed., The Assiniboines: From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Larpenteur Long) (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), xlvi, 16.

85 The Assiniboine word for the “White man” literally means “he who takes the fat”; White men were called “wasichu,” which means “takes the fat.” Though “White man” is an inaccurate term for Europeans or Americans, it will be used in this dissertation. I do not mean to designate race or to offend either erudition or personal preference.

86 My main source for this information is paraphrased from oral history I learned from Robert Four Star.
notes on their meeting, painted his portrait in December of that year. Before Catlin encountered Azana for the first time, he carried with him certain underlying assumptions about the fate of Indigenous peoples against the threat of Western expansion. At Catlin and Azana’s first meeting, Catlin described him as beautifully adorned in his traditional regalia, but “. . . as sullen as death . . .,” thus revealing Catlin’s assumption that Azana could foresee his grim destiny. After Azana returned from Washington to St. Louis, Catlin joined him on the steamboat Yellowstone for his return journey up the Missouri to Fort Union. Through Catlin’s written memoirs in his journals and paintings of Azana begun during their first encounter, we see how disturbed Catlin was by Azana’s dramatic transformation. After observing Azana’s trips to and from Washington, five years later, between 1837 and 1839, Catlin painted a before and after image of Azana on canvas. One half of the painting shows Azana standing stoically in his traditional buckskin with an eagle feather bonnet and moccasins with the Capitol of Washington behind him. The other half shows him posturing haughtily in front of his village in the upper Missouri River region adorned in a blue U.S. military uniform, beaver top-hat, white gloves, holding an umbrella in one hand and a fan in the other, a cigarette holder in his mouth, and two bottles of alcohol in his back pockets. The specific adornments, gifts from President Jackson, such as the blue coat, have never been confirmed in Presidential records.

George Catlin epitomizes the prototypical Euro-American collector or archivist. Catlin’s representations of Azana were shaped by his perspective as a settler, a proto-ethnographer of sorts, and his sense of a mission to “rescue” Indians from vanishing from

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91 See correct name with John Canfield Ewers, *Indian life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 78. Ewers says correct name is *The Light and Ah-jon-jon*, stating that: “Several of this man’s descendants, elderly Indians living on Fort Peck and Fort Belknap Reservations, Montana, have told me the name refers to something transparent and bright” (p. 78). David R. Miller also told me that he had looked at the Presidential records of Andrew Jackson and was unable to find any records of these specific gifts.
America. Catlin’s notes tell the story of how Azana was “selected by Major Sanford, the Indian Agent, to represent his tribe in a delegation which visited Washington city under his charge in the winter of 1832.”

Before he had joined Azana on his return journey up the Missouri, Catlin admits in his “Letter No. 1” that nothing would stop him from “becoming their historian,” and “snatching from a hasty oblivion what could be saved for the benefit of posterity, and perpetuating it . . . to the memory of a truly lofty and noble race . . .” In another volume he writes:

. . . the Indian and the buffalo—joint and original tenants of the soil . . .
have fled to the great plains of the West, and there under an equal doom,
they have taken up their last abode, where their race will expire and their bones will bleach together.

Catlin felt compelled to rescue them. With his rescue mission in mind, and a brush in hand, he painted hundreds of paintings and wrote extensive journals on Indigenous groups and individuals. He travelled across the North and South American continents, from the Northern Plains to the Andes, to build his collection. He even brought some Ojibways and Crees with him on a tour to Europe as a kind of living display of Indigenous specimens. This latter event was the first attempt to start what would later become a “Wild West” show in Europe beginning around the mid-1800s. In all these aspects – as a collector, historian, ethnographer, painter, curator, and exhibitor of Indigenous peoples and their cultural objects – Catlin was similar to a few other European or American explorers/artists/collectors who had encountered Indigenous peoples, such as Karl Bodmer (1809-1893). Bodmer accompanied German explorer Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, into the upper Missouri River region during 1832-1834.
In 1831, Catlin had been in St. Louis for some time already in order to observe Indian chiefs on their ways to meet with American officials in Washington. When he first met Azana, Catlin, who mistakenly translated Azana as Win-Jun-Jon (Pigeon’s Egg Head), described him as “handsome” and “noble” and “unrestrained and unfettered by the disguises of art . . . surely the most beautiful model for the painter.” Catlin fit Azana into his preconceived image of the untainted “Red Man.” In his published letters and paintings, Catlin seems to imply that he considered the quillwork and buckskin as signs of an uncorrupted being before Azana’s journey to Washington. When Azana arrived home, Catlin described the sensation he stirred amongst his people as he told them about his adventures in the “Great White Father’s” city. Yet, Catlin’s narrative then shifts to depict Azana as estranged from his people, when he describes that many thought him a “great liar.” Several months after Azana’s return, Catlin wrote the following observation in one of his letters: “He is now in disgrace, and spurned by the leading men of the tribe, and rather to be pitied than envied, for the advantages which one might have supposed would have flown from his fashionable tour . . . .” In point of fact, some of Catlin’s assumptions may have been incorrect. Catlin’s version of the story about Azana reveals that he assumed Indigenous peoples would vanish under the development of American expansion. This is likely one of the reasons why he was such an avid painter of Indigenous people, and why he took some of them on tour to Europe: his actions were that of a non-Indigenous archivist.

As mentioned above, Catlin’s bifurcated painting of Azana depicts the stoic “noble savage” before his “corruption” by American civilization, with a full eagle-feather bonnet on the left, and with America’s national capital in the background. After his return, Catlin symbolized his corrupted transformation on the right with Azana adorned with whiskey bottles, fancy clothes, and haughty posture, with a tipi village in the background. Catlin’s journals and published autobiographies reveal that at that time when

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96 Quoted in Robert Berkhofer’s, *White Man’s Indian*, 89; From George Catlin, *North American Indians; Being Letters And Notes On Their Manners, Customs, And Conditions, Written During Eight Years’ Travel Amongst The Wildest Tribes Of Indians In North America*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1841), 2.
Catlin met Azana, he wanted to impress Euro-American consciousness with an image of indigenous loss.  

Through his art, Catlin was determined to rescue “the looks and customs of the vanishing races of Native man in America from that oblivion to which I plainly saw they were hastening before the approach and certain progress of civilization.” Catlin’s now famous painting of Azana’s transformation represented a pernicious myth in the consciousness of dominant society. Catlin’s painting exemplified an inaccurate assumption that Indigenous people were incapable of being aware of nineteenth-century American intentions to settle the North American Plains. Subsequently, Indigenous peoples needed to be historically preserved by non-Indigenous experts before their assimilation.

During a research trip to Washington, D.C. in June 2010, in participation with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, I visited and photographed Catlin’s famous painting of Azana in the National Gallery. While I was there I observed a docent discussing Azana to a small audience, but her story was flawed, including using the mistaken name of Win-Jun-Jon. She told her attendees that his own people stoned him to death, as if it was a majority of people in his village who thought he was a liar. She was incorrect in both the method and reasons behind the murder of Azana, emphasizing his death as representing the demise and naivety of Indigenous peoples in the grip of American and European colonization. The National Gallery, as a Western archive of Indigenous peoples, in this instance, perpetuated the narrative that Indigenous people required historical preservation before their cultural bodies of knowledge were lost under the yoke of Western expansion.

Elizabeth Broun, the Director of the Smithsonian Art Museum, in her preface to the book, George Catlin and his Indian Gallery, positions Catlin as different from some of the previous explorers into Native lands. As Broun points out, he was one of the first explorers who was in search of the “Native pure being,” such as John La Farge, Henry

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99 George Catlin, Life Among the Indians By George Catlin (London: Gall and Inglis, n.d.), vi.
Adams, Frank Cushing, Paul Gauguin, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Broun asserts two emergent themes from Catlin’s works and travels: “Two ideas—the journey and the mirror—have been fundamental to understanding Catlin through the dual disciplines of history and biography . . . he was seeking the Enlightenment ideal of the ‘natural man’ living in harmony with nature.” The mirror that Broun references is the image of the Indigenous person that needed to be archived: what it means to be “the Self,” and to talk about “the Other” as depicted in his paintings, journals, letters, and books. This idea parallels Edward Said’s concept of “Orientalism”: the notion that the “West” constructed images of the “Orient” (i.e., Middle Eastern and Asian countries) to rationalize Western domination. Yet, in our example here, as it concerns Azana, this “Other” required preservation before an assumed disappearance from the historical record. Those narratives and pictures also inform the second idea – the journey – which formed a canonical body of archived knowledge in the Western sense. The voices of tribal people alive today, whose ancestors were recorded by artists on canvases and archived in the National Gallery, have gone unrecognized for too long.

Catlin’s painting, and numerous others like it, helped to frame non-Indigenous images of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous artists, which have been created since first contacts between colonizers and Native peoples. These images implicitly and subtly perpetuated the notion that Western civilizations would inevitably overwhelm Indigenous cultures. This notion also conveyed Indigenous peoples as incapable of understanding the threats of Western imperialism—in this case American expansion. Consequently, non-Indigenous explorers like Catlin, pseudo-ethnographers in their own right, assumed that it was their duty to preserve Indigenous cultures and people in collections and museums before they turned to dust. Catlin represents a non-Indigenous “epistemic anxiety” that created a moral need to archive knowledge about Indigenous tribes. This archived knowledge is thus contained in the static material forms of paintings, journal records, and other products of documentation. Nonetheless, it is true that Catlin was an important

archivist of Indigenous peoples, and as such, his paintings, journals, and collections should be readily accessible and duplicated for those specific Indigenous peoples that he collected from. Catlin’s paintings and published texts are important not only for the scholars and enthusiasts of Native American studies but also for the Indigenous people themselves.

Many scholars of Native American studies have missed the opportunity to attend to Native interpretations of historical products about their people held in archives, such as Catlin’s paintings. Nonetheless, scholars and students of Native American studies and history have used Catlin’s paintings of Azana in tours, history texts, and courses to represent settler tropes about Indigenous peoples, including the concept of the assumed inevitability of these peoples’ assimilation. Consequently, the reproduction and use of Catlin’s image of Azana exemplifies how scholars of Indigenous histories have framed products of Western archived knowledge in their own narratives. Too often, these narratives have neglected the contemporary voices of Indigenous peoples. ¹⁰³

Unfortunately, almost all of the works of non-Assiniboine historiography about Azana portray him as a victim of American civilization that required historical preservation. This further emphasizes the idea of Indigenous loss, victimization, and cultural degradation. While middle- to late-nineteenth century American expansion into the Northern Plains territories devastated Indigenous communities, much of the historiography about this period overemphasizes Indigenous destruction; it loses sight of the ways that Indigenous peoples have kept their bodies of cultural knowledge alive through the tradition of oral history. In the introduction to Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (2009), Dee Brown claimed that, “Although the Indians who lived through this doom period of their civilization have vanished from the earth, millions of their words are preserved in official records”; and further that, “Out of all these sources of almost forgotten oral history, I have tried to fashion a narrative of the conquest of the American West as the victims experienced it, using their own words whenever possible.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ See cover image of Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present (Toronto Random House of Canada Ltd., 1978). See also Steven Conn, History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

the traumas inflicted upon Indigenous peoples of the North American Plains and elsewhere by American westward expansion and colonization is incontrovertible, this kind of discourse obscures the actions that Indigenous actors have taken to sustain their bodies of cultural knowledge under duress.

Written in the 1960s, John C. Ewers’s chapter “When the Light Shone in Washington” in his book *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* describes Azana’s trip to the American capital with a similar interpretation as Catlin’s. Ewers does not question Catlin’s version of the story. Instead, he implies that Azana represented the “Red man” duped by American power and taken as a fool by his own people.  

Ewers claims that before Azana’s trip, “Indians who roamed the plains of the Upper Missouri Valley had little reason to be awed by the size or the power of the United States,” since only a few American traders entered that Indian territory to compete in the fur trade. He also posits that John Jacob Astor’s American Fur Company had economic and diplomatic intentions to compete with Great Britain’s Hudson Bay Company for the hide trade in the borderland Assiniboine region. Ewers wrote his narrative history with the purpose of informing non-Indigenous audiences and, as such, it reiterates the trope of American corruption of Indigenous peoples. Even though Ewers had carried out direct fieldwork in Indigenous communities in Montana during his extensive career, including, in particular, with the Assiniboine, he entirely neglected Assiniboine voices about Azana.

Ewers repeated the assumptions about Indigenous naïveté that Catlin deployed. Ewers wrote that the “Washington Indian” delegates would “be touched by The Great White Father’s interest in and liberality toward his red-skinned children. Surely, these Indians would return home with enthusiastic reports of the power and the kindness of Americans.”

Ewers’s description of Catlin’s portrait representation of Azana before he went to Washington, which is different from the bifurcated one (see Appendix E) as “a savage Apollo,” is even more romanticized and racialized than Catlin’s painting: Catlin’s portrait emphasized the mongoloid features of this proud, handsome man—his large broad face, prominent cheek-bones and nose; his firm lips, strong jaw, and straight,
shining black hair. His powerful body was clothed in a shirt of finely dressed mountain-goat skin . . . .

In his chapter, Ewers includes a description by the traveller Alexander Phillip Maximillion, a German Prince, who saw Azana at Fort Union in 1833: “He was a handsome man, in a fine dress; he wore a beautifully embroidered black leather shirt, a new scarlet blanket, and a great medal round his neck.”

Maximilian also noted that Azana was called “General Jackson,” because of his presidential medallion. For Ewers, along with the settler and explorer documents he examined, the concern seems to be about preserving histories of Indigenous peoples through archival products that fix individuals such as Azana into a timeless frame.

Ewers noted that after Azana’s death, his body was placed in a tree near Fort Union, and upon request from doctors in St. Louis, his “head was cut off, placed in a sack with several other Indian crania, and sent downriver to the civilization that had been the cause of his undoing.”

Though this seems morbid to us today, this was a time when Euro-American scientists were constructing racial inferiority theories based on cranial diagnostics.

Ewers highlights some observations from Edwin Thompson Denig, who was married to Azana’s sister, Little Woman. Denig was charged with the tasks of bookkeeping and management of fur trading activities at Fort Union for twenty years from 1837 to 1857. Denig claimed one of Azana’s fellow travelling Cree companions, Broken Arm, as the real “liar” about American power. It is ironic that Azana was interpreted as the “liar,” but Denig, who witnessed the aftermath, described Broken Arm as “. . . a scheming, mean beggarly Indian and on his return proved himself unworthy the attention bestowed upon him.” Azana, on the other hand, was “a man of truth and would not bear contradiction.”

Furthermore, Denig reported: “The Cree now written of named Eyes on Each Side [Broken Arm], fearing a similar end, or at least profiting by experience, told all lies, represented the Americans as but a handful of people far inferior

108 Ewers, Indian life, 79.
110 Ibid., 88.
in every respect to his own.” Ewers’s examination of Azana’s experience is disappointing. He concluded with an exclamation that Azana “… was bad medicine. The Light had to be extinguished!” Ewers perpetuated Catlin’s assumptions, fixed in narrative and painted form, emphasizing an Indigenous demise, and thus repeating a product of non-Indigenous archived knowledge.

Ewers assumed incorrectly: Azana’s murder was neither inevitable nor was it caused by American civilization. By his description, the reader is left with the impression that Azana was yet again the victim: he perpetuates the myth that Indigenous leaders such as Azana were mere pawns of American imperial power. We can see that as late as the 1950s and 1960s, when Ewers wrote this article, non-Indigenous scholars often directed their examinations towards how colonization and forced assimilation had destroyed much of Indigenous peoples’ bodies of knowledge and their ways of life.

Products of history about Indigenous peoples archived in collections in the forms of paintings, texts, and objects, such as we have with Catlin’s painting, reveal non-Indigenous assumptions that lack an understanding of Indigenous agency through the oral tradition. Through analysis of the images that early explorers and settlers created, Robert Berkhofer reveals several non-Indigenous tropes that assumed that the Indigenous people they encountered were incapable of sustaining their bodies of cultural knowledge. And interestingly, Catlin’s painting of Azana’s transformation is the cover image to Robert Berkhofer’s pivotal book on American Indian history, The White Man’s Indian (1979). It is there, on the cover, for a reason. Berkhofer’s core argument examines the genealogy of histories and images representing Natives as, “an ideal or theoretical history that pointed out the normal, that is natural, development of humankind’s behavior in contradistinction to what really happened … the image of the good and bad Indian came to demonstrate what the life of man was like in the original state of nature.” To show that indigenes functioned as the mirror image of European predecessors, Berkhofer quotes a late-eighteenth century Edinburgh University professor, Adam Ferguson, who

112 Denig, Five Indian Tribes, 114.
113 Denig, Five Indian Tribes, 90.
114 My greatest argument with Ewers is that, despite his extensive research, he gives no account of James Larpenteur Long’s Land of Nakoda, which I examine in depth in Chapter 5.
116 Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian, 47.
“wrote in 1767: ‘It is in their [the Indians’] present condition that we are to behold, as in mirror, the features of our own progenitors.’ Berkhofer points out the tendency by eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to manufacture the image of the “noble savage” in order to idealize humanity’s past. Consequently, these images were used to justify the colonization of Indigenous peoples: this was a double-edged sword—a longing for an idyllic past and yet a scorning of it at the same time.

Berkhofer chose Catlin’s painting of Azana for the cover of his book because it represents the most stereotypical image of the assumed total annihilation of the “pure” Indigenous person who would inevitably be corrupted by American civilization. Berkhofer describes this painting as symbolizing the noble, dignified Native on the one side, and the travesty of encroaching American civilization on the other side. He states:

In the “before” [Washington, D.C.] picture, Catlin depicted the Assiniboin [sic] chief in all his romantic glory and noble bearing, untainted in clothing or psyche by White civilization . . . . The colonel’s uniform, the umbrella, the fan, the cigarette, and the clownish, foppish strut in the “after” picture all reveal in Catlin’s opinion how civilization corrupted the natural nobility and manners of the Indian.

Berkhofer uses Catlin’s painting of Azana to criticize the assumption that Indigenous peoples had no history until that history could be written about or painted, and then archived by non-Indigenous scholars and collectors. Subsequently, following this assumption, if settlers, explorers, ethnographers, collectors, and artists failed to properly archive Indigenous cultural phenomenon, this history might surely be lost. Berkhofer correctly deconstructs the non-Indigenous images and narratives about Indigenous peoples, because these images furthered assumptions that subsequently obscured the actions of Indigenous historical actors that demonstrated agency. Nevertheless, investigations into what might be found in oral traditions that have been maintained by Indigenous peoples about their histories and represented by these kinds of archival products calls for further attention.

117 Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian, 47. Adam Ferguson is quoted from John W. Burrow, Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 12.
118 Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian, description of Plate 6, following page 138, and discussed on page 86.
It was not until the twenty-first century that a slight change in focus from the previous historiographical approach to Catlin’s painting of Azana took place. A non-Indigenous scholar of North American Indigenous history, Colin G. Calloway, briefly acknowledged the interpretation of Azana’s legacy by Azana’s progeny. Calloway states:

It seemed [emphasis added] as if Catlin’s assessment of the impact of contact with “civilization” was accurate. Ah-jon-jon\(^{119}\) passed into recorded history as a victim and as something of a fool. But Ah-jon-jon’s present-day descendants remember a different man and a more complex personality, and Catlin’s assumption that outward forms of cultural borrowing represent cultural suicide was too simple.\(^{120}\)

Even though this passage is from an undergraduate textbook, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (2008), Calloway could have gone further to represent those Assiniboine voices. He could have inserted a few quotations or statements from Indigenous peoples that were descendants of the historical actors described in his textbook. I spoke to Calloway about this passage in his textbook at the 2011 Western History Association conference in Oakland, California. He said he learned this from an Assiniboine student at the University of Wyoming, who claimed she was a descendant of Azana.

The oral tradition regarding Azana, as spoken by the Assiniboine, remains strong. With some exceptions, Indigenous oral traditions, as a way of sustaining their bodies of cultural knowledge about their histories, have thus far been under-acknowledged by scholars. Alongside settler documents and artwork about Indigenous pasts, however, Indigenous oral traditions practiced within Indigenous communities keep Native knowledge alive through storytelling and shared cultural activities.

Assiniboine people both resisted and adapted to cultural domination since their first encounters with European empires through their original cultural practices, primarily through the process of the oral tradition. Descendants of Azana, and the many other

\(^{119}\) Galloway uses John C. Ewers’s translation and name of this man as Ah-jon-jon. I use the name Azana, as told to me by Robert Four Star. William Standing’s use of Az-an-zan-na, in James Long’s, *Land of Nakoda: the story of the Assiniboine Indians, from the tales of the old ones told to First Boy (James L. Long), with drawings by Fire Bear (William Standing), under direction of the Writers' program of the Works projects administration in the state of Montana* (Helena, MT: State Pub. Co., 1942), will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Indians painted by Catlin, are alive today. Though their ancient bodies of cultural knowledge have transformed over time, largely because of the pressures of colonization and national expansion, that knowledge is still living by constantly adapting cultural values and practices, such as the oral tradition, along with other contemporary choices, such as controlling their own conventional archives. That is also why the archives that people like Catlin made and protected are reinterpreted, reclaimed, and often held in high esteem, not just by scholars and museum-goers but also by Native people that belong to a particular lineage, that is, by their ancestors. Broun confirms cultural survival:

The 2000 U.S. Census brought news of another fundamental shift. Many of the rural Midwestern counties Catlin travelled have now lost so much population that they are again classified as “wilderness,” with fewer residents per square mile than they had in 1860. And in a curious reversal of history, the numbers of both Native Americans and buffalo are increasing in many of these same counties where once they were “vanishing.”

The Assiniboine, and Indigenous peoples of North America in general, have sustained their communities for millennia by adapting cultural practices to ongoing transformations brought on by American and Canadian expansion. Specifically through oral traditions, they have brought their pasts to life through storytelling as with the directed purpose of continuing cultural knowledge: Assiniboine storytellers, such as Robert Four Star, are knowledge keepers—archivists—for their Assiniboine audiences.

In addition to learning about important Assiniboine historical individuals from storytellers, such as Robert Four Star, I asked several questions of my interviewees focused on what they knew about Azana. These questions were meant to ascertain how they had learned about him and whether or not they were related to him in some fashion. These questions then led to discussions about what they knew of other well-known Assiniboine leaders and events in Assiniboine history, and whether they felt such knowledge was important for present and future generations to learn. Most tellingly, I asked what they thought about the differences between reading about Assiniboine history from an outside perspective and hearing (or reading) about that same history directly from an Assiniboine. The answers to these questions revealed some common themes.

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122 I call this a way of archiving, as it is an indigenous form of keeping knowledge alive.
123 See Interview Questions in the Appendices B.
Though there is no one singular Assiniboine perspective, my interviewees who did know Azana’s story carry a very different interpretation of the events than the standardized non-Assiniboine representation.

Only a few of my interviewees stated they were either descended from or related to Azana. And not all the Assiniboine with whom I spoke have heard stories or are familiar with either the oral or written stories about him. Yet, all my interviewees stated strongly that the oral tradition of storytelling about Assiniboine history, and learning that history directly from an Assiniboine is essential to their continuation as a people. What was most interesting to me was that when I raised Azana’s name, people who knew his story would tell their own stories about how they were related to him or discuss his historical importance to the Assiniboine.

In the summer of 2010, around a Sweat Lodge, just a day before the Medicine Lodge, I had a conversation with a man named Kenny Ryan about a paper I had written on Azana. Kenny is an enrolled Assiniboine leader and a former tribal chairman at Fort Peck. Kenny told me that he was a descendent of Azana. He also told me that he had visited the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. sometime after he retired from a position working for the National Congress of American Indians. Before he headed home to Fort Peck, he stood in front of Catlin’s paintings of Azana along with some of his Indigenous colleagues and friends. There, in front of the portrait, he stated “I am going home,” thus making him and Azana linked in a national diplomatic experience. In this example, Kenny Ryan, the storyteller, wove oral tradition with non-Indigenous art in the context of the National Gallery while directing his vision to his homeland. His story about this event demonstrates the act of sustaining bodies of cultural knowledge: it utilized more than the oral tradition, more than Catlin’s painting, or more than a text written about Azana alone. The Assiniboine stories about Azana serve the purpose of keeping bodies of knowledge alive; these, in turn, inform an Assiniboine sense of peoplehood from one generation to the next.

124 It is interesting to compare what Kenny Ryan told me about his experience viewing the Catlin painting of Azana in the National Gallery, as he is one of Azana’s descendants as well as was a political representative of American Indians working in D.C., with what I observed and heard from the docent in 2010 at the National Gallery (page 14 above).
After that conversation with Kenny, I sent him the paper I had written about Azana upon his request. Two years later, after I arrived in Billings, Montana to conduct the majority of my interviews, I received a phone call. The call was from Cleo Hamilton, one of Kenny’s relatives. She stated that Kenny had given my paper to her. She corrected me about a statement I had made in the paper regarding one of Azana’s descendants, William Standing, an Assiniboine artist who lived in the first half of the twentieth century. I had mistakenly written that he was part Kiowa, citing a website by the Meadowlark Gallery in Billings, which holds some of Standing’s artwork. Cleo asserted that William Standing was a full-blooded Assiniboine, and one of her relatives. Wanting to know more, I interviewed Cleo at her home in Poplar, Montana on July 2, 2012.

Cleo claimed she was a descendant of Azana. She learned about him, and Assiniboine history, from listening to stories from her elders, especially her grandfather, Bernerd Standing, brother to William Standing, and her mother, Gladys Jackson, who passed away in her 90s in September 2011. Her great-grandfather, Stephen Standing, Bernerd’s father, was a well-known and powerful medicine man and Medicine Lodge leader, who only spoke Assiniboine. Stephen had married Patty Standing, who was descended from Azana. Cleo had travelled a lot with her parents, visiting many elders and relatives. She told me, “I would sit there and listen and remember things.” By listening to these oral historians, she learned that “… by going to Washington and seeing the New World … ,” Azana had brought important knowledge back to his people about American power, even though some of his own people were afraid or jealous of him after his return. When I asked Cleo why she felt learning this history was important, she said: “It gives you pride, really, in your tribe to know that important members in your tribe accomplished something,” such as visiting the President of the United States in the new national capital. She compared the Assiniboine pride in their knowledge about Azana to a similar pride by the Apache in their knowledge of Geronimo. When I asked Cleo about the difference between hearing – or reading – Azana’s story from an Assiniboine or from a non-Assiniboine historian, she said, “I think it’s more accurate when you hear it from

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125 I spoke with Kenny Ryan and gave him my consent forms in 2010. I was unable to confirm a formal interview with him in 2012. I still need permission to write about these conversations.

126 Cleo Hamilton Interview, July 2, 2012, in her home in Poplar, MT. See Cleo Hamilton, Interview Bios, in the Appendices A.
an Assiniboine or an Indian, because the non-Indian is more slanted toward whatever their perspective is … sometimes you pick up these inaccuracies as you read through it.” Cleo asserted that it was essential to Assiniboine cultural survival that youth and adults visit and listen to their relatives and elders tell stories about their history and language. Her claim about these conversational practices was one of the most striking parts of our conversation, standing out in my mind even today. As Cleo sadly emphasized, in contemporary life so many people are too busy to sit and listen to stories.

In contrast, other Assiniboine people with whom I spoke first heard about Azana from non-Assiniboine sources. Jim Shanley said he first heard about him from seeing the Catlin paintings in D.C., while doing political work for the Fort Peck Community College, and from reading a play about Azana in the 1980s. When I asked him why learning about Assiniboine history was important, Jim stated that, “supposedly, you know, the more you know about what has occurred in the past, the better prepared you are for what is going to happen in the future … although our politics right now certainly doesn’t indicate that … .” When I asked Jim his opinion about reading Assiniboine history from non-Assiniboine perspectives versus hearing it from Assiniboine themselves, he stated, “I don’t think there is much difference … people want to perpetuate these fairy tales,” referring to an idealized past, and further that, “… there are pros and cons on both sides … .” According to him, these included personal stories that are colored by their own personal background, whereas documents also have obvious weaknesses, “… tinted by the perspectives of the viewer … [so] you are never going to get anything perfect either way.” Jim also stated that people of our generation are not “digital natives,” implying that the younger generations will probably learn about their history through digital sources. My interview with Jim confirmed that diverse Assiniboine perspectives exist about perpetuating their own cultural and historical knowledge, and that multiple ways of keeping that knowledge alive should be utilized. He also explained his opinion clearly, stating that historical narratives, and the ways in which they are maintained over time, will always be imperfect and incomplete.

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127 Jim Shanley Interview, June 19, 2012, in his home in Poplar, MT. See Jim Shanley, Interview Bios, in the Appendices A.
For some of my interviewees, the personal stories about Azana were vital to how they see themselves in terms of identity, and for their progeny. Dale White, who is the son of Judy Four Star and step-son of Robert Four Star, is a younger Assiniboine cultural practitioner. He told me about the ceremonial naming of his son, Azana, and how his son told him about Azana visiting him in a dream and telling him about his trip to D.C. For Dale’s family, the nineteenth-century Azana is much more than an interesting historical actor; his story carries sacred import for his family and for an imagined Assiniboine future.

The oral histories told about Azana by Assiniboine people themselves continue to live on through their telling. They carry the purpose of perpetuating a sense of Assiniboine identity and their role in shaping their social, cultural, political, and economic existences. Intricate archival grains found within the weaving process of the oral tradition reveal an Assiniboine archival concern similar to the “epistemic anxiety” of Dutch colonial control over Indigenous populations in Indonesia as examined in Ann Stoler’s work. Parallel to Stoler’s examination of Dutch colonists’ fears regarding an Indigenous insurrection found in the margins of archival products, many Assiniboine people are concerned that stories will be maintained and told to youth in the vital process of oral tradition. Assiniboine archival concerns about their own cultural knowledge preservation are found within the oral history process of storytellers telling stories to live audiences in particular contexts of time, such around a kitchen table with visitors who have gathered from afar for the annual Medicine Lodge. The stories that storytellers tell require living audiences in contexts that support Assiniboine communities in order to take on lives of their own.

I heard through the Assiniboine grapevine that full copies of Catlin’s paintings of Azana currently hang on the chamber walls of the Tribal Executive Council at Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Headquarters. To Assiniboine people, these images represent an Assiniboine leader, an ancestor to Assiniboine people living today. They also speak about Azana as an example of a dignified man who told the truth, thus emphasizing his agency.

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128 Dale White Interview, July 3, 2012, FPCC, Wolf Point, MT. See Dale White, Interview Bios, Appendices A.
From an Assiniboine perspective, such as Robert Four Star’s, Azana’s report about his trip to Washington D.C. in 1831 remained within Assiniboine social circles through the use of oral histories. Consequently, Assiniboine leaders of the late-nineteenth century probably had some idea of America’s intention to expand into their lands. For contemporary Assiniboine people, Azana was an Assiniboine ambassador. Though American and Canadian colonization in the late-nineteenth century decimated Assiniboine ways of life, Assiniboine agency never vanished. The oral history about Azana supports and fosters the memory that the U.S. looked to the Assiniboine as allies, rather than as enemies, and that the Assiniboine wanted American products, such as iron skillets and guns, rather than the wish to become “American” or to lose their own cultural knowledge and ways of being.

The historical implications of Azana’s story depict first contacts between “the Self” and “the Other,” and between the “indigene” and the “settler.” As John Lutz writes:

Comparing indigenous and explorer accounts of the same meetings brings the collision of fundamentally different systems of thought into sharp relief. Europeans and indigenous people had (and in some cases, still have) incommensurable beliefs about what motivated behaviour, about fate, about trade, about reality.\(^{130}\)

There is no one uniform story about events or individuals in Assiniboine history. Instead, many multi-sided stories and perspectives reveal different representations about them. Listening to oral histories about Azana by Assiniboine storytellers, and then comparing that storytelling process to reading archived products, such as written narratives and images of the man, reveal complex multi-angled perspectives of Assiniboine history. Therefore, locating this historical analysis on the retelling of Azana’s story focuses on his actions within the historical context of American westward expansion in which he was an active participant.

Azana’s story represents an important moment in the larger canon of Assiniboine oral history. Indigenous people that utilized oral traditions from one generation to the next to record the past predated colonial encounters. After contact, the process was also transformed by those encounters. It is clear that the Indigenous oral tradition survives

today, so those transformations, though impossible to measure in quantifiable data, were clearly not destroyed.

Azana’s trip to Washington gave the Assiniboine historical knowledge of American people and material culture long before other tribes in the Northern Plains. His diplomatic trip was also significant because a number of important treaties were made with Indigenous tribes on the Northern Plains from about 1851 to the end of the nineteenth century. After the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, Goose, an Assiniboine chief, was sent to Washington for similar purposes as Azana. My theory, based on conversations with Robert Four Star, is that Azana’s report about the Americans was knowledge that was kept active and alive through the tribe’s oral tradition, and this is one of the reasons that they did not have to engage in war against the U.S. For instance, the Assiniboine chief White Dog rejected Sitting Bull’s request that they join the Sioux in the wars against America in the 1870s. Despite the fact that the Sioux had tenfold the number of treaties with Americans than the Assiniboine, the Assiniboine had more prior knowledge of American power in terms of numbers and technology than the Sioux: Azana’s accounts were remembered. Within the historical context of this period, the Assiniboine’s interpretation of Azana’s importance remains very strong.

Assiniboine oral histories about Azana, when compared to non-Assiniboine written texts about him, show different purposes in maintaining those histories, whether for Indigenous peoplehood or community identity, in the case of the former, or national identity, in the case of the latter. Indigenous oral traditions tend to focus on processes, morality, and cultural continuity as an Indigenous way of historicizing and maintaining
their own interpretations about Indigenous agency in their own histories. Different storytellers, for example, whether Indigenous or Western, tell histories for their own particular audiences, who themselves inhabit distinct cultural contexts. Parallel to this relationship, Indigenous oral storytellers keep cultural knowledge alive for different purposes versus the work of non-Indigenous archivists of archival products.

Assiniboine storytellers, such as Robert Four Star, told stories about Azana that represented him as an ambassador rather than as a pawn of the American empire. In a very different representation, Catlin’s paintings about Azana’s journey to and from D.C. emphasized his demise under American encroachment. In a similar way, other Euro-American representations found in primary and secondary archival literature lost sight of examples of Indigenous peoples’ agency to shape American and Canadian expansion. Again, this stands in contrast to Assiniboine oral histories, which tend to focus on their own actions in shaping the events of the past to inform mores, and neither focus on their heroic acts nor on their foibles. Instead, Assiniboine storytellers often encourage their audiences to put these mores into practice in the present.

Azana’s story, as described in non-Assiniboine texts and artwork for non-Assiniboine audiences, focuses on the historical individual both separated from his community and engulfed by a larger American narrative of Indigenous loss. On the other hand, Assiniboine stories told about Azana concentrate on the perpetuation of a sense of peoplehood: a historical awareness of how the Assiniboine see themselves in relation to larger American, Canadian, and world contexts.

In order to better understand Indigenous peoples as agents of their own histories, it is important to acknowledge the recent wave of Indigenous scholarship in the last twenty years or so. Peter Nabokov has called this scholarship the “new generation of

135 McCormack claims that Euro-Canadian historical documents about Thanadelthur in the early-eighteenth century tended to focus on events of “first contact,” as a base point for subsequent “post-contact transformations” in a linear chronology. See Patricia A. McCormack, “The Many Faces of Thanadelthur,” in Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History, Jennifer S. H. Brown, and Elizabeth Vibert, Editors, (Peterborough, Ont. [u.a.]: Broadview Press, 2003), 331.

136 McCormack discusses this contrast in Indigenous oral traditions versus Western historiography. McCormack argues that Chipewyan oral historians—storytellers—in contrast, tended to focus “… their own historical stories … on other social and moral issues … They have seen their histories as continuous, largely uninterrupted by European agendas, at least until the advent of colonial control,” as read in Patricia A. McCormack, “The Many Faces of Thanadelthur” in Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History, Jennifer S. H. Brown, and Elizabeth Vibert, Editors, (Peterborough, Ont. [u.a.]: Broadview Press, 2003), 331.
Native historians” that emerged in the 1990s. These historians of Indigenous cultures, comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, have posited ways of unearthing and discussing Indigenous history that serve both Indigenous peoples and the world of academia. In addition, new theoretical assumptions about carrying out Indigenous history may also inform archival theory as it relates to Indigenous peoples.

These newer scholars have intervened in the last decade to support a rethinking of historiographical theory for Indigenous peoples. Some of these discussions show the potential to inform a nascent Indigenous theory of archiving. Choctaw scholar Devon Abbott Mihesuah offers several critical insights regarding the purpose of Indigenous history for Indigenous communities. Mihesuah claims that historians (whether Native or not) will be more responsible if they deploy an interdisciplinary methodology that includes indigenous “voices and perspectives.” She also states that it is important that these scholars “are concerned about . . . tribes and communities.” Drawing attention to those historians who care about Indigenous communities, she writes that “. . . there is a great deal of difference between historians who are concerned about present-day realities Natives face and historians—both non-Native and Native—who . . . have no concern for the people they write about.”

Mihesuah asserts that historians should be actively aware of how their work affects Indigenous peoples and communities. Indigenous histories as archived knowledge inform the present about how Indigenous peoples survived colonization, assimilation, and administrative violence. Furthermore, they may contain possible ways of perpetuating that knowledge for future Indigenous generations. Mihesuah declares:

. . . historians of the Indigenous past have a responsibility to examine critically the effects of their historical narratives on the well-being of Natives and to also examine their stories’ influence on the retention and maintenance of the colonial power structure.

138 Devon Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?” in Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities, Devon Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, eds. (Lincoln, NB and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 156.
139 Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?”, 143.
140 Ibid., 144.
141 Ibid., 157.
Distinct Indigenous communities, places, and collective pasts help shape Indigenous identity. In particular, the ways these communities maintain their bodies of cultural knowledge through archival practices, such as the oral tradition, form an infrastructure to support a sense of peoplehood. Mihesuah posits that, “[f]or Indigenous people, knowledge of the past is crucial for their identity growth and development, pride, problem-solving strategies, and cultural survival.” Thus, Indigenous history should examine Indigenous connections to culturally distinct communities, long-term belonging to lands, and unique epistemologies. Indigenous oral traditions serve the purpose of sustaining the peoples’ histories, thus keeping those histories very much alive.

Mihesuah’s insights suggest that history-as-narrative constructs contesting interpretations of “truth,” which applies to history in the form of archived knowledge. Therefore, Indigenous oral traditions should be respected as evidentiary sources – as archival knowledge – just as relevant as non-indigenous written histories. To add to this, oral tradition helps Indigenous peoples archive cultural knowledge in a way that is unique and profound in and of itself, as a living process rather than as a static product fixed on a cold storage shelf. Oral tradition requires both a teller (or tellers) and a listener (or listeners) in a specific cultural context.

Indigenous forms of telling history through the oral tradition should not be relegated to legend. Scholars of Indigenous studies have turned an important corner to affirm that research about Indigenous peoples living today should take the Indigenous interests seriously, and respect their ways of protecting their bodies of cultural knowledge. This ethical framework of doing Indigenous research supports a nascent Indigenous theory of archiving, as well. Scholars of archival theory and Indigenous studies should listen to Indigenous people concerning their bodies of cultural knowledge found in the oral tradition. Peter Nabokov describes indigenous historiography that serves the interests of contemporary Indigenous peoples, discussing the multiple ways that

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142 Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?”, 146.
144 Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?”, 147-150.
145 In addition to the importance of context, audience, and the role of the storyteller, the stories are often repeated several times over the course of a person’s life.
Indigenous peoples may be served through ethical historian methodologies. Nabokov avoids romantic or essentialist interpretations that turn Indigenous people into either “benighted savages” or “nature poets.” He states, “In dispersed journal articles and the occasional anthology . . . in more recent years there has appeared an encouraging trickle of specific, often localized studies on American Indian historicity.” He quotes Raymond D. Fogelson to define Indigenous historicity: “native writing of native history from a native perspective.” This idea applies to Indigenous archiving of Indigenous history through oral tradition, seen here as a process shaped by the perspectives of storytellers and their audiences in specific cultural contexts and time frames. Histories about Indigenous peoples should take into account the multiple perspectives from the Indigenous narrators that tell their histories in relation to the histories archived about them by non-Indigenous writers, artists, and collectors. Conjointly, the inside and outside boundaries between “the Self” and “the Other,” the settler and the Indigenous, are sometimes blurry; the false binary category of Indigenous and settler most often loses sight of how human beings influence each other culturally, thus transforming cultural practices over time.

I retold Azana’s story in this chapter in order to demonstrate the vast differences between Assiniboine people telling their own history in their own voices and an outside written history about them; I also did this to highlight the importance of Indigenous peoples’ agency in controlling the discourse about their people. The discourse about Azana’s journey in its shifting form, and what it meant for the Assiniboine people, is still largely unknown to non-Assiniboine people. In short, Azana’s story and his legacy for the Assiniboine have never been analyzed to inform the larger debate about Indigenous people controlling their own archival processes.

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147 Nabokov, A Forest of Time, 10.
148 Ibid., 25.
149 Ibid., 21.
150 If Assiniboine perspectives on this history are not part of standard Montana or U.S. history school curricula, I certainly think they should be. I cannot speak to how many Assiniboine are familiar with this story.
Indigenous archivists serve their own communities’ interests by continuing to tell stories about their ancestors’ experiences during the period of Western expansion and colonization. Indigenous cultural practitioners also preserve their cultural knowledge through performing oral histories. Indigenous cultural practices, such as oral histories, have created complex intersections between the individuals and the collective constructions of Assiniboine identity that sit in contrast to outside cultural representations, such as George Catlin’s paintings, or histories about them, such as John Ewers’s “When the Light Shown in Washington.” Assiniboine have gained more control over their ongoing cultural transformations through their own archival processes.151

What is important about Assiniboine preservation of cultural knowledge is that it emerges from people knowledgeable and experienced in Assiniboine cultural practices, such as language, ceremonies, and important sacred sites. While there is no singular Assiniboine perspective about how to maintain their cultural practices and history, Assiniboine perspectives about the importance of the oral tradition stand strong. In order for the Assiniboine to preserve their cultural knowledge, there must be knowledge there for them to preserve; people like Azana and Robert Four Star have kept cultural knowledge alive under duress. In this work, they were neither insular nor so diffused that they lost cultural distinctness found in their structural cosmology of the world.

Through an analysis of Azana, some of his descendants, and interviews with contemporary Assiniboine people, this examination has clarified the different archival purposes found between settlers’ narratives and images about Assiniboine history with Assiniboine peoples’ own oral histories. These stories about Azana from within the community, when contrasted with those narratives from without, describe encounters between “the Self” and “the Other,” the indigene and the settler, the writer/artist/historian and her subject. Settler images of Azana represented what became stereotypes about Indigenous peoples facing American imperialism on the Northern Plains. Up until the 1970s, non-Indigenous historians assumed that Assiniboine or Indigenous peoples were

151 For example, they produced a recent video about the Lewis and Clark expedition using Assiniboine actors, artwork, and language; they continue to manage the tribally controlled Fort Peck Community College and Fort Belknap Community College; they led one of the first efforts for a tribally managed Wellness Center at Fort Peck; and the Fort Peck Community College recently published their own book, For example, see David Miller, Dennis Smith, Joseph R. McGeshick, James Shanley, and Caleb Shields, The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000 (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2008).
unable to speak for themselves. Thus, it is important to see that Assiniboine narratives about Azana highlight the agency of Assiniboine people in shaping history.

Oral tradition for the Assiniboine people continues to be a vital way of not only maintaining their own cultural continuity but also informing how they see their role in the world. With other ways of keeping their histories alive, such as ceremony, territorial knowledge, writing histories, and artwork, the oral tradition shines bright in the constellation of Assiniboine knowledge keepers. Standing alone, the oral tradition, like the others just mentioned, has certain limits. Oral histories vary within communities and change over time. By definition, the oral tradition requires a living audience of listeners, people who will remember the stories, and who in turn will tell others within a dynamic cultural context—one that is constantly shaping and being shaped by the power to archive knowledge over time.

As Assiniboine strengthen their oral traditions for their own people, they exercise self-determination in the present and for their future. Assiniboine narratives told in oral histories, songs, visual representations, or performed in rituals, such as naming ceremonies, are functions of an Assiniboine way of archiving cultural knowledge while at the same time, keeping it alive. The Assiniboine have been telling their own version of history long before their encounters with westward expansionist settlers, whether through rock art, buffalo hides, or oral history, and ever since, in spoken word, written texts, dance, song, pictures, and art. These cultural practices are indicative of what I call an Indigenous archiving process. For Assiniboine knowledge keepers, the oral tradition is essential to the Medicine Lodge, which I discuss in Chapter 3, and vital to Assiniboine ways of sustaining their own cultural system and their own worldview.

Similar to a medicine bag that holds different ceremonial objects that are specifically meaningful for the cultural practitioner, after hearing and contemplating Azana’s story in various forms over several years, I realized that the other ways of keeping knowledge alive were significant parts of his story for Assiniboine people. In order to see their individual uniqueness, I discuss these other ways of keeping knowledge alive in subsequent chapters, such as ceremony, sacred sites, written texts, and artwork. In the concluding Chapter 7, I reaffirm that these ways of keeping knowledge alive work together rather than separately.
Chapter 3: Wiotijaka (Medicine Lodge), 1880-2012

For any people to make genesis accounts, turning points, and even key figures in their collective past convincingly part of their present, they usually do more than talk together … people often feel the need to move together.
– Peter Nabokov¹⁵²

What I have learned comes from the [Medicine] Lodge, from the Sweat Lodge, to have a good heart.
– Armand McArthur (Assiniboine Medicine Lodge Leader)¹⁵³

Like entering through a temple’s doorway, the first Assiniboine Medicine Lodge that I experienced, in the summer of 1996, introduced me to Assiniboine cosmology. It was through this first Medicine Lodge that I began to learn what it meant to be Assiniboine. Since that introduction, I have continued to attend Assiniboine Medicine Lodges almost every year. No ceremony I have seen before or since matches the intensity of the sacrifice, beauty, and power of an Assiniboine Medicine Lodge.

Jeff Cummins, an enrolled member in the Assiniboine of Fort Peck, fellow alumnus of UCSC, and a member of the Student Alliance of North American Indians, invited me to drive with him to my first Medicine Lodge in June 1996.¹⁵⁴ Once we arrived at Fort Peck, we were invited to a purification ceremony, which was a sweat lodge for all of the dancers and families. This sweat lodge was big enough for about 20 relatively large men, and sat at in a location called Chicken Hill, in a small forest on the northern bank of the winding Missouri River (Mini Shoshe or Muddy Water). I was struck by the sense of humor and friendly manner that most of the cultural practitioners showed, even to a stranger like me.

The next day, I attended a procession that started at the Medicine Lodge’s leader’s house, Larry Wetsit (He-Wets-The Arrow), in Wolf Point. This caravan of cars and trucks stopped four times to smoke the sacred pipe in a circle in the wild grasses during the journey. The caravan moved first west and then north of a tiny town called Aswego, on a gravel road to the site where the Lodge had been held for the last few decades. Upon

¹⁵³ Armand McArthur Interview, June 28, 2012, at his home, Pheasant Rump Reserve, Saskatchewan.
¹⁵⁴ Jeff was also a good friend of mine. We had both attended a sweat lodge in the San Jose, California foothills run by a Blackfeet cultural adviser, Gary Middle Rider, which was meant mostly for veterans.
entering this site, older lodge poles, skeletons of sacred structures, lay scattered on a flattened circular hill surrounded by wheat fields and fences, a site which held a broad view that looks south to the Missouri River bottom. From this vantage point, situated near Highway 2 and the railroad tracks that connect east and west, all other signs of civilization disappear; only the sage-green rolling hills exist, along with the azure sky with its exploding cumulus cotton clouds above. For the Assiniboine, facing south marks a beginning place in the immemorial past, felt in the present, and looking towards an uncertain future.

There was a third traveling companion with us named Jacob Manatowa-Bailey, and he, Jeff, and I were all asked to help out in various ways with the Medicine Lodge over the next three days. Jeff, being a veteran, was invited into the very important Ogichidabi (Warrior Society). Jacob was asked to keep the fire lit through the night. I helped Oliver Archdale, a Medicine Man, gather sage and other plants, and I also assisted the dancers. We would each witness two lodges (teepees) put together to form what locals call in English “God’s House.” It was within this structure that everyone gathered to hear stories from veterans and sing sacred songs late into that Thursday’s star-filled night. Then, first thing on Friday morning, beginning after sunrise, the warriors gathered everyone around a tall and straight cottonwood, the sacred center-pole, which they had “stalked” like prey just as the sun was rising. The dancers who had begun their fast were to help construct what looked like a great cottonwood roundhouse, or nest: a green wall of cottonwood branches on the outside; a roof of large poles adorned with broad cotton cloth four yards in length in four colors, red, blue, white, and yellow; and a doorway facing south, meant for inviting the spirits. Here the dancers and singers would pray for the next two nights and three days. In a way, the whole of Assiniboine cosmology is represented by the Medicine Lodge. For Assiniboine cultural practitioners, within those walls of the cottonwood, beats the center of the universe: the four directions, the sacred earth, the water, the fire, the sky and heavens, and all the animals, plants, and people.

Several years later, after participating in Assiniboine cultural practices, living within various Assiniboine communities, and while working on this dissertation, I realized that ceremony is one way that Indigenous peoples keep embodied cultural knowledge in circulation. Assiniboine ritual practices and ceremonies, such as the
Medicine Lodge, serve as functions of preservation, and must be understood within the Assiniboine systems of meaning. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explore ceremony as an Indigenous method of archiving. For Assiniboine cultural practitioners, the Medicine Lodge is one of their most important ceremonies; it is a renewal of life through collective prayer, and the movement of bodies through space, in the acts of dancing, singing, and fasting. Medicine Lodges draw the Assiniboine together annually from June through July on several of the nine reserves throughout Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

This chapter has five parts. In the first, I explicate my argument and define the Medicine Lodge as a way of archiving through embodied action. In part two, I show how this embodied action operates within the symbolic meanings, functions, and structures of the Medicine Lodge. In part three, I give a brief chronology of historical descriptions of Medicine Lodges by settlers and ethnographers. In part four, I describe U.S. and Canadian policies that disciplined Assiniboine bodies, primarily through boarding schools and the suppression of ceremonies. Finally, in the fifth part, I discuss how embodied ceremonial practice, as a way of keeping Indigenous knowledge alive, relates to conventional Western notions of what an archive means and represents. Subsequently, embodied ceremonial practice, as seen through the Medicine Lodge, differs from the other ways of archiving mainly because it requires living human bodies moving together in a shared purpose of cultural preservation.

Conventional Western notions of archives, though important as mechanisms to preserve information, are insufficient in keeping knowledge alive for Indigenous communities. Some bodies of sacred knowledge cannot be preserved in these Western ways; an attempt to do so would often be “off limits,” or taboo, from the perspective of certain Indigenous authorities. Nonetheless, it seems to me that almost all peoples, from secular nation-states to Indigenous communities, utilize ceremonies and ritualized performances to instil a sense of shared meaning kinaesthetically, so that ideas can be maintained over time. In this larger sense, ceremonies may thus be seen as mechanisms

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for people who see themselves as a community-group with a shared system of meaning. Ceremonies help them to sustain bodies of knowledge over time on their own terms, such as a university graduation or the inauguration of an American president by a member of the clergy. I believe that scholars in Western academies have undervalued ceremonial practices as ways of archiving. With this chapter, I intend to show that ceremonies are an alternative way of keeping knowledge alive.

This chapter does not reveal personal, sacred, secret, or private information. It also does not give instructions on how to conduct Assiniboine ceremonies. In this sense, being informed by Assiniboine perspectives, but writing for a scholarly audience, I traverse an invisible line between the surface and the interior of Assiniboine cosmologies. By listening to the Assiniboine voices in the interviews that I recorded as they expressed their own subjectivity, and by examining archival documents, it is my conclusion that the Medicine Lodge can be seen as a vehicle of sustaining a sense of self and peoplehood, one which helps define what it means to be Assiniboine.

In the noun form of the term “archive,” I define the Medicine Lodge as a physical and temporal organization of objects that carries meaning for Assiniboine people as seen from their own experiential perspectives, and also see that Medicine Lodge practitioners are the keepers, or “archivists,” of this knowledge. In the infinitive verb “to archive,” I define the Medicine Lodge as a way of preserving knowledge over time through embodied actions, such as dancing, singing, and praying. I define wakan (sacred) ritual practices for Assiniboine people as embodied actions that instil shared meaning through lived experience.

For clarity, my use of the term “embodiment” that is inherent in this ceremony is drawn from Diana Taylor’s definition of “performance,” found in her study of political contestation in the Americas, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003). Taylor argues that “… we learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, through cultural agency, and by making choices. Performance for me, functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, for Taylor, historical agents deploy

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¹⁵⁶ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), xvi. Also, for a discussion on the idea of “embodiment,” see Brenda M. Farnell, *Do you see what I mean?: Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995; Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); and George Lakoff and
performativity in a “repertoire” that questions the power to claim legitimate knowledge solely in Western archival terms. As Taylor states, “If performance did not transmit knowledge, only the literate and powerful could claim social memory and identity,”\textsuperscript{157} and further that “[b]y taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by ‘knowledge.’”\textsuperscript{158} Adding to Taylor’s claims, I use the concept of embodiment and performativity through ceremonial activity as an additional, or alternative, way of keeping bodies of cultural knowledge alive for Indigenous peoples.

My previous work in experiential education also informs my use of the terms embodiment and performativity. Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) scholar Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyers calls the experiential education that is utilized in Native Hawaiian schools “embodied knowing.”\textsuperscript{159} Meyers distinguishes “knowledge” from “knowing” through kinaesthetic experience, thus transforming the word “knowledge” as a noun into a verb form, “knowing,” through action. Native Hawaiians have a saying, “maka hana ka ike,” which may be translated as, “the learning is in the doing.” I experienced this Kanaka Maoli value, amongst many others, while teaching at a Native Hawaiian charter school, the Hakipu’u Learning Center, in its founding school year of 2001-2002. The Kanaka Maoli ohana (family) that directed and founded this school emphasized learning through engaging in cultural activities, such as weaving with plants, working in the kalo (taro) fields or lo’i (fish ponds), and learning the native language, chants, and origin stories.\textsuperscript{160}

Participating in these cultural activities at Hakipu’u had a direct influence on my work with the Assiniboine at Wamakasha Oeti (Bison Camp), which I founded and directed from 2002 to 2005, with the guidance of a local community committee at Fort Peck. Families at Bison Camp engaged in a variety of embodied cultural activities. Embodied knowledge through ceremony for the Kanaka Maoli, as for the Assiniboine, is essential for understanding their sense of peoplehood and well-being, through the acts of

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\textsuperscript{157} Taylor, \textit{The Archive and the Repertoire}, xvii.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{159} Meyer, \textit{Ho’olu: Our Time of Becoming}.

\textsuperscript{160} This is thoroughly discussed in my master’s education thesis. See Josh Horowitz, “Wamakashka Oeti” (master’s thesis, Dominican University of California, 2003).
performing their sacred values with their physical bodies. Ceremonies, such as Hula Kahiko (ancient hula) for Kanaka Maoli, and the Medicine Lodge for Assiniboine, exemplify how embodied knowledge through dance, song, drumming, and the use of specific plants, animals, colors, and so on transmits meaning between members of a collective group.

The Medicine Lodge is performed as a life-sustaining practice for Assiniboine communities, as well as for the broader world. As Peter Nabokov argues in *A Forest of Time* (2002), there are several aspects to Indigenous ceremonies that require examination in order to respect them as “ritualized history.” Nabokov correctly claims that rituals enable Indigenous peoples to renew their cultural values, remember where they came from, and resist the corrosive effects of colonization, settlement, and national assimilation.

Understanding ceremonies as a way of keeping knowledge alive requires some degree of immersion in the symbolic system of a particular community. In his chapter “Renewing, Remembering, and Resisting,” Nabokov provides a personal anecdote of first encountering a Crow adoption ceremony in 1962 along the “banks of the Little Bighorn River,” in which he “had no clue what was going on.” Over 20 years later, in the 1980s, after several years of dissertation research and forging relationships with Crow people, Nabokov was momentarily “conscripted” into that same ceremony, through an act of reciprocity, where he both gave and received simultaneously. This time around he not only understood the ceremony’s meaning, but was actively transformed by it. As Nabokov states, “No one should observe ‘outside’ this symbolically created world or fail to ratify its power; bystanding was not an option.” Nabokov reminds us that a deeper degree of understanding a people’s cosmology, the very cultural context in which ceremonies take place, is accomplished only through experiential participation. In my

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161 Nabokov, *Forest of Time*, 172.
162 Ibid., 172.
163 Ibid., 176. I should clarify that Nabakov was not adopted here, but called into part of the ceremony aftermath with a specific name of a Crow ancestor that he had studied and written about. As a researcher of Indigenous studies, this is important to acknowledge: that understanding the internal meanings as a partial participant, after years of building trust, is different from interpreting cultural aspects from the outside and as a bystander. Also, as an aside, Nabokov was my professor of Native American Folklore my freshman year in 1988 at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in the same year he submitted his dissertation at U.C. Berkeley.
164 Ibid., 176.
own examination, I have some degree of understanding the internal cosmology as taught to me by Assiniboine knowledge-keepers and gained over the course of 16 years of participation in Assiniboine ceremonies, though my understanding is still only partial.\textsuperscript{165} Of course, each participant of a particular ceremony will have their own unique interpretation of it as it is individually experienced, but this will still be within a shared field of symbolic meanings.

Ceremonies for Indigenous communities, as for whole nation-states,\textsuperscript{166} are mechanisms that link collective pasts to the present through embodied action, so that future generations have a path to follow. According to Nabokov, in this way, “They commit bodies, gestures, voices, and stagecraft to dramatized and/or danced enactments or tableaus of the sacred histories that either originally chartered or, more commonly reconsolidated their ancestral communities.”\textsuperscript{167}

Indigenous ceremonies, as Nabokov points out, not only help to sustain identities and histories, but also work to resist erosion by assimilation:

\ldots many Indian religious pageants or ritual cycles of central sacramental significance to their tribe’s identity do seem to fit the Native requirements for ‘doing history’—honoring and preserving their self-conceived pasts by representing them through symbolic regalia and routinized \ldots expressive behaviors.\textsuperscript{168}

I would add further that Indigenous peoples use their ceremonies, such as the Medicine Lodge, not only to protect and sustain their remembered pasts but also to foster a greater healing for the world. When embodied action expresses a collective past in the present in order to sustain it for a future existence, the noun “archive” becomes the active verb

\textsuperscript{165} I was both honored and privileged to have been adopted, accepted, and acculturated into the Medicine Lodge society after I had lived there for a year, and after my first invitation to the Fort Peck Medicine Lodge in 1996. The same standards of doing Indigenous research, so eloquently asserted by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her work Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), apply to me as well: both then and now, I strove to meet the standards of both my Assiniboine community and my UBC academic community.


\textsuperscript{167} Nabokov, 173. This is a similar idea to Meyer’s “knowing.”

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 177.
“archiving,” specifically through performativity.  

As may be the case for other Indigenous peoples, Assiniboine ceremonies help to sustain what it means to be Assiniboine. Without the Medicine Lodge and other important ceremonial practices, the Assiniboine might cease to exist as a distinct people. Assiniboine ceremonial practices require individuals to apprentice under snonkwaya whichasha (“knowledge-keepers”).

In this chapter, through descriptions given by Assiniboine people about the Medicine Lodge and my own participation since 1996, I intend to examine how Indigenous ceremonies serve as methods of keeping knowledge alive, but also show that they are ongoing and contested processes that change over time, rather than remaining fixed. In this sense, Indigenous ceremonial practices, as ways of archiving, are shared spaces of meaning through experiential ritual, such as painting a color onto a person’s body to signify a season, a cardinal direction, or a set of values. These practices are kinaesthetic, embodied, and experiential, meaning that the practitioner uses their whole being in the ritual: body, mind, and spirit all work together, as they move through space and time. These rituals may include burning sage or sweet grass and greeting the dawn, or filling a sacred pipe in a specific manner with plants that have been gathered and cured in precise ways. They also may include dancing, drumming, or singing particular songs that have been passed on from one person to another as gifts that are as valuable as physical objects or currency.

The Medicine Lodge is perhaps the most important ceremony for Assiniboine people, who gather together from distant locations for a common purpose. As Dennis Smith, an enrolled Assiniboine historian and professor at University of Nebraska states,

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169 For an example of this, see Nabokov’s discussion of the “Pueblo Tricentennial Run of 1980,” in *Forest of Time*, 191.

170 After living at Fort Peck and teaching in Poplar Schools, and through MY adoption by Robert Four Star, I began dancing in the Medicine Lodge in 1997 (along with Jeff for the following four years). I completed the four-year commitment in 2000, and return almost every summer to support the Medicine Lodge society. I have also assisted Medicine Lodge singers, such as Robert Four Star, on several other reserves, such as Fort Belknap and Blackfeet reservations in Montana, and Stoney reserves in Morley, Alberta. My description of the Medicine Lodge largely comes from experience and participant observation. It also includes information that my interviewees shared with me, and have given me their permission to relay. Also, several Assiniboine-produced texts, which are examined in greater detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, also provide descriptions of Medicine Lodges. My intent is to give the reader a sense of the structure, meaning, and history of the Medicine Lodge as central to Assiniboine identity and culture. It is not to give a “how to” explanation of the events that transpire, or to expose sacred (and often secret) personal information.
“Vital to Assiniboine sacred life is the Medicine Lodge, or sun dance, a collective annual ceremony usually held in June.” The majority of other Assiniboine ceremonies are directly related to the Medicine Lodge, as well. Assiniboine and their invited friends from other tribes and nations gather together, such that the Medicine Lodge functions like the hub of a wheel, with many spokes that connect to other communities. Ceremonies act as centers of gravity that pull in distant relations—people who share the same cultural practices.

Other ceremonies besides the Medicine Lodge also exemplify Assiniboine ways of keeping cultural knowledge alive. Some examples include the Inibi (Sweat Lodges), Wahichiyabi (spirit callings), naming and adoption ceremonies, wakan í (vision quests or “sitting on the hill”), and daily-life activities, such as pipe ceremonies, gathering medicines, hunting, singing, and the interpretations of dreams. All Assiniboine ceremonies and sacred beliefs revolve around the idea of wakan. As Dennis Smith states, for Assiniboine who are also traditional cultural practitioners, wakan is:

… applied to anything which is sacred, mysterious, and incomprehensible to man. All things in the physical world—including plants, animals, waters, rocks, and celestial bodies—are considered living beings, each possessed with spirits, and manifestations of wakan. Although not personified, the creator is known as Wakan Tanga (sacred, mysterious, incomprehensible, large, big).

Robert Four Star instructed me that the Creator also goes by the names Dagu Wakan Shka-Shka, which literally translates as “What Sacred Moves Moves,” and Wagondowa Makoche Gaka, which in English means “Above Earth Maker”.

Not coincidently, the idea of movement, shka, or “to move,” is also central to Assiniboine cosmology, as well as how knowledge is transmitted through bodies in motion. I observed in ceremonies, for example, that Assiniboine cultural practitioners pray facing first south, and then move their bodies in the directions of west, north, east,

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171 See Dennis Smith, “Fort Peck Assiniboines to 1800,” in The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000, by David Miller, Dennis Smith, Joseph R. McGeshick, James Shanley, and Caleb Shields (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2008), 22. Dennis Smith is an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine, and a professor of history at the University of Nebraska.

172 This idea of a “hub” that connects Indigenous peoples is a concept I borrow from Renya Ramirez’s examination of urban Indigenous communities in her Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

and then returning south. This observation was informed by a study of embodiment, as found in Assiniboine (Plains Indian Sign) language, drawn from Brenda Farnell’s *Do You See What I Mean? Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action* (2009).\(^\text{174}\)

Similar to other Assiniboine oral histories, these narratives are fragments and angles of an Assiniboine vision about embodied actions. Further, drawing on Farnell’s examination, Raymond Gibb affirms:

> The Assiniboine philosophy of ‘being-in-the-world’ makes body movement fundamental as a way of knowing . . . physical being is essential to the attainment of power. For example, prayer is a highly embodied activity where bodily suffering in the hot steam of a sweat lodge and from fasting and periods of isolation provides a significant pathway to seeking and giving power.\(^\text{175}\)

This exemplifies that Assiniboine cultural practitioners have both precise and complex ways of positioning their bodies spatially in relation to the cardinal directions when conducting ceremonies. Actions may also include putting their hands on trees or rocks, standing or sitting, not laying down to rest during a ceremony with one’s back facing the ground, facing south when singing certain songs, or turning to face the four directions while praying, taking a medicinal plant, or smoking the sacred pipe, called a Chanuba Wakan.

Out of the 20 people who I interviewed for this work, only four do not currently attend Assiniboine Medicine Lodges for personal reasons of their own. Nevertheless, everyone I interviewed respects Assiniboine ceremonies, especially the ways they were conducted by their ancestors. Due to the fact that the Medicine Lodge was my first induction into the greater Assiniboine community, the majority of my contacts, consultants, and friends do participate in the Medicine Lodge, and in Assiniboine ceremonies in general.

Some of my interviewees reported that they learned about certain ceremonies from their elders, who took them to observances as children, such as Robert Four Star’s

\(^{174}\) For an excellent analysis of Assiniboine embodied actions in relation to territory, see Farnell, *Do you see what I mean?*, 5. Gil Horn, currently in his 90s and a resident of Fort Belknap, was also one of my interviewees. Robert Four Star told me that Gil Horn (one of his elders) was a prisoner of war in a Japanese military camp in the Philippines during World War II. While a prisoner, he engaged in Plains Sign Talk with a fellow Cree prisoner across cages. A Japanese guard said that he would teach them Japanese if they taught him PST.

mother, Evelyn Archdale. Others stated that they learned ceremonial practices later in life, from leaders such as Robert Four Star. Lucy Reddekopp, an Assiniboine resident of Wolf Point, told me that she was inspired to learn more about what it means to be Assiniboine after reading books, such as John Neihardt’s Black Elk Speaks (1932). Lucy said that once the youth, or any person, has a desire to know more about their culture, ceremonies are key: “once the kids, people, start having sweats … I think that’s where they need to start … you know … to have some good elder to teach them … because you don’t learn unless you have a mentor … . We all have to have a mentor of some sort.” Lucy described a powerful and personal transformation after living a life submerged in the unhealthy effects of alcohol and the shame of not knowing about her culture. After she had a dream in which one of her ancestors visited her, Robert Four Star interpreted that dream for her; this process then inspired her to participate in the Medicine Lodge. Though she currently practices Christianity, she stated that she sees “little difference” between Assiniboine religion, symbolized in her words as the “pipe and the Eagle feather,” and Christianity, “the cross and the church.” From her perspective, her name expresses this commonality: her Assiniboine name, Amba Wakan Wiya (Sacred Day Woman) was given to her by Oliver Archdale. Oliver explained to her that this name conveys a deeper meaning, because Sunday is sacred, as it is the last day of the Medicine Lodge and because it is also the Christian day of Sabbath.

Similar to Jesus for Christianity, Assiniboine believe that a spirit, Mitugashi Honksheetugapa (Grandfather First Boy), the deity of the South, first introduced the Medicine Lodge ceremony to them centuries ago. Robert Four Star told me that the Medicine Lodge was brought to the Northern Plains to bring rain after a long period of drought. From Assiniboine peoples’ perspectives, the central tenet of the Medicine Lodge is to renew life for all living beings. In Assiniboine language, the Medicine Lodge is called both Wiotijaka, which literally translates as “to make the dwelling of cloth,” and Tibi Tanga, which stands for “Big Lodge,” where the “ti” in “tibi” means “living” and the

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176 Robert Four Star Interview #1 (Video), June 12, 2009, in his home two miles West of Wolf Point, MT. See Robert Four Star, Interview Bios, Appendices A.
178 Lucy Reddekopp Interview, July 3, 2012, in her home, Wolf Point, Montana.
“bi” means “beings” or “many.” Oliver Archdale told me that Wiotijaka means “to make the old-time religion.”

He told me this after he had received instructions from his “Grandfather” spirits who visited him in a dream. They spoke to him in Assiniboine and told him to give me the name of Wiotijaka Numbe, which he translated as the Maker of the Old Time Religion Two Times. This was in the late fall of 1998, after I had visited the Medicine Lodge site. He told me that the Grandfathers gave me this name because I came from a different people, Seneca or Jewish, and because I also danced in the Medicine Lodge and was adopted as a son by Robert Four Star.

Though there is no one singular Assiniboine perspective on the Medicine Lodge or on Assiniboine ceremonies, Assiniboine people share a common understanding regarding their unique cosmology. This cosmology includes a variable set of beliefs in a spirit world, ancestor spirits, and sentient beings found in nature, such as animals, plants, and weather patterns. Medicine Lodges deeply engage with local ecology, as the waxchinja (cottonwood tree), pezh xoda (sage), pezhiskuya wachâga (sweetgrass), wamakashka (bison), wamni (eagle), and other plants and animals from the location plays a central role in the ceremony. All the elements are also considered as sentient beings, including the sun, moon, stars, Makoche Wakan (Sacred Earth), rain, hail, snow, thunder and lightning, and with mini (water) as the most important essence of life. Through the supplication of the dancer’s prayers and suffering, the Wagiya Itacha (Chief Thunderbirds) cause the rain to fall from the clouds.

Assiniboine see themselves as both distinct from and similar to other Indigenous peoples in terms of cultural beliefs, values, and practices. In one instance, I heard some Assiniboine say that they are very similar to Dakota or Lakota. At another moment, however, I heard the same people say they are quite different from the Dakota or Lakota;

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179 I learned this from Robert Four Star in his language class, and from the Assiniboine-language book written by Kenny Ryan. On different reserves, Assiniboine have different words for the Medicine Lodge.

180 Many Assiniboine people believe that plants, such as sage, and weather, such as storm clouds are sentient beings that should be respected and acknowledged as such.

181 In this description of the Medicine Lodge, I intend to represent the structural framework that orients Assiniboine values, practices, and understandings from their own perspectives, as reported to me in interviews, through my participant observation, and through Assiniboine-produced texts. For more on this, see the methodology section in the Introduction to this dissertation. As I state there, and reiterate here, I will not reveal sacred, personal, and secret information, nor will I over-apply a foreign theoretical set of assumptions onto Nakona ways of being and the manners in which they preserve cultural knowledge.
that though both might use the sacred pipe and have similar ceremonies, they have different colors for the four directions, deities, and separate purposes for their ceremonies.

In an interview with Robert Four Star after my first Medicine Lodge, he told me the ceremony’s main purpose. Robert said that “we bring our prayer cloth and they [the dancers and leaders] pray for us; we bring our songs and come from different areas and they appreciate that, just like we completed today.”182 He also said that the original Medicine Lodges conducted in the old ways brought rain: that they were literally rain-dances. The main idea in the contemporary Assiniboine world is that prayers for sustaining life requires sacrifice through suffering, fasting, dancing, clothing (which in ancient times were hides), and the songs and drumming that go along with them.

Through the seasons, there are three Medicine Lodge singings, held after the first full moon of the fall equinox in September, the winter solstice in December, and the spring equinox in March. At these singings, they smoke the sacred pipe and sing Medicine Lodge songs, which have been passed down over several generations and that speak to all of the relations described above, such as the animals and plants. They share a feast of mostly hand-gathered foods, such as June berry soup and dry meat soup with hominy, which are made by specific cooks and passed out by selected helpers (called the cooking society) in a precise manner. Most importantly, at these singings, a family often sponsors the Big Lodge for the following June. They gather for the same purposes during the December winter solstice following the first full moon, and in the spring equinox when they gather the components required for the wótowa (sacred bundle). The bundle contains 68 braids of sweet grass, coloured cotton cloth, and the prayers of the families that sponsor the Big Lodge that takes place after the first full moon, around the summer solstice. Between March and June, the family is responsible of taking care of the bundle like it is a living being.

Time, space, geography, and meaning are all intertwined for Assiniboine people. Ceremonies “give you direction in life; they give you your own identity; the ceremony was given to the Indian people; I believe that once the ceremonies start coming back to

182 Robert Four Star Interview #2 (Video), May 30, 2010, at his office on the campus of the Fort Peck Community College, Wolf Point, Montana.
the people, the Indian people will find themselves — eh?” Mike Lonechild stated in my interview with him.¹⁸³ Mike Lonechild said further that “the old people said, we have a way; this is our way; that in order to find ourselves we are going to have to find who we really are,” and to find that way ceremonies were given by the Creator carried on by the old people.¹⁸⁴ Each season corresponds to a geographical direction, a Grandfather or Grandmother deity, animals, and a colour. Summer is associated with south (widógah); the colour red (shã); My Grandfather First Boy (Mitugashi Honkshee Tugapa); and the values of health, happiness, and love. The land in the south is called maštá makóce (the hot land). Fall is associated with west (wiyóhpeya); and the colour blue (inde); My Grandfather Thunderbird (Mitugashi Wagiya Itacha); all of the chief animals such as Chief Buffalo, Wolf, and Eagle; and the values of strength, endurance, and humility. Winter is associated with the north (wazíyam); the colour white (ska); My Grandfather with the Long White Hair (Mitugashi Pahaskaska); all of the white animals, such as the White Bear (Matóska); and the values of purity and wisdom. Spring is associated with the east (wiyohabam); the colour yellow (zi); My Grandmother Following Day Woman (Mikushi Amba Heeyaiessa); all of the ancestors living on the other side of the Great River in the Sky (Wánagi Ochangu, which means the Milky Way, and which is translates specifically as Spirit Road); and the values of gratitude and respect. The Medicine Lodge is thus designed and organized according to these directions, seasons, colours, and deities.

The structure of the Medicine Lodge corresponds with the spiritual framework of wichatacha (the human body), the Makoche Wakan (Sacred Earth), and the universe, which is symbolically represented by a circular dwelling. On the first day, which is usually a Thursday, and before the Medicine Lodge begins, the Medicine Lodge society and all of the dancers who have committed to dance migrate from the Lodge leader’s house and stop four times to smoke the pipe on the way to the Lodge site. For the Medicine Lodge that I attend, this is traditionally north of Aswego.¹⁸⁵ As I experienced

¹⁸³ Mike Lonechild Interview, June 28, 2012, in the home of Francis and Yvonne Lonechild, White Bear Reserve, Saskatchewan. Mike Lonechild is Cree-Assiniboine and a participant in several Medicine Lodges. See Mike Lonechild, Interview-Bios in Appendices A.
¹⁸⁴ Mike Lonechild Interview, June 28, 2012, in the home of Francis and Yvonne Lonechild.
¹⁸⁵ In the “old days,” meaning pre-twentieth century, the Medicine Lodge took 12 days from beginning to end: four days to prepare; four days to travel to the site of the Lodge; and four days of dancing, fasting,
the first time, this is more than a twenty-mile journey accomplished by a caravan of cars and trucks driving across the reservation. Once at the site, a specific center is chosen, and two large lodges, tibis, are put together, which symbolize the Creator’s House. A painting of rainbows and the Wamakashka Itacha (Chief Buffalo) adorns one tibi, and a painting of Wagiya Itacha (Chief Thunderbird) is on the second tibi. That evening, veterans selected to join the Ogichada (Warrior Society) share stories from their experiences of war in order to turn participants’ minds toward why they are there and the importance of life. From my observations and participation, this sharing by the Ogichida and their integral role in the whole Medicine Lodge is a powerful way of healing old psychological wounds. After this, singers sing Lodge songs well past midnight, usually under a canopy of bright stars.

At sunrise the next morning, the Ogichada search for the Chawanka (Sacred Tree of Life), which is a waxchinja (cottonwood tree), found south of Aswego along the Missouri River’s forested banks. Once the Ogichida select the Chawanka, they go back to the campgrounds of the Lodge site and gather all of the people. From there they lead the people back to take the life of that the selected tree through a ceremony which involves smoking the chanuba wakan. The tree is then chopped down with axes. Once the tree falls, everyone rushes in and takes pieces of Chawanka’s body, meaning woodchips and small branches of leaves, for medicine that will protect and sustain life in their homes in the coming year.

Once the sacred tree has given its life so that the people may live fully, they bring it back to the campsite and place it in the center of a large circle, where the sacred bundle had been placed. Representations of the rainbow, Thunderbird, blue lightning, and the red path are carved and painted onto the tree by a designated and respected Assiniboine artist. I interviewed Nathan Beaudry, a Cree artist, who has been the carver of the sacred center pole since the 1990s, when he was asked by Kenny Ryan to participate. He grew up and lived in Wolf Point, Fort Peck, and is a valued member of the Assiniboine community there. Nathan Beaudry stated that painting and carving the sacred center pole singing, praying. In contemporary life, with work and school schedules, the Lodge has been shortened to four days total, so that people gather, begin their fast, and prepare on Thursday; build the Lodge on Friday; and dance from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, at which time there is a grand feast to break the fasting.
was the most humbling sacred honour in his life.\textsuperscript{186}

Surrounding the center tree are 16 tall posts. Four beams cross from the outer posts to the center tree from the four cardinal directions, and on these are yards of cloth in the four colours; each represents a direction, as discussed above. On the outer side, cottonwood branches with the leaves are placed for cover. On the inner side, shorter branches are positioned to create a stall for the dancers. Men dance in the west and women dance in the east. In the north, the Lodge leaders have an altar, a fire pit. In the northeast, the singers drum with small hand drums while sitting on a untanned bison hide. The doorway for people and spirits to enter and leave the Lodge faces south. As people enter, they move clockwise around the tree. The top of the Sacred Tree is considered the Thunderbird’s nest, or the center of the universe. Prayer cloths in many colours are tied around the tree.

Once the Lodge is built, the dancers enter with their gear and ceremonial regalia. The dancers represent baby Thunderbirds in a great Thunderbird nest. They dance, fast, and pray from sunrise to midnight until Sunday afternoon through any type of weather, with brief breaks between the sessions. On Sunday morning, before noon, there are usually several special ceremonies, such as healing, adoption, and naming ceremonies. Many of the male dancers choose to pierce the flesh of their chests with small wooden pegs that are attached to the top of the tree or to their backs to drag bison skulls around the perimeter of the Lodge; when this is complete, the dancers are like baby Thunderbirds, ready to leave the nest. After all the rituals are complete, usually by the late afternoon, there is a big feast and lots of giveaways.\textsuperscript{187} Four days later, the Lodge society buries the prayer cloths and the Medicine Bundle.

All the components that go into the ceremony are passed onto apprentices and relatives through participation and the oral tradition. The seasonal ceremonies connected with the Medicine Lodge, and the annual Medicine Lodge itself, generate historical consciousness through embodied oral tradition, songs, dancing, and ritual practice.

\textsuperscript{186} Nathan Beaudry, Sr., Interview, June 26, 2012, at his home, Wolf Point, Montana. See Nathan Beaudry, Sr., Interview Bios, Appendices A. I discuss Nathan and his artwork in more detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{187} “Giveaways” are common throughout Indigenous North American Plains communities, where individuals and their families mark important transitions, such as graduations, weddings, death of relatives, by distributing gifts to the community (including visitors and other guests).
Medicine Lodges literally emerge within those four days and submerge into the landscape over the course of the following year: people gather and construct them, the prayer cloths that were tied to the center pole are buried afterwards, and the skeleton limbs and branches are left to decay naturally. Meanwhile, the embodied knowledge that was experienced by participants lives on. The Assiniboine Medicine Lodge societies across the Northern Plains today have their own genealogy, histories of change, adaptation, and continuity, created from the reservation period to the very present.

In an interview with Jeff Cummins, he shared some of his experiences as a Vietnam veteran that he incorporated into the Ogichida (Warrior Society) in 1996. During this interview, Jeff experienced an emotional pull when discussing that initiation and return to his Assiniboine community: this was a significant honour that turned his personal life in a new direction, one toward his cultural roots. Jeff stated that he had operated radar to target incoming missiles during the war and experienced major stress and anxiety in this position, which eventually led to an honourable discharge, but many years of feeling “lost.” From early childhood, and into his late thirties, he was mostly disconnected from his Assiniboine culture and community. Jeff told the story about how Joe Miller, also a veteran of Vietnam, who had been a paratrooper during the war, and who was the Itacha (Chief) of the Ogichida Society and the current Hunga (Head Chief) of the Wadopana (Canoe Paddlers), had asked Jeff to join the Ogichida. This was a major turning point for Jeff, who was healed by, but was also able to give back to his Assiniboine culture through the ceremony. Jeff’s induction into this society resulted in his receiving the Assiniboine name of Makbia Ogichidae (Sky Warrior). He stated:

I was selected to help take the tree … I was very anxious … because I had never participated in that kind of ceremony … As a Vietnam vet I had never shared any of the experiences … my sense of confusion … or the feelings generated from the war … no one had ever offered to help me with that … and as a result of that it was a beginning … still makes me emotional … it was an answer—one of many answers that I was seeking—to questions sometimes I didn’t even know … how to present.\(^{188}\)

Since that first introduction into the Ogichida, Jeff said, “I have been able to help ensure that the Medicine Lodge, along with the other veterans … through the request of the

\(^{188}\) Jeff Cummins, Interview, June 12, 2012, in his home, Billings, Montana. See Jeff Cummins, Interview Bios in Appendices A.
Lodge and Joe Miller, to ensure that this culture—this practice—is continued.” When I asked how the Medicine Lodge helps him to remember, Jeff said:

… that’s pretty much … a touchstone of Assiniboine—what it means—the practice … being there and interacting is the culture … so for me doing that was kind of like taking me from Western society and putting me in Assiniboine life engaged … [it] further solidified my dream of being Assiniboine.

After that first Medicine Lodge in 1996, Jeff committed to four years of dancing, and he continues to participate in the Ogichida Society to the present day. In Jeff’s words, participation in the Medicine Lodge has given him:

The luxury of experiencing repeated telling of stories, singing of songs, practices of interactions with other Assiniboine people, protocol… [and] … has allowed me to bring my other sisters and brothers, siblings [of five], back to the Lodge … we have all received our Indian [Assiniboine] names, which makes me eternally happy because when I do pass I will be able to join my ancestors.

Jeff’s stories about the Medicine Lodge reveal the importance of embodied ceremonies: they are a form of keeping knowledge alive.

To summarize some of the ideas behind the Medicine Lodge, people from different reserves, and many living away from reserves, gather together to offer their prayers and songs, share medicine and stories specific to their home locations, receive Assiniboine names, and visit relatives and friends. Each Medicine Lodge has its own set of unique societies, leaders, members, songs, and ways of conducting the ceremony. Singers, dancers, and participants will often also travel to other Lodges to share songs, medicines, and to help out during the event. Each person has their own story regarding how they became familiar with the Medicine Lodge: their subjective experience is between only them and the spiritual forces of the Medicine Lodge.

The Assiniboine Medicine Lodges in the U.S. and Canada from the time of the earliest written colonial records in the mid-nineteenth century to the present have altered in outward appearance, or in the number of days, or in the location, or with particular protocols. At the same time, they have remained consistent in purpose. They use belief systems according to the oral tradition, despite their attempted suppression by

189 Jeff Cummins Interview, June 12, 2012, in his home, Billings, Montana.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
government agents, residential and boarding schools, or missionaries. The embodiment inherent in ceremonial activities is the main way that Assiniboine have kept bodies of knowledge alive. No amount of artwork, texts, oral stories, photographs, or recordings can replace embodied action as a way of preserving knowledge. Even so, it is important to understand the history of the individual texts, pictures, photographs, and descriptions of Medicine Lodges in order to evaluate the consistencies, variations, and omissions as they relate to the Medicine Lodge ceremonies.

The first published document and illustrations by Assiniboine hands that describe the Medicine Lodge are found in James Larpenteur Long’s *Land of the Nakoda* (1942). Long based the part about the Medicine Lodge on oral histories given to him by Standing Rattle, who was 79 years old at the time, and who was a Medicine Man, Medicine Lodge Leader, and a descendent of Azana.

In a brief five pages, James Long describes the Medicine Lodge and then relays the recorded oral history by Standing Rattle, writing:

In the old days the annual Medicine Lodge dance was a religious ceremony. It was the important event of the year—much as Christmas is to the white man except for the significance …. Today this ceremony is erroneously called ‘Sun Dance’ according to Standing, seventy-nine-year-old Medicine Man who still leads the dance each year.

Standing Rattle also gave some interesting details not mentioned elsewhere: “It is told that very long ago sacrifices were made to the Double Faced Being, a war god…In later years all prayers and offerings were made to Thunder Bird, the God of Rain.” Further along in his narrative, Long describes something that was no longer occurring as it had once been done: “Occasionally relatives who had been ill for a long time, were taken to

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192 See the 2004 edition of James Larpenteur Long, *Land of Nakoda: the story of the Assiniboine Indians, from the tales of the old ones told to First Boy (James L. Long)* (Helena, MT: Riverbend Pub. in cooperation with the Montana Historical Society Press, 2004), 169-174; a brief biography of Standing Rattle can be found on page 222. I think it is interesting that a person’s first name can become the last name of his progeny. In the 1961 edition of *The Assiniboine*, which was edited by Kennedy, this information is found on pages 150-172. In addition, see other Assiniboine texts that describe the Medicine Lodge by Dan Kennedy (Carry the Kettle), John Snow (Stoney), and *Tatanga Mani* (Stoney). I discuss this in more detail below, as well as in Chapter 4.

193 He was also the father of the illustrator William Standing, also known as Fire Bear, (who I discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). One of my interviewees, Cleo Hamilton, claimed Standing Rattle was her great-grandfather. Some of my interviewees reported that they do not attend the current Medicine Lodge because the leaders do not conduct the ceremony in the way that the older generations did.


195 Ibid., 171.
the dance and the headman was asked to treat them. Usual treatment was to make water flow by magic from the Medicine Pole into a container...,” a curative treatment for the sick, and “… one of the rare sights at a Medicine Lodge Dance. Only a Lodge Leader who had been given the power performed this act.”196 This phenomenon is occasionally referred to as an older, or a truer, sign of the real power of the Medicine Lodge, which has been lost.

Outsiders have also had many opinions about the Medicine Lodge. Fur traders at Fort Union produced the earliest written records about Medicine Lodges in the 1830s. The French fur trader Charles Larpenteur, who worked under Edwin Thompson Denig at Fort Union from the 1830s until his death in 1872, described the Medicine Lodge from an outsider’s perspective. In his edited journals, Forty Years a Fur Trader, Larpenteur states that: “The medicine lodge, which takes place once a year, in June, is conducted with the view to show how strong are Indians’ hearts, and to beg the Great Spirit to have mercy upon the tribe.”197 Larpenteur recorded what he calls the three forms of torture: three days and nights of fasting and dancing, “jumping up and down” with “crow” or “pelican” bone whistles, “… looking straight up to the center post of the lodge,” chests pierced with ropes tied to the center pole, and the dragging of buffalo skulls by skewers in their back shoulders. Larpenteur describes that when the “services” begin, the dancers, “are painted in all colors, looking like so many devils—men and women alike; the former are naked down to the waists, but the latter are dressed.”198 Larpenteur wrongly and offensively described dancers as “devils” and their bodily practices of fasting, vigorous dancing, and piercing as types of “torture,” and eagle-bone whistles as “pelican bones.” Even so, minus these offensive untruths, the Medicine Lodge as it is practiced today appears to remain largely true to this description, though the ceremony has been shortened.199

Denig, Larpenteur’s boss at Fort Union, also wrote about Assiniboine ceremonies. Denig was assigned by the American Fur Company to run Fort Union from about 1837 to the late 1850s. In response to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s questions, he wrote in the 1850s

197 Charles Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872 (Lincoln, NE; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 331-333. See also a description of Azanzana on page 343 of this book.
198 Larpenteur, Forty Years, 332.
199 James Larpenteur Long, the author of Land of Nakoda was Charles Larpenteur’s descendent, because Larpenteur’s wife was Assiniboine.
in his collection of information about Natives of North America. His descriptions were later compiled and edited in the “Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1928-1929.”

Denig writes that, “All these Indians [of the Upper-Missouri] believe in a Great Power, the First Cause of Creation, though they do not attempt to embody this idea, and call it by name Wah-con-tun-ga or Great Mystery.”

Regarding the Medicine Lodge, Denig mentions that the sun, thought to be a body of fire or the eye of the Creator, was “worshipped as the greatest visible symbol of the Great Mystery . . . . On some occasions councils are opened with fire struck from flint, such as peace-making between two nations, ceremonies in the medicine lodge, and feasts to the dead . . . .”

Though his descriptions barely scratch the surface of Assiniboine ritual practices, when they are compared to contemporary Medicine Lodges, they do show, much as Larpenteur’s texts do, that present Assiniboine cultural practitioners have sustained the basic functions of the Medicine Lodge.

About half a century after Denig, in 1909, a student of Franz Boas, a man named Robert Lowie, wrote an extensive ethnography about the Assiniboine that touches on both the loss of ceremonial participation because of missionary influences, as well as what had continued. Lowie had studied the mythology, language, history, and material culture of the Stoney Assiniboine in Morley, Alberta in 1907, and the Assiniboine of Fort Belknap in Montana in 1908. According to Lowie’s introduction regarding the Stoney, “Though very much of the ancient life had become completely effaced under the influence of missionary teaching, I was able to collect a reasonably large body of mythological material.” As a result, Lowie states he was advised to do further ethnology of Assiniboine at Fort Belknap, “in order to enlarge the inadequate conception of Assiniboine ethnology obtained from their Canadian kinsmen.”

Lowie’s descriptions of the Medicine Lodge at Fort Belknap reveal a consistent pattern as well. Lowie writes that the Medicine Lodge is the,

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202 Ibid.


Sun-Dance (Wótijax; Stoney: Wahi amba wagijibi). The sun-dance and the horse-dance are regarded as the two most sacred ceremonies of the Assiniboine. While, however, the horse-dance is the property of a society, the annual erection of the sun-dance lodge is the work of a single man possessing special qualifications. Within recent years, several men have tried to put up a sun-dance lodge without having the prerequisite supernatural experiences, and have failed in each case ... At one of these attempts ... a storm rose after the formation of the camp circle and blew down many of the lodges; and on the next morning, the wife of the builder died unexpectedly. At present, there is only one Assiniboine capable of conducting the ceremony ... who had inherited them in the direct male line through six generations of ancestors and had himself claimed a peculiar relationship to the thunder-bird... 

Further, Lowie describes that because that lodge leader had died recently, a qualified Cree was invited instead to lead the annual ceremony. Also, Lowie states, “At present [1908], the sun-dance is combined with the Fourth of July festivities sanctioned by the government.” He notes that there was no “torture” (meaning piercings) at Fort Belknap, though at Morley his informants did mention this past practice.

Lowie also relies on previous writings from the early-nineteenth century about the Medicine Lodge, such as those by Father Pierre-Jean De Smet. Lowie assesses, “De Smet’s account of an Assiniboine sun-dance is of interest, principally as illustrating the composite character of the ceremony. Throughout the year, he relates, the Assiniboine look forward with eagerness to the time for erecting the medicine-lodge, which seems to have been the earliest part of spring.” Overall, Lowie describes some differences between how the ceremony was conducted during De Smet’s day when compared to his own observations and according to his informants. In earlier times, the ceremony was conducted over a 10 day period, rather than the present four. Nevertheless, the similarity in purpose, intent, and meaning, which together are the shared experience of the Medicine Lodge, show the continuity, though the form, timing, and material objects have changed slightly.

Between 1899 and 1908, Sumner W. Matteson took some of the earliest photos of masked Fools Dancers, including one dancer using a staff adorned with dewclaws from a deer.

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206 Ibid.
208 The most interesting piece to Lowie’s collection is his photographs of masked Fools Dancers, including one dancer using a staff adorned with dewclaws from a deer.
photographs of the Medicine Lodges at Fort Belknap. Matteson, born in 1867, left the family banking business and roamed the Indigenous southwest, from Mexico to the Northern Plains, often by bicycle. He gained permission to take photographs of Assiniboine Medicine Lodges between 1898 and 1910. Matteson took several photos of sacred functions, such as the “Fools Dance.” Assiniboine call the Fool Dance a Contrary Society, a witgogagka, or a dance “to make crazy or reversed.” Using a mask and cloaking one’s body, and thus their identity, participants temporarily embody the witgogo “contrary spirit.” In this way, they bring humour, healing, and go against standard tradition. For example, they move in reverse to the sun’s direction, and enter the Medicine Lodge backwards.

One photograph taken by Matteson in 1906 outside a Medicine Lodge under construction at Fort Belknap shows four Assiniboine on horseback wearing traditional porcupine quilted buckskin shirts, their hair in braids, who stare unsmiling at the camera. One of them, in a black cowboy hat, holds an American flag upside down. The image description states: “During building Medicine Lodge Flag reversed without hostile intent.” While it is impossible to accurately say if this is a form of a distress signal or a protest against American suppression of ceremonies, it is difficult to be unmoved by this image. There are many other photos labeled “taken in 1899” in the Paul Warner collection, housed in the National Museum of the American Indian Photo Collection. This collection also includes photographs of the Horse Dance that used to be practiced during the Medicine Lodge, but is no longer.

These older records that describe the Medicine Lodge from the mid-nineteenth century to early-twentieth century show that Assiniboine had managed to maintain their ceremonies fairly intact. Assiniboine Medicine Lodges persist today, even though American and Canadian expansion dominated the daily life of Indigenous peoples in the Northern Plains for the last two centuries.

Medicine Lodges helped Assiniboine people to counter American and Canadian historical domination. In many ways, Canadian government policies towards Assiniboine

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209 This is from a CD document that the NMAI sent to me for research purposes in June 2010.
210 Sumner W. Matteson, Jr. photographs, negatives, and other material, circa 1890-1915, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (negative, slide or catalog number). Photo Lot 89-8, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution; National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland: P21391.
ceremonies, and Indigenous religious practices more broadly, paralleled U.S. policies from the late-nineteenth century into the late-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{211} At the same time, there were some significant differences in each government’s policies, as well as how particular Assiniboine people in the U.S. and Canada responded.

In this era, American assimilation policies failed to destroy Assiniboine cultural life. Embodied actions performed in ceremonies helped Assiniboine communities sustain their bodies of knowledge under duress. In her 1987 ethnographic study of the Gros Ventre (also known as Atsina), of the Fort Belknap Reservation, Loretta Fowler shows how the Assiniboine Medicine Lodge persisted throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{212} As Fowler demonstrates as it regards Gros Ventre cultural change, during the transition into the twentieth century, “… occasionally a Gros Ventre man would participate in the Assiniboines’ Sun Dance, which had been held fairly regularly, if sometimes surreptitiously, since reservation settlement.”\textsuperscript{213} Referring to a photograph taken by Matteson of a giveaway ceremony held at the Assiniboine Medicine Lodge at Fort Belknap in July 1906, Fowler claims that:

At this time Agent William Logan [who served the Office of Indian Affairs at the Fort Belknap agency between 1902 and 1910] tolerated, sometimes even encouraged, Indian ceremonies. The Sun Dance or Medicine Lodge (“without the torture features”) was held July 6-9 under The Male’s direction during the week-long Fourth of July celebration.\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{211} U.S. and Canadian policies towards Assiniboine and other Indigenous tribes of the North American Plains were both different and similar in complicated ways. For an important discussion and comparison of the countries’ policies during the late-nineteenth century, see Joseph Manzione, “I Am Looking to the North for My Life”: Sitting Bull 1876-1881 (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1991).

\textsuperscript{212} The Assiniboine share the Fort Belknap reservation with the Grose Ventre.

\textsuperscript{213} See Loretta Fowler, \textit{Shared symbols, contested meanings: Gros Ventre culture and history, 1778-1984} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 76. Fowler continues, stating that, “Hand games were held, but when the owners died, one by one, they did not transfer their bundles” (p. 76). Fowler examines Gros Ventre cultural (and tribal) identity in relation to the Assiniboine of Fort Belknap reservation from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries.

Agent Logan’s tolerance towards Indian ceremonies certainly helped Assiniboine at Fort Belknap maintain this very important cultural practice. Though focused on Gros Ventre people, Fowler’s work shows Assiniboine accommodation and resilience in sustaining their Medicine Lodge throughout the twentieth century. Even so, the forced assimilation inherent in residential and boarding schools, both on and off the reservations, attempted to confine and discipline Assiniboine and other Indigenous bodies, and were specific attempts to destroy ceremonial knowledge.

Through these schools, government officials believed that Indigenous peoples would cease their spiritual practices and become American and Christian. As Loretta Fowler points out in The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains (2003), many non-reservation schools were modeled after the Carlisle Industrial Training School, established by Lt. Richard Pratt in Pennsylvania in 1879, and which ran until 1918. She writes that Pratt “… believed that a military regime would instill the discipline necessary to the assimilation process.” This regime included military uniforms, platoons, marching, and having to work while attached to a ball and chain. Catholic or Protestant missionaries often ran the schools on the reservations with the general intention of eradicating Indigenous worldviews.

Due to extreme poverty, orphans, as well as other children, were often sent off the reservation to distant boarding schools, such as Carlisle. As Brenda Child shows in her 1998 book Boarding School Seasons, “Advocates of boarding schools argued that industrial training, in combination with several years of isolation from family, would diminish the influence of tribalism on a new generation of American Indians.”

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215 The intersecting political relationships between tribes at both Fort Peck (Assiniboine and Sioux) and Fort Belknap (Gros Ventre) are extremely complicated, predating contact with Europeans, and they are beyond my present analysis. I will, however, add two examples of intertribal participation in the Medicine Lodge from direct experience. Since the 1990s, if not before, Joe Ironman, a Gros Ventre, has been the leader of an Assiniboine Medicine Lodge in the Little Rocky Mountains on Fort Belknap, and Tommy Christian, who is Sioux and Assiniboine, and fluent in both languages, has participated in both Sioux Sundances and Assiniboine Medicine Lodges.


218 Ibid.

219 Ibid.

Assiniboine teenage orphan from Poplar, Fort Peck, named Addie Hovermale, experienced the personal discipline at Carlisle between 1910 and 1917. Addie’s Assiniboine mother had died from tuberculosis and her “white” father had died in an insane asylum in Storm Springs, Montana. Letters between herself, her paternal grandparents who were living in Pennsylvania, an Indian Agent at Fort Peck, and the Superintendent at Carlisle discussed her educational needs, her request for eyeglasses, and her severe body pains. A letter addressed to the Superintendent her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. M. H. Hovermale dated Nov 6, 1913 stated that they were very concerned for Addie’s education, because Superintendent Friedman had called Addie a “boy,” showing his unawareness: “We hope you will not neglect her schooling. We want her to be able to take care of her self [sic] you understand we are not any Indian blood in us. It is her mother […] her father was our son but they are both passed away […]. She is an orphan girl.” At one point, the nurses that oversaw Addie thought she was hysterical; eventually they determined she might have been drinking too much coffee.

Ceremonial practices, such as the Medicine Lodge, strengthened Assiniboine resilience against assimilation programs in Canada as well. Under the Indian Act, first established in 1876, the Canadian government prohibited Indigenous ceremonies and dances such as the Potlatch or Sundance. In the pivotal book *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7* (1996), Treaty 7 elders and Tribal Council members argue that Indigenous peoples of Canada have maintained their own bodies of knowledge through embodied actions, such as ceremonies, which contrast with Canadian legal interpretations of Treaty 7 negotiated in 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing. Treaty 7, one of the Numbered Treaties, was a formal signed agreement between Queen Victoria and several First Nations of present day southern Alberta that ceded Indigenous territories in exchange for certain rights, provisions, and programs promised by the Canadian government. Walter Hilderbrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and Sarah Carter carefully gathered oral histories from elders under the direction of Treaty 7 First Nations, including

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222 National Archives I, (“Hovermale, Addie”), ARC Identifier: 1373322.


the Bloods, Piegan, the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Stoney (Nakoda), and the Tsuu T’ina (Sarcee). These oral histories reveal how ceremonial knowledge practiced by Northern Plains Indigenous peoples in Canada survived misunderstandings and the suppression of Assiniboine ceremonies. Regarding the discussions of terms relevant to the treaty-making process at Blackfoot Crossing, Chief Roy Whitney states that they “…were conducted with sacred prayers and singing of ceremonial songs. It is within this cultural and spiritual context that our forefathers arrived at their understanding of the meaning of the sacred treaty.”225 According to Whitney, meanings inculcated within the Indigenous embodied practice of treaty-making, through song for example, in the late-nineteenth century were misunderstood by Canadian newcomers: government officers relied solely upon written documentation rather than embodied knowledge.

“Nakoda” Treaty 7 elders, who were interviewed in their “Nakoda” language, asserted the importance of ceremonial practices, especially the Medicine Lodge (often called Sun Dance in this context). Bill McLean, an elder of the Stoney (Bearspaw) Nation stated:

In the Sun Dances, they prayed to the Creator and all the creatures, the sun, the wind, the water, and all living things. They prayed so that they can have a good life, that the future would be good to them; it was a powerful religion. Unfortunately, the different church denominations tried to stop it: “They said the Native people are not praying to God but are praying to the sun—they condemned it. But they could not squash it. The Creator helped the Native people.”226

From this perspective it is clear that both Canadian Christian denominations and government policies attempted to suppress the Medicine Lodge’s (or Sun Dance’s).

According to Katherine Pettipas’s study, Severing the Ties that Bind (1994), the Canadian federal policy of the repression of Indigenous ceremonies damaged communities, but ultimately failed in its primary goal. Pettipas primarily focused her study on the Cree, but also included other tribes of the Northern American prairies, such as the Cree’s allies, the Assiniboine. Pettipas showed that core ceremonies such as the Medicine Lodge were in fact strengthened despite the Canadian government’s

225 Treaty 7 Elders, The True Spirit, xii.
226 Ibid., 90.
repression. She asserts that the attempt to assimilate Aboriginals into a homogenous Canadian nation-state was premised on the assumption by Department of Indian Affairs officials that, “… there existed a direct connection between indigenous worldview, ceremonial life, and the social, economic, and political structures of the community.”

This assumption was correct.

Pettipas begins with a story about Piapot (1816-1908), also known as Kísikâw-awâsis (Flash-in-the-Sky Boy), who was an Assiniboine-Cree spiritual leader and healer. During the late-nineteenth century Piapot fought against the Canadian government so that he and others could practice their Indigenous religions, specifically the Thirst Dance, which is another name for the Medicine Lodge. Piapot’s commitment to Indigenous religions lived on throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta. As Pettipas explains:

After World War One, returning war veterans from the Piapot Reserve formally appealed to the Indian Commissioner, William Graham, for permission to perform their Thirst Dance … . These men and their children would be the new warriors in the new social order, and would continue to carry Piapot’s message of protest to the Canadian government.

Apparently, despite the American government’s policy of assimilation toward Native Americans in the early-twentieth century, Assiniboine people at Fort Belknap and Fort Peck also continued to exercise their cultural practices in the 1930s, but in adapted forms. At Fort Belknap, as Fowler describes it: “… federal officials developed programs to make Plains Indians agriculturalists, fluent and literate in English, and Christian.” The U.S. policy of assimilation had various negative effects on the different tribal (or cultural) groups of Fort Peck (Assiniboine and Sioux), and at Fort Belknap (Gros Ventre and Assiniboine). The American government labeled each group as either more or less

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227 See Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), xi, 3. The Cree and Assiniboine, though different linguistically, have intermarried over generations that they most often refer to each other as kin. For example, Pettipas begins her first chapter about Piapot, a Cree/Assiniboine chief of the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Ironically, Pettipas, a curator of Native Ethnology for the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, has worked for decades helping Aboriginals reclaim sacred objects held in Canadian museums: I see this as a reciprocal process between Indigenous and Western ways of archiving.

228 Pettipas, *Severing the Ties*, 3.

229 Ibid., 10.

230 Ibid., 16. The involvement of veterans returning from either Canadian or American military service who are particularly committed to Indigenous ceremonial practices is a theme that I will return to in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

231 Fowler, *Shared Symbols*, 72.
“progressive” or “accommodating” to their policies.

In the 1930s, the Assiniboine went through a period of increased cultural practices, which paralleled cultural growth stimulated by John Collier’s efforts toward the Indian Reorganization Act. At Fort Belknap, as Fowler states:

Among the Assiniboines, religious rituals have persisted—not in unchanged form, but they have persisted. For several years after the 1930s a core of “traditional families,” a small minority among the Assiniboines, persisted in having hand games, seeking spirit helpers, singing the ceremonial songs, and continuing other forms of religious ritual (such as spirit lodges and the Sun Dance), sometimes through contacts with Fort Peck and Canadian Assiniboines and Rocky Boy Crees.232

Though a minority in each Assiniboine community, ceremonial practitioners maintained bodies of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next, and through connections across communities with alliances with other tribes.233

Medicine Lodges seemed to surge into the open and retreat into the shadows in cycles during the changing political climate of twentieth-century America. According to Fowler, there was a brief, noticeable surge in Assiniboine and Gros Ventre ceremonies in the 1930s and early 1940s at Fort Belknap. However, this positive trend did not last. Conservatism dominated the American social landscape in the 1950s, and the Termination Era, which brought Indigenous peoples’ relocation to urban centers, had an adverse affect on ceremonial participation.234 On some reserves, the Assiniboine Medicine Lodge stopped altogether. During this downward turn, Fowler shows that, “In 1952 the last Assiniboine Sun Dance, supervised by a few ritual authorities, was held at Milk River.”235 This Sun Dance was led by an Assiniboine elder named First Chief.236 According to Fowler’s examination, after 1952, participation in ceremonies and secular dances, such as powwows of Fort Belknap, declined: “These were ‘the years when

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232 Fowler Shared Symbols, 212.
233 Robert Four Star has informed me that the Blackfeet have long-standing respect for Assiniboines, even though there is also a history of conflict between them. A Blackfeet elder, Buster Yellow Kidney adopted Robert as his son in the 1980s. I have assisted Robert in travels to the Blackfeet Reservation in Western Montana to help sing Medicine Lodge songs. In addition, I have traveled with Robert and his brother Oliver Archdale to several Nakona Medicine Lodges in Alberta and Saskatchewan to assist in supporting dancers.234 See Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford Lytle. The nations within: the past and future of American Indian sovereignty. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 211.
235 See Fowler, Shared symbols, 162.
236 See Fowler, Shared symbols, 279, note 17. She cites the Wellington records, which I have examined at Newberry in August 2010: J. W. Wellington Collection, Box 14, MSU.
everybody was low,’ as one Assiniboine put it. In the 1970s, the cultural revival began, and by 1977 the summer dance [powwow] begun to draw large crowds, becoming more an intertribal than local event.” 237 This means that when the Medicine Lodges were strong, other, more public and secular cultural practices were also stronger.

In contrast to U.S. policies, the Canadian government did not amend the Indian Act in regards to “traditional” Aboriginal ceremonial practices until 1951. Pettipas argues that, though the government repression and collections of sacred objects into Canadian museums have traumatized Aboriginals up to the present day, the main core of Aboriginal ceremonial practices, such as the Medicine Lodge were altered and resilient, even held in secret. 238 Subsequently, between the 1950s and the 1970s, the Medicine Lodge went partially underground. 239

Medicine Lodges resurged strongly in both Canada and the U.S. by the 1970s. During her work with Aboriginal communities from the 1970s through the 1990s, Pettipas observed younger and older generations working together in “rebuilding the strength of their people” through values emanating from “traditional” spiritual practices. 240 The older generations in Canada had been disciplined when they were forced to reject their ceremonial activities in boarding schools. Nonetheless, for there to have been a renewal of these practices, they must have kept this embodied knowledge alive in secret. Pettipas’s observations regarding the youth and elders linking cultural knowledge between them parallels Assiniboine concerns expressed by certain people during my interviews. Bodies of knowledge that are passed onto younger generations have real effects on communities spiritually, socially, economically, and politically.

Ceremonies often held in secret helped Assiniboine people endure cultural losses caused by government and missionary suppression. As reported by my interviewees, Assiniboine communities saw a significant resurgence of their original ceremonies in the 1970s, the Medicine Lodge in particular. At that time, younger individuals, such as Robert Four Star, were selected by their elders to become ceremonial leaders. Therefore,

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237 Fowler, Shared Symbols, 162. Here, in the chapter entitled “Interpreting Cultural Revival,” Fowler is discussing the decline of the local Gros Ventre “traditional” summer powwow that would take place right after the summer “Sun Dance”; secular gatherings such as these were tied to the sacred (religious) ceremonies, such as the Medicine Lodge.

238 Pettipas, Severing the Ties, xi.

239 This information was shared by my interviewees.

240 Pettipas, Severing the Ties, xiii.
the elders who mentored my interviewees in the 1970s most likely sustained the knowledge that they had learned from their elders in previous decades in secret, under the watchful gaze of government agents and while in residential and boarding schools.

All seven of my Canadian interviewees explicitly shared the trauma that they had experienced while being forced to separate from their families, as well as being subjected to the bodily punishment at these schools. Those efforts on the part of the schools did not cease until the 1970s. For both the American and Canadian Assiniboine communities, once they placed their bodies back into ceremonial practices in the 1970s, their healing began.

According to Yvonne Lonechild, a resident of Whitebear Reserve, residential schools caused a “loss of identity” and “we had to relearn it all … we had to relearn exactly who we really were … the process of the residential school was assimilation … they almost – I would say not almost – they destroyed us.”241 Despite this loss of identity, referring to her return to her mom and dad after the residential schools, “The roots that was instilled in us before we left here – they could never destroy those.”242 The most significant healing in reclaiming Assiniboine identity for Yvonne came through years of participation in the Medicine Lodge after the first time she helped her father, Alfred McArthur, travel to Lodge in Aswego in the early 1980s. As she said, “participating in the Lodge, being it dancing, be that your there making special fasting … when I go there its reaffirming my total belief, my total traditional belief, I believe this way, I’ve got my help this way, its where I am comfortable, I feel at peace … you can feel the sacredness of stuff there, you get your healing there, its just like a time where people come to focus on prayer.”243 Yvonne asserted in conclusion to the interview that ceremonial participation: “Josh: that should be a way of life; its the responsibility of the

241 Yvonne Lonechild Interview, June 28, 2012, in her and Francis Lonechild’s home on the White Bear reserve in Saskatchewan; a Cree/Assiniboine family, Yvonne is Assiniboine and marreid to Francis Lonechild who is Cree. Francis, a Medicine Lodge singer and elder leader, adopted me as his son after the Medicine Lodge in 2010; he lost a son who was an active Medicine Lodge practitioner and Medicine Man in 2008; he is also Robert Four Star’s adoptive brother. Yvonne and Francis Lonechild committed to sponsoring the Big Lodge in June 2012. See Interview Bios in Appendices A.
243 Ibid.
people to hand it down to their family members – the good teachings.”

Wilma Kennedy, a resident of Carry the Kettle Reserve, also spoke about the horrible treatment she experienced in residential schools, beaten so much she had a “scabby head” from the lashings given by yardstick from the teacher for speaking Assiniboine and also for “being too scared” to speak English. She said that she was beaten so bad one time with a belt across her face that she is partially deaf in one ear. In response to my question about the importance of ceremonial participation she stated: “my grandmother told us that years ago before she passed … if you don’t teach your kids there’s going to be nothing … no Indian language, no medicine … oh she was a great Medicine woman.”

In their discussions regarding ceremonial revival and activism at Fort Peck, Assiniboine and Sioux scholars have claimed that:

Although families and communities at Fort Peck had always maintained their traditional spirituality in ceremonies, rituals, and prayers (usually through song), a renewed awareness surfaced in both Assiniboine and Sioux cultures. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, both tribes held Medicine Lodge Ceremonies (Sun Dances), Sweat Lodges, and Pipe Ceremonies.

While renewal efforts were taking place amongst these populations, the American government did not “officially allow” Indigenous ceremonies until the legislature passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

Previous historical studies of assimilation programs, such as the early reservation management by the U.S. federal government, are correctly described as forms of cultural genocide. At the same time, while acknowledging the trauma caused by governmental

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244 Yvonne Lonechild Interview, June 28, 2012, in the Lonechild’s home, White Bear reserve in Saskatchewan.
245 Wilma Kennedy interview by phone, July 13, 2012. Wilma Kennedy is an elder leader who lives in Carry the Kettle reserve in Saskatchewan. She adopted Robert Four Star, Oliver Archdale, J.R. Beauchamp, and myself as sons in 1997. See Interview Bios in Appendices A.
248 See Melissa Meyer, The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation, 1889-1920, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); see also Thomas Biolsi,
suppression of ceremonies, Indigenous peoples have protected much of their cultural knowledge through ceremonial embodiment. Assiniboine have sustained the Medicine Lodge by drawing people from distant communities into embodied ceremonies, just as they did before the U.S. and Canada expanded their national borders. Thus, ceremonial embodiment became a remedy against the historical traumas of the twentieth century.

While the Medicine Lodge continues in much the same way that it did over 100 years ago, there are other ceremonial practices that have been lost to the winds of time. The Horse Dance no longer takes place during the Medicine Lodge, as was documented by Sumner Matteson photographs and recorded in oral histories. Much more recently, in 2008, an elder named Carl Four Star, passed away, taking with him the Hand Game Bundle, which was another important healing ceremony. Carl had not transmitted it to apprentices for unknown reasons.

Western theoretical assumptions about archiving and archives, and Indigenous ways of keeping knowledge alive through embodied ceremony, have undergone a historical relationship that crosses a spectrum, from animosity to reciprocity. Rather than relying solely on archival documents about ceremonies, scholars of Indigenous histories may potentially gain new insights when they begin to conceptually view embodied practices through the symbolic systems of the respective community. The kinaesthetic qualities of living bodies, learning and expressing knowledge about their cultural pasts through movement, starkly contrasts with reading or interpreting inanimate documents and photographs. In 1997, Robert Four Star and Oliver Archdale asked me to help participate in a re-burial ceremony of the remains of an Assiniboine girl from the mid-nineteenth century that were found at Fort Union by the National Park Service. After Oliver conducted a ceremony related to this activity, Robert and I slept in a buffalo hide

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249 Assiniboine have sustained the Medicine Lodge by drawing people from distant communities into embodied ceremonies, just as they did before the U.S. and Canada expanded their national borders. Thus, ceremonial embodiment became a remedy against the historical traumas of the twentieth century.

250 Carl Four Star was one of Robert Four Star’s brothers.
tibi, keeping the fire alive, sleeping next to the wooden box of remains. The next day we
drove back to Fort Peck and reburied the girl’s remains in a local Assiniboine cemetery.
This was a rare opportunity that showed how a national archive and museum had worked
with local Indigenous people to have these remains appropriately cared for. My direct
experience of helping to return the girl’s remains from a national archive, such as the
National Park Service at Fort Union, North Dakota, to an Assiniboine cemetery shows a
local phenomenon that parallels other, global Indigenous and national archival
relationships at this new intersection of reciprocity and respect.

A quarter-century ago, this type of reciprocity would have likely been considered
unthinkable, as national and state archives and museums held tight control over
Indigenous remains and objects. As Linda Tuhiiwai Smith argues, Indigenous peoples
experienced this “scientific collecting” as a violent cultural theft of such things as human
remains stored in colonial archives.251 In her critique of Western science, specifically
ethnography, Smith quotes James Clifford, who defines scientific ethnography as “culture
collecting,” through which,

… diverse experiences and facts are selected, gathered, detached from their
original temporal occasions … . Collecting—at least in the West, where time is
generally thought to be linear and irreversible—implies a rescue of phenomena
from inevitable historical decay or loss.252

Smith asserts that, “These collections have become the focus of indigenous peoples’
attempts to reclaim ancestral remains and other cultural items (known in the West as
‘artefacts’) belonging to their people.”253 In some cases, the efforts that Smith highlights
have been successful. Further, as non-Indigenous archivists, curators, historians, and
anthropologists learn more from Indigenous knowledge-keepers about what certain
collected sacred objects mean to them, this may lead to more appropriate respect for
Indigenous authorities. As but one example, during my research visit to the archives of
the National Museum of the American Indian in June 2010, I was shown a room for
Indigenous researchers to conduct ceremonies before, during, or after their research, such
as smudging with sage for protection.

251 Linda Tuhiiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (Dunedin, New
Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1999), 61.
253 Ibid.
In the last decade, there has been an increased interest by the American and Canadian mainstream public regarding Indigenous religious rituals. As John Hick posits:

Primal religion … preserves values that had been largely lost within the major traditions in their modern forms, but are still potentially present within them and are now beginning to be recovered in an increasingly serious awareness of our interrelationship with the rest of the world of which we are a part… In this situation the gift of primal religion to the modern world is a reminder of our unity with the whole of nature and our continuity and kinship with all life.²⁵⁴

Hicks correctly points out that Indigenous—what he calls “primal”—preservation of religious knowledge is not only important to Indigenous peoples in sustaining their own cultural practices but to all humanity, as we are an interconnected whole.

On a research trip in June 2012, I drove to Carry the Kettle and White Bear reserves in Saskatchewan with Robert Four Star as my adviser and navigator, just as we had done over 15 years before. I had just missed the Aswego Medicine Lodge of 2012 at Fort Peck because I was giving a presentation at the Indigenous Archives Libraries and Museums Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After a six-hour drive on barren two-lane highways, and after traversing gravel roads that cut across grain fields as far as the eye could see, we arrived at Carry the Kettle just in time for the afternoon dance session of a small local Medicine Lodge. Armand MacArthur from Pheasant Rump reserve was the Medicine Lodge Leader. Outside the sacred lodge, I discussed my research with several people, and passed out my consent forms for interviews. Armand asked me over to his blue Silverado pickup during a break. I discussed my project with him, and gave him my introduction letter and consent form. That evening Robert and I drove further east to White Bear, where I interviewed two sisters and their elderly mother, who was in her 90s. The next day, we drove back to the Lodge at Carry the Kettle, mainly because they had asked us to return.

On that Sunday, when some of the more intense aspects of the Lodge occurred, such as healing ceremonies, Armand asked Robert to sing some of his sacred Medicine Lodge songs. This was a very special honour for the participants and families gathered there. Robert asked me to help him sing. To this day, I cannot express the humility that this invitation instilled in me, especially because I do not think I was contributing all that

much when I sung. When Robert finished, he was given blankets, sweet grass, tobacco, and other gifts. We drove home to Fort Peck, both feeling content, honoured, and grateful.

The next day, Armand called me. He wanted me to come back and interview him as soon as possible. I asked Robert if this was feasible. He said affirmatively, “Yes, I could go with you, as I want to see my brother Francis [at Carry the Kettle].” Thus on Thursday, we returned to Pheasant Rump to see Armand. As instructed by Robert, on the way north, I bought a colourful blanket, put in some sweet grass, tobacco, and some money, and gave this to Armand once we arrived to his home. After the interview Robert and Armand engaged in a sacred exchange of reciprocity.

Armand gave Robert tobacco and a beautiful Eagle Feather headdress that he had been gifted as Chief for the Pheasant Rump Band. He then asked Robert for a song that he had sung at the Medicine Lodge at Carry the Kettle. Robert singing this song for Armand was a most sacred gift, showing the value of songs that are typically only sung in special ceremonies. With Robert’s consent, Armand used a digital recorder to record Robert’s song so that he could memorize it.

This reciprocity between Armand and Robert, with me as a witness, also shows at least two important things about ceremonies as they relate to a way of archiving for Indigenous peoples. First, the Medicine Lodge gathers Assiniboine bodies into a circular sacred structure, where they then move around a center of spiritual gravity. Second, songs, sacred objects, and the conversations between people at ceremonies keep specialized knowledge in circulation through an embodied, sacred exchange. This kind of ritualized practice exemplifies an intimate performance between people who have no audience other than the participants themselves. Western archival storage boxes contain useful information for contemporary ceremonial practitioners, such as photographs and slides of Medicine Lodges from the 1900s and the 1950s, yet, as records locked away and preserved for scholarly research, they are disembodied documents: the ceremonies themselves instil embodied experiences, reinforcing memories, which bring knowledge to life.255

255 I examined photographs, slides, and photocopies of Medicine-Lodge related activities at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. and at the Newberry Library in Chicago in the
The network of Medicine Lodges that take place annually across the vast Northern Plains in the U.S. and Canada, and the ceremonial exchanges that they elicit, echo what Wade Davis described as the Kula ring in *The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters In the Modern World* (2009). Drawing from Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and his own field experience, Davis describes the Kula ring, a network of islands in Melanesia covering thousands of square kilometers: “Known as the Kula ring, it was a system of balanced reciprocity based on the ceremonial exchange of two items, necklaces of discs chiseled from red spondylus shells known as the *soulava*, and arm bands of white cone shell, the *mwali*.” Each ocean-going voyager would exchange these gifts with at least two partners for life. The necklaces would be exchanged in a sun-wise direction with one partner, while the armbands would travel in the reverse direction, and be exchanged with another partner. The sacred journeys could take 20 years before the object was returned to the original owner. For Melanesians, the Kula Ring keeps knowledge alive through embodiment, similar to the Medicine Lodge for Assiniboine.

For many Assiniboine people, the Medicine Lodge is the central hub that holds Assiniboine people together as a community. Each individual Assiniboine Medicine Lodge functions as part of a large wheel, which is then connected to other hubs of Assiniboine communities. Every summer, both new and old Assiniboine participants gather together from distant locations. Through ceremonial prayer, fasting, song, and dance, Assiniboine people contemplate and perform what it means to be a human being according to their specific worldviews. By experientially understanding the deeper meaning represented by the physical, spatial, and visual structure of the Medicine Lodge in terms of seasonal change, colors, flora, fauna, and weather, Assiniboine people internalize their own map of the universe in their own terms. The Medicine Lodge for the Assiniboine, in short, is an essential source of living a meaningful life and giving back to the world by passing knowledge from one generation to the next through embodied ceremonial practices, keeping that knowledge alive through movement.

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summer of 2010; when I showed those images to interviewees, such as Robert Four Star and Dale White, they would often be able to tell me what the symbols or regalia meant.

Embodied practices within Assiniboine communities holistically strengthen the retention of cultural knowledge: the ceremonies engage the whole body. Like the other methods, such as oral tradition, ceremonial participation sustains cultural knowledge. It also significantly counters the negative impacts of colonization, working in reciprocity with colonial and national archives and museums that hold sacred objects, writings, and photographs about the ceremonies.

By fortifying Assiniboine ceremonies through the selection of younger apprentices who are meant to be future leaders, Assiniboine people carry ancient knowledge forward, forging a path into the future. Assiniboine ceremonies cannot be learned in a lab or museum, or from a book or video: they must be experienced through embodied action to have the necessary transformative impact on the practitioner. Most often these ceremonies take place in relation to Assiniboine sacred sites, a spatial sensibility or territoriality that I discuss in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Wamakashka Istima (Sleeping Buffalo)

A human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate and, in the Western sense, “inanimate” beings, a relationship based on a shared “essence” of life. The significance of place, of land, of landscape of other things in the universe, in defining the very essence of a people, makes for a very different rendering of the term essentialism as used by indigenous peoples.

– Linda Tuhiwai Smith²⁵⁷

These rocks are sacred, just like our old people. The mountains, the rocks, earth, water, all the mountains, all the ecology, and Indian religion. They are all connected.

– Pat Chief Stick, Chippewa-Cree elder (quoted in part from the National Register of Historic Places placard at the Sleeping Buffalo site).²⁵⁸

In the summer of 1996, on one of my first trips with Oliver Archdale,²⁵⁹ we headed west from Fort Peck Reservation on Highway 2 in his Chevy pickup to Fort Belknap for a ceremonial gathering. A little way past the small town of Saco, we stopped at the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks to offer tobacco and prayers for safe travel and gratitude for life. Oliver instructed me to offer tobacco and prayers to the Sleeping Buffalo as an essential part of my immersion into Assiniboine cosmology. Reflecting back on how Oliver introduced me to Assiniboine protocol in relation to the Sleeping Buffalo, I consider that moment as an example of Indigenous territoriality.

I define Indigenous territoriality as a complex network of relationships to sacred sites that help to keep bodies of cultural knowledge alive for Indigenous communities. Now, any time I drive by the Sleeping Buffalo, I always stop to give thanks to the buffalo, and all of the animals, plants, minerals, and elements, just as many Assiniboine and other Indigenous peoples do. Recently, while travelling from Fort Peck to Fort Belknap in the summer of 2012, we stopped to offer prayers and respect to the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock. At the junction between Interstate U.S. Route 2 and Montana Highway 243, at the entry road to Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs Resort, we pulled into a small parking lot in the northeast corner. Far from being flat, the highway

²⁵⁹ I discuss Oliver Archdale and my induction into Assiniboine societies in the Introduction to this dissertation.
itself, a lonely two-lane road heading both west and east, gently snakes through the
grassy hills, valleys, and coulees of the high plains. Across the landscape, boulders,
rocks, and small patches of yucca plants dot the view. Once outside of the truck, the
smell of dry golden prairie grass and sage filled my nostrils with the crisp pure air. At the
same time, in the middle of that hot summer, the sun hit the pavement like an anvil. As
usual, high cumulus clouds offered moments of shade. Inside an open wooden shack that
is painted maroon on its three walls, and surrounded by a small rectangular fence about
four feet high, rests the Sleeping Buffalo and the Medicine Rock.

The Sleeping Buffalo is a large reddish granite boulder about five feet long, three
feet wide, and three feet high resembling a buffalo close to the ground with its legs
underneath. On the Sleeping Buffalo, the neck, head, horns, ribs and line going down its
backbone are distinguished by what seem to be carvings from ancient times. Next to it,
the Medicine Rock, an oval grey granite boulder of similar size, has several petroglyphs
of animal tracks, such as the eagle, the wolf, the four directions, and many other signs. To
the touch, the boulders are smooth, and when the sun is shining as it did that day, they are
warm. As a visitor approaches the rocks, a placard created by the National Park Service
tells the story of the boulders’ historical importance to tribes of the Northern Plains:

On the crest of a ridge near Cree Crossing of the Milk River is a group of glacial
boulders which from a distance resemble a herd of sleeping buffalo. They were
held sacred by the Indians and one in particular was thought to be the leader. It is
now part of this monument … . The tribes have legends of the herds’ origins, and
long before the white men came sacrificed possessions to the Sleeping Buffalo. 260

Though this information is true, for many informed Indigenous peoples of the region
these boulders represent a significantly deeper history regarding Indigenous
territoriality. This is the subject of this chapter.

As the placard at Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock mentions briefly, these
two boulders were relocated from their original site, where they used to sit amongst a
herd of buffalo rocks at a place that the Assiniboine people call Cree Crossing. What the
placard does not state is that they were moved at various times in the twentieth century,
eventually being confined to this site in the 1980s, and then inducted into the National
Historical Registry in 1995. Similar to other Indigenous peoples of North America that

260 Placard at site: National Park Service, National Historical Registry.
faced national expansion, the rocks’ history parallels the effect of reservations on Assiniboine peoples’ relationships to their territories. The rocks survived three forced migrations. Settlers first removed them from their original resting place during a development project on some private property in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. At that time, they were placed in a local city park. Then, twice later, in the late-twentieth century, they were moved again to open locations along the interstate highway.

Similarly, national U.S. and Canadian policies dispossessed the Assiniboine of the freedom of movement across their territories and confined them to reduced areas on which they were to live on nine different reservation lands. Despite this land dispossession and forced settlement, Assiniboine people have kept bodies of cultural knowledge about locations and places alive, both on and off the reservations, through their interactions with forms of nature, such as rocks, springs, plants, animals, stars, and the weather. For Assiniboine, sacred sites inform how they see themselves as a community belonging to a homeland.

Archivists, scientists, and historians use information in archives to construct narratives about the past in order to inform cultural identities of the present. People also use archives to manage natural resources for economic reasons. For example, Assiniboine, like other Indigenous nations, map, create atlases, manage wildlife, and store data about their territories and resources in a Western archival sense. This way of archiving information about land and natural resources is useful when driven by Indigenous peoples themselves; however, it is also quite different from what I call an Indigenous way of keeping bodies of cultural knowledge alive through various relationships with sacred places. Sacred sites are distinct from typical Western


262 See Paul Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2003). I agree with Nadasdy when he argues that Western forms of knowledge documentation and data collection about territory limit Indigenous relationships to their territory. Nadasdy argues that the Kluane relationship with their lands conflicted with
archives. Forms of nature, such as mountains, rocks, lakes, and trees, inform Assiniboine identities, influencing the world in meaningful ways. For many Indigenous peoples, a mountain or a rock sustains a certain body of knowledge.

In this chapter I focus on the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, as well as a number of other sacred sites that not only have lives of their own but also keep Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge alive. When Assiniboine engage with sacred sites, the sites themselves provide meaningful information to Assiniboine cultural practitioners.

Through their relationships with both human beings and forms of nature, including both the experiential qualities of embodied practices and the places themselves, the Assiniboine sustain bodies of cultural knowledge over time. These embodied practices include telling stories about sites viewed in the landscape; hunting, gathering medicine plants, rocks, and water; and performing ceremonies, songs, and dances in these locations, such as “sitting on the hill” (the local idiom for a vision quest) or by giving offerings. As mentioned in the last chapter, many Assiniboine cultural practitioners consider inanimate forms of nature, such as rocks or lightning, as sentient. The terms territory, land, and nature, as I use them in this chapter, include the whole system of animals, plants, rocks, waters, the underworld, and the sky.

Heard primarily through Assiniboine voices, this chapter argues that even though reservation, state, and national boundaries have inflicted violence on Assiniboine peoples’ abilities to connect with sacred sites, the knowledge kept at these sites persists. Despite the dislocations caused by political and economic boundaries, Assiniboine relationships to places retain significant cultural and historical meaning, as well as remain sources of medicine and spiritual power. The relationships between sacred sites, such as the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock, and Assiniboine people have sustained each

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263 In this chapter, the relationships of Indigenous peoples to territory may include both actions with, and knowledge about place, space, territory, ecology, land (or bodies of water, such as oceans or glaciers), nature, geography, and location. I use specific terms for each concept where appropriate.
other despite their parallel historical relocations as they faced the consequences of American and Canadian settlement.

Scholars have discussed the tension held between Indigenous and Euro-American speakers’ perspectives about space-time, or what I would call Indigenous spatial epistemologies versus those of the West.\textsuperscript{264} Settler understandings of land often assume that empirical scientific data is more valid than Indigenous accounts. Nevertheless, specific sites in the landscape connect Assiniboine individuals with their ancestors and their own futures. Through understanding some fundamental Assiniboine language structures, particularly as they pertain to place, land, ecology, and the earth, I intend to more accurately represent how Assiniboine peoples’ accounts inform their territoriality.

A concept I use in this chapter, territoriality, signifies the various relationships between sentient places and Assiniboine people. Places become sites of memory through which Assiniboine people derive meaning to perpetuate bodies of knowledge. One in-depth study that points towards places as living keepers of knowledge for Indigenous peoples is Keith Basso’s book \textit{Wisdom Sits in Places: Language and Landscape Among the Western Apache} (2008).\textsuperscript{265} Basso spent over 20 years working for, learning from, and studying the Western Apache, including their language and their relationships to places. Similar to my study with the Assiniboine, Basso learned that Apache people survive, gain knowledge, and acquire morality and identity through their relationships with places. By understanding Apache language structure, place names, cultural practices, and storytelling, Basso’s work also confirms Apache peoples’ belief in sites of memory, and that these sites are sentient. Basso quotes his Apache consultant, Annie Peaches: “The

\textsuperscript{264} For a discussion of the contrast between Western and Indigenous ways of interpreting forms of nature, see Julie Cruikshank, \textit{Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). Cruikshank demonstrates the incommensurability between settler and Indigenous ways of conceptualizing and experiencing land in her study of encounters in the Yukon St. Elias Mountains. Cruikshank argues that, “Modernist recasting of ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ continues to present local knowledge as an object for science rather than as intelligence that could inform science” (257).

\textsuperscript{265} For an in-depth study of Indigenous language and places as archives, I draw much of my theoretical lens from Keith H. Basso’s work: see Keith H. Basso, \textit{Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache} (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). Also, see Thomas F. Thornton, \textit{Being and Place Among the Tlingit} (Culture, Place, and Nature), (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008). Thornton learned that Tlingit have their own ways of “mapping territory, especially through sacred property (at.óow), such as ceremonial regalia, which too might be ‘mapped’ onto the body as an element of personhood” (70).
land is always stalking people. The land makes people live right.”266 He also quotes another Native consultant, Nick Thompson, stating, “Even if we go far away from here to some big city, places around here keep stalking us,” and despite the negative impacts of American settlement and modern life, “The land … looks after us. The land keeps badness away.”267 Similar to my study with Assiniboine people, then, Basso shows that sacred sites for Apache people are more than symbolic landscapes: sacred sites are knowledge-keepers with power.

Though sparse, there are other studies that follow Basso when discussing Indigenous interpretations of sentient places. For a parallel study of Indigenous relationships to their landscape in the Northwest coast, I draw on Jeff Oliver’s Landscapes and Social Transformations (2010). Oliver has examined Indigenous transformations of places and their ecologies in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia within the historical context of colonization. Focusing particularly on Coast Salish groups, he shows that “landscapes are not just static, given, or objective things. Registered by the senses, they are also subjective and become real in the interpretive context of human experience.”268 Similar to Oliver’s study of Coast Salish territoriality, the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, as one of many sacred sites, also instill knowledge subjectively in Assiniboine people in distinctly Indigenous ways that contrast to typical ways of thinking about knowledge acquisition in the West.269

Broadly speaking, for Indigenous peoples, land is often a primary agent of historical and cultural change; it represents a living, sacred being that gives meaning to their identities and leads to a sense of community well-being. At the same time, as a scholar of Indigenous histories, I do not assume that all Assiniboine people, or all Indigenous peoples for that matter, have the same relationship with territory.

266 Basso, Wisdom Sits in Places, 38.
268 Jeff Oliver, Landscapes and Social Transformations on the Northwest Coast: Colonial Encounters in the Fraser Valley (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 5.
269 For other works that discuss contrast between Indigenous and Western forms of knowledge construction about place, nature, land, and relationship to territories, see the following: Hugh Brody, Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981); Coll Thrush, Native Seattle: Histories From the Crossing-Over Place (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); and Paul Nadasdy, Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2003).
Nevertheless, as an overarching theme for many contemporary Indigenous peoples, forms of nature are animate and sacred. As Peter Nabokov writes:

The full-bodied role of nonbuilt environments in American Indian history is more than painted canvas backdrops for human events. Mountains, canyons, springs, rivers, and trees often enjoyed the capacity for volition and intentionality. They demanded allegiance to and remembrance of their significance as full players in tribal passages through time. Regardless of when a group historically came to occupy a locale, it commonly felt compelled to construe some “primordial tie” to the topography it hereafter called home.270

Nabokov draws this concept of a “primordial tie” directly from David Miller’s article, “The Assiniboines and Their Lands: The Frameworks of a Primordial Tie” (1981), which discusses Assiniboine relationships to places that are not on reservation lands.271 I build on Miller’s points to highlight routes or connections between these places as archival processes through a shared sense of Assiniboine territoriality.

Over the course of the next three sections, I use Assiniboine voices and the history about the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks to examine how Assiniboine territorial knowledge has been maintained despite American and Canadian settlement and national expansion. In the first section, I give a description of Assiniboine systems of meaning and language regarding sacred sites as keepers of knowledge. Here I focus on the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks as examples of how, broadly speaking, rocks and buffalo inform Assiniboine peoples’ sense of territoriality. In the second section, I give a brief history of the destruction of the buffalo, and subsequent confinement of Assiniboine people to reservations. In the third section, I examine the Sleeping Buffalo’s forced migration in the twentieth century as a consequence of national expansion. Finally, I emphasize the persistent knowledge of sacred sites and the establishment of the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks as a National Heritage Site.

Of course, not all Assiniboine narratives about territory are told in the same way, and not all share the same content. Assiniboine oral histories, including the interviews I

270 Peter Nabokov, A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2002), 132. I took the class “Native American Folklore” with Nabokov my freshman year at UCSC in 1988. It was in this course that I first learned the role of storytelling in oral traditions and the important distinction between emic and etic views. “Emic” means from the perspective as seen from inside a community cultural system, where as “etic” means a view from outside a community.

conducted, are fragments and angles of particular visions about a collective sense of Assiniboine territory, belonging, and identity. Furthermore, in all of the narratives that I have reviewed, there does not seem to be any moral imperative that every Assiniboine person understands or shares regarding places. At the same time, however, residents of various reservations, including Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, Carry the Kettle, Pheasant Rump, and White Bear, while reporting different perspectives about locations, also reveal a shared sense of “original territory.”

As mentioned above and elsewhere, many Assiniboine cultural practitioners believe that forms in nature are living beings. Tatanga Mani (Walking Buffalo), a Nakoda (Stoney Indian) from Chief Chiniki reserve in Alberta, affirms the volition of trees: “Did you know that trees talk? Well they do. They talk to each other, and they’ll talk to you if you listen … I have learned a lot from trees; sometimes about the weather, sometimes about animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit.”272 Thus, for Assiniboine, it is not just metaphorical to say, “The earth is alive.” Statements like these are literal, grounded in the specifics of things and places.

The Assiniboine call the earth makoche wakan, which means sacred earth. Like Mecca for Muslims, specific places inform Assiniboine identities, allowing for connections between bands, kin relationships, histories, and spatial understandings, all of which transgress reservation, state, or national boundaries. Regarding relationships to territory, rocks are central to Assiniboine cosmology and cultural practices. This is clear when looking at the actual name of “Assiniboine,” which is a Cree word for Stone Boilers.273 It is seen in other ways as well. Iya (The Stone) is one of the central trickster figures in Assiniboine cosmology, a shape-shifting deity in the form of a rock.274 Tiny

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273 This was taught to me by Robert Four Star. Assiniboine people had cooked their food with heated rocks.

274 Sacredness of rocks may be found in other Indigenous cultural cosmologies. Keith Carlson gives an inter-cultural interpretive account about Salish Aboriginal chiefs’ experiences with stones in London in Keith Carlson, “Rethinking Dialogue and History: The King’s Promise and the 1906 Aboriginal Delegation to London,” *Native Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (December 2005): 1-38, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost, accessed October 17, 2012. The delegation of three chiefs, Charlie Isipaymilt, Joe Capiolono, and Basil David, were profoundly moved in Westminster Abbey in 1906 with what they believed were “transformer stones”: “Transformer stones are boulders, but they are also special rocks that hold within
pebbles are used in ceremonial rattles. Igneous rocks are used in Sweat Lodges. This leads us to the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, which have layers of important meaning for Assiniboine.

Also central to Assiniboine cosmology and cultural practices, the buffalo as an animal that moves in herds, represents a life-giving force for human beings. In addition, similar to social groups of human beings that form a collective body of families, such as Assiniboine communities, the buffalo are seen as a people or tribe of their own. This continuity in cultural meaning also recognizes the historical significance of Assiniboine peoples’ involvement in the fur trade of buffalo hides in the late-nineteenth century.

It was from the buffalo that Assiniboine procured food, shelter, medicine, and ceremonial objects before contact. Buffalo and bison are called Tatanga in Assiniboine, which means Greatness, and in the older dialect, according to Robert Four Star, Wamakashka translates as Great-Moving-Mass Across the Land. The Assiniboine maintain a Buffalo Chaser Society, which I was inducted into after directing and founding the Wamakashka Oeti (Bison Camp) in 2002. Again, all of this leads us to the importance of the Sleeping Buffalo Rock.

Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks’ original location during the pre-reservation era was important not only to Assiniboine but also to other tribes, such as the Cree, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Gros Ventre, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, and Sioux. The Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks’ original location was on a ridge above the Milk River, a place called Cree Crossing. According to Assiniboine, the Sleeping Buffalo, which was the largest boulder at the site, was the leader of a herd of stone buffalo. They were diversions for unsuspecting hunters; and the Indigenous peoples of the region respected them as moral guides and as directional markers. The herd of stone buffalo that

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275 Personal names for Assiniboine people, as spoken in the Assiniboine language, carry multiple levels of meaning that signify what they draw their power from and inform how the individual should carry out certain practices. One of Robert Four Star’s Assiniboine names is Wamakashka Doba Inaji Hunga, which translates into English as Chief Buffalo Stops Four Times. Because he carries a buffalo name, Robert does not eat buffalo to avoid illness. Also, Robert literally stops four times when he is walking towards a ceremony.

276 Chere Jiusto, “Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks,” Montana State Historical Preservation Office, Phillips County, Montana, May 17, 1996, National Park Service Archives, File number 96000548: Section 8. According to this document, members of these other tribes also consider the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock as sacred helpers.
dotted the hills around Cree Crossing marked the location where Assiniboine people and other Indigenous peoples would ford the Milk River, moving north or south as they followed animal buffalo herds in Big-Bend country, which is today the U.S.-Canadian border.\footnote{Historical placard at “The Cree Crossing,” as photographed by Phil Konstantin in 2003 at the website www.americanindian.net/2003w.html, accessed March 5, 2012.}

In both written texts and oral histories, Assiniboine people describe the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock \textit{in situ}, before their removal. In \textit{Land of Nakoda} (1942), First Boy (James Long) devotes 10 pages to the importance of the buffalo, and specifically the Sleeping Buffalo for Assiniboines.\footnote{James L. Long, \textit{Land of Nakoda: The Story of the Assiniboine Indians, from the Tales of the Old Ones told to First Boy (James L. Long) with drawings by Fire Bear (William Standing), under direction of the Writers’ Program of the Works Projects administration in the state of Montana} (Helena, MT: State Pub. Co., 2004 [1942]). The 2004 edition was published with an introduction by James Shanley. I will discuss this book in more detail in Chapter 4.} Long confirms their importance:

> In the buffalo country is a rock, which resembles a buffalo lying down. It was held sacred by the tribe … whenever a band passed by they always camped at some suitable camping place near the rock. Then the people placed offerings around it; some were thanksgiving for things received or for good health enjoyed by their families… The medicine men, who had the Spirit Buffalo for their helper, made their sacrifices for the welfare and prosperity of the people.\footnote{Long, \textit{Land of Nakoda}, 81.}

Fire Bear (William Standing), the illustrator for this book, drew a picture of men praying with the Sleeping Buffalo rock.

In one of Long’s interviews, an elder, named Duck, 79 years old at the time, who was part of the Prairie Band of Assiniboine, tells two powerful moral stories about the buffalo rock, “handed down through the generations of our people.”\footnote{Ibid., 81.} The first story Duck tells describes how a war party of Assiniboine originally discovered that the Sleeping Buffalo and his herd were boulders, rather than the animals they thought they were, and thus how they became their sacred protectors. The party leader determined that “This place is sacred,” and then enacted a pipe ceremony of thanksgiving and offered prayers for sustaining people through hard times. The second story Duck tells describes how a very young couple stranded from their band was saved from starvation during a time when Assiniboine people in the area faced famine. At the time, there were no buffalo in sight and they thought they were going to die. After the young man offered
prayers to the Sleeping Buffalo, Thunder Beings came, and with lightning and thunder, diverted three buffalo toward the couple’s small willow lodge. Together, with the man on the woman’s back, since his legs were too weak to walk, he was able to muster enough strength in his arms to kill one buffalo with his bow and arrow. The next morning, the woman found her band and they were able to hunt the other two buffalo, living to tell the story. There are many stories like this amongst other tribes of the area that explain the moral importance of taking only what is necessary to live from the buffalo. 281 This is both heard and seen in the oral histories and the written records about these sacred rocks.

Sacred sites, as keepers of knowledge, can be seen in how Assiniboine describe their territories. I witnessed the significance of sacred sites as keepers of knowledge on the small reserve of Pheasant Rump when I interviewed Armand McArthur in his home. 282 Not far from his home a Sweat-Lodge frame sits lonely by a beautiful, small blue lake. A barely visible track from it leads up to a sacred hill called Calf Hill, where the grass shines an emerald-green in July. After my interview with Armand, he took Robert Four Star and me up in his navy blue Chevy Silverado pickup to an ancient Medicine Wheel at the peak of this hill. In the center laid a large pile of boulders, about the size of buffalo skulls, on which blue, red, yellow, and white cloth offerings were laid. From this vantage point, one could see a 360-degrees panorama with cumulus clouds adorning a lapis horizon. Radiating out from the center, in four directions, and with concentric circles of smaller stones, the Medicine Wheel represents Assiniboine territory. As Armand described it, starting in the south, he pointed to Devils Tower in Wyoming; then he pointed west and described the Canadian Rocky Mountains and Stoney Park; then north to the Edmonton; then east to Lake of the Woods; and then back to the center. Altogether, this was Assiniboine territory, which was outlined by sacred sites.

A week later, in one of my interviews with Robert when discussing sacred sites, he stated that the site that Armand showed us, “was a site put together by First Boy, when

282 I describe this interview in more detail in Chapter 3. Armand McArthur had called me requesting this interview. I had visited with him while he was leading the Medicine Lodge at Carry the Kettle, and he had requested Robert Four Star to sing at the lodge. I helped Robert sing and had travelled with Robert on all these trips as my navigator, guide, and consultant. After this interview at his home, Armand asked Robert for songs, and after Robert recorded them, Armand gave Robert a very sacred Eagle Feather head-dress he had been given previously when he had been a band chief. This was an excellent example of exchanging songs and regalia as a way of archiving.
he came there … the stones to me resemble the original Lodge, Medicine Lodge,” and
further, “… that was about 1100 [CE?] … it tells you where these sacred sites are … like
boundaries … that doesn’t mean that’s the only land we occupied … at that time the
sacred people that put those there … that was the territory they operated in.”

According to Robert, sacred sites, especially with stones and petroglyphs like these, are
places where prayers go directly to Wagandowa Makoche Gaka (The One Above Earth
Creator).

My interviews with Robert and Armand and others show a collective sense of
Assiniboine territory, belonging, and identity. In Do You See What I Mean? Plains Indian
Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action (2009), Brenda Farnell also addresses sacred
sites as markers of Assiniboine territory. Farnell’s primary consultant in the Plains Indian
Sign Language was an Assiniboine medicine man and Vietnam veteran named Earthboy.
Earthboy began in the north and moved counter to the sun’s direction, as with a sundial,
telling historical stories about significant places. Each place name in the Assiniboine
language, as spoken and signed by Earthboy, tells a story in and of itself. Farnell states
that, “Earthboy names the places which he calls the ‘boundary markers’ of this territory,
and many of these places have a story attached to them that is referred to in the
names.”

For example, he pointed to the northwest, to a place called Iya Waokma, or
“Writing-on-Stone,” where Assiniboine continue to find spiritual assistance. This site,
like the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, is registered with the United States
National Park Service, and because it sits across the U.S.-Canadian border, it is also
designated as a Canadian Provincial Park of Alberta. According to Farnell’s findings,
“The morning after prayers and offerings have been made, the rock will show what one
wishes to know through petroglyphic writings on its face.”

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283 Interview with Robert Four Star #3, in the home of Larry Smith, July 9, 2012.
284 Brenda M. Farnell, Do You See What I Mean?: Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 5, 69. This is an excellent analysis of Assiniboine embodied actions in relation to territory. Also, see Farnell cited by cognitive scientist in Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., Embodiment and Cognitive Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16. Gil Horn, currently in his 90s, and a resident of Fort Belknap, was also one of my interviewees. Robert Four Star told me that Gil Horn (one of his elders) was a prisoner of war in a Japanese camp in the Philippines during World War II. While a prisoner, he engaged in Plains Sign Talk with a fellow Cree prisoner across cages. A Japanese guard said that he would teach them Japanese if they taught him PST.
285 Farnell, Do You See What I Mean?, 72.
how sacred sites, rocks specifically, function as keepers of cultural knowledge for Assiniboine people.

Stories shared by Armand McArthur and Robert Four Star, and those that Farnell documented, as told to her by Earthboy about the time before Euro-American expansion, share a common theme about original territory. They each point to similar boundary markers in order to outline Assiniboine territory during that earlier historical period. Beyond these markers laid enemy territory. This area extended from what is now called the Cypress Hills, Saskatchewan in the north, south to the Yellowstone River in southern Montana, east to the White Earth River near Fort Union in North Dakota, and west to the Big Belt Mountains and Sweet Grass Hills of western Montana. Assiniboine descriptions about their original territory show the connections that the Assiniboine have maintained to certain places, despite reservation, state, and national boundaries. Since the time of pre-contact to the early-twentieth century, Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock, sat in their place of origin, in the heart of Assiniboine territory, a mid-point between all of the directions, north, south, east, and west.

In the 1860s, Granville Stuart, an American pioneer in Montana, gave the first written settler account of the Sleeping Buffalo and the sacred rocks along the Milk River in “Life and Customs of the Indians,” which is a chapter in the 1925 book of his journals, Forty Years on the Frontier. Born in Iowa in 1834, after Stuart had sought wealth in the California Gold Rush, he then aggressively searched for the precious yellow metal in Montana. The editor of his published journals described him as an “Indian fighter,” and “the first sheriff of a Montana county… . He led the Yellowstone expedition of 1863, and was active in the search for a direct route from the East to Montana.” Stuart describes how local Native peoples of northern Montana would leave “shrines” of cloth, sage, meat, or tobacco offerings on trees and rocks, “… to invoke the aid of the Great Spirit.” Stuart was particularly impressed with the Sleeping Buffalo:

In the big bend of Milk river thirty miles east of Fort Belknap is a big gray granite rock resembling a buffalo lying down. This rock was greatly reverenced by the Blackfeet and River Crows and in passing they always placed on it some talisman.

Many of them made long pilgrimages to this sacred rock for the sole purpose of making offerings.  

Stuart’s journals are quite thorough in his descriptions of places that both were and are sacred to local Indigenous peoples.

In the October 2, 1958, a Phillips County News article entitled “Sleeping Buffalo at Plunge Turn-Off Revered by Early Day Indian Tribes” quotes Granville Stuart’s account, but also gives other important Indigenous history about the spiritual significance of the sacred rocks. This article states that the rock, “was left on the Cree Crossing ridge at least 200 million years ago,” and further, “Stories told by the Assiniboines date their arrival in the upper Missouri river country at about 1700.” This article concludes with the earliest land developer’s observations of Cree Crossing:

Henry Hedges and H.G. Robinson who came into northern Montana in 1892 and established ranches in the area of the Cree Crossing told of seeing beads and pieces of cloth on the stone, indicating that until fairly recently the Indians believed in the powers of the “Sleeping Buffalo.”

Thus, the article incorrectly states that local Indigenous beliefs regarding the sacred power inherent in the rocks had died off by the 1950s. None of the settler accounts understood, as Assiniboin and other local Indigenous peoples do, that rocks are sentient beings, holding power to the present day.

All of my consultants acknowledge the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock site as an important stopping place to offer prayers and seek protection when traveling west,

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287 Granville Stuart and Paul C. Phillips, Forty Years on the Frontier As Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart, Gold-Miner, Trader, Merchant, Rancher and Politician (Cleveland, OH: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1925), i-15, ii-41. Also, Stuart describes the “Sundance” and medicine men that match current descriptions; see pp. 41-45. Also, in his “Introduction” see the information about his envoy and “minister plenipotentiary” to Uruguay and Paraguay—his journals contain “much information about the copper, nitrate, and other resources of that continent” (17). Stuart is also quoted in the article “Sleeping Buffalo at Plunge Turn-Off Revered by Early Day Indian Tribes” Phillips County News, Thursday, Oct. 2, 1958.


east, north, or south. On the Medicine Rock there are ancient petroglyphs of a hand and a circular design that encompasses the four directions, which are represented by a circle with a cross in the middle, and thus four quadrants. For Assiniboine, a circle with the four directions, or quadrants as they sometimes define them, represent time and space, the four winds, sky, and earth. This idea is present in all ceremonies, as people sit and move in a circle. It is also seen in visual depictions, such as beadwork. The circular movement and the four directions; as well as wagondowa (the above), or makbia (sky); and Makoche Wakan (Sacred Earth); and Assiniboine personal and place names, together form a significant aspect of Assiniboine identity and orientation. In the same way that a spider’s web connects different points for the spider to traverse, these intersecting locations and things, of lands, animals, weather, rocks, plants, space, time, and the universe, all transmit knowledge to Assiniboine people. This Assiniboine territoriality stands in contrast to settler ways of understanding land in the Northern Plains that American and Canadian explorers encountered and national expansionist possessed in the nineteenth century.

Euro-Americans began mapping Assiniboine territory in the early 1800s, and gradually over the century, government officials reduced Assiniboine lands to present-day reservation boundaries through treaties and legislation. By the time Meriwether Lewis and William Clark had explored the area of what is now the state of Montana in 1804, Indigenous tribes of the area had already migrated, transformed, and interacted with the environment of that region. In addition, Aboriginals had experienced trade, conflicts, and social exchanges with British and French fur traders and explorers. I next discuss the late-nineteenth century dispossession of Assiniboine territories, and the beginnings of the reservation period, which continued into the early-twentieth century. I discuss this period in order to explicate how ties to sacred sites remained despite this era of dispossession.

290 Not by coincidence, it is an image and description of the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks that Farnell uses to begin her sixth chapter: “Chapter 6: Storytelling and the Embodiment of Symbolic Form” in Farnell, Do You See What I Mean?, 174.
291 I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2: Azanzana.
292 For a deep analysis of the fur trade and the role of the Assiniboine as middle-men in it, see Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
In the minds of government officials, such as the Indian Agents who followed in explorers and fur-traders’ tracks, Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains needed to be reorganized to fit into an emerging national order. This ordering of settlement included a drive to increase capital, labor, and property through the exploitation of forests, wildlife, minerals, and grasslands. To justify this colonial agenda, a discourse of assimilation ensued. Jeff Oliver’s *Landscapes and Social Transformations* (2010) counters the tendency in colonial discourse that assumes that “the Native, like nature, was an entity to be disciplined, forced to submit to the newly emerging capitalist landscape and its colonial power brokers.” Oliver argues that this “Big Picture” model of colonization of Indigenous places that is found in colonial discourse:

… describes how British Colombia was carved from wilderness between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries—both on paper, as a series of lines and place names on the map, and on the ground, as an environment transformed through the physical labors of Europeans.

Oliver’s study of the colonial restructuring of landscapes for Aboriginal people of the Frazer Valley parallels the dispossession of Assiniboine territories.

Borders drawn on maps were more than lines on paper in terms of how those borders negatively impacted Indigenous Peoples of the Northern Plains. Without any regard to Indigenous relationships to the land, the U.S.-Canadian border was established in 1818, and had the effect of limiting Assiniboine relatives from easily visiting one another. Free movement across the border became increasingly regulated. This arbitrary line would later define the northern border of a large reservation area for multiple tribes, who engaged both in alliances and intertribal wars, as well as conflicts with settlers in what would later become Montana and North Dakota.

In Assiniboine, the word for the U.S.-Canadian border is Changu Wakan, which translates into English as “mysterious (or sacred) road,” or sometimes it is translated by others as the “Medicine Line,” a name derived from the late-nineteenth century mysterious phenomenon that kept U.S. soldiers from crossing into Canada. While the 49th parallel line of longitude that separates the U.S. from Canada may accurately describe a

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295 Farnell, *Do You See What I Mean?*, 73.
visual map, as many of my consultants confirm, Assiniboine people maintain consistent travel between U.S. and Canadian reservations, as well as interact with sacred places off the reservations. Depending on the personal experiences of each individual Assiniboine person, and the personalities of border officials at the time of crossing, Assiniboine people from Canada or the United States seem to agree that stopping at the border for inspections is a minor inconvenience: “it means nothing to us.”

Nonetheless, the causes and consequences of reservation boundaries reveal a traumatic history of buffalo destruction for Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains, including the nine Assiniboine reservations spread out between northwestern Alberta and northeastern Montana. By the mid-nineteenth century, as the fur trade escalated into the Northern Plains region, Assiniboine communities had established long-standing networks and influence in the broad territory as described by Armand MacArthur at the Medicine Wheel site. Henry Youle Hind, a Canadian geologist, confirms this in his book *North-West Territory*, which is an illustrated, cartographic account of the area written after an expedition through this region in the late 1850s. In his book, Hind stated the purpose of this survey: “In July, 1857, the Canadian Government organized and dispatched an expedition to examine the country between Lake Superior and the Red River of the North, with a view to determine the best route for opening a communication between that lake and the settlements on Red River…” Hind wrote the name “Assiniboia” to describe the region, from present-day Lake of the Woods, west to the Saskatchewan River, and south to the Yellowstone River. At that time, the British and American governments were competing to build connections across the continent in an effort at national expansion and settlement.

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296 Robert Four Star Interview #2, May 30, 2010, in his office at FPCC, Wolf Point, MT. Here I will refer to what my consultants say about this. After returning from a ceremonial gathering in White Bear in 1998, in a caravan with Robert Four Star in the front, I did have the experience of being searched thoroughly. This included an invasive inspection of my medicine suitcase, waiving my rattle around, and smelling my tobacco mixture, until finally the border patrol’s boss came out and told him to desist.


298 “Assiniboia” first appears in Henry Youle Hind’s *North-west territory*, 127; Hind points out that Assiniboine is from: “‘assini’ a stone –Cree” word, as pointed out by Howse in his footnotes on this page. Also, see maps in S. J. (Simon James) Dawson, *Report on the exploration of the country between Lake Superior and the Red River settlement: and between the latter place and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan* (Toronto: J. Lovell, 1859).
In the United States, a few years after the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851, the Treaty of October 17, 1855, established a hunting and trading areas primarily for Gros Ventre, Piegan (Blackfeet), and Assiniboine peoples that extended from northern Wyoming to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, to the Yellowstone River into North Dakota, and north to the U.S.-Canadian border. As Dennis Smith discusses, during the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty, under the authority of “Crazy Bear, chief of the Girl’s Band, and The First Who Flies, chief of the Stone Band and brother of The Light … Assiniboine agreed to a tribal boundary for Assiniboine bison hunting lands…” By this time, the Assiniboine had suffered smallpox epidemics and increased conflicts with other tribes, which were also being pushed from place to place by settler incursions. These peoples included several Sioux tribes, Crow, Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, and various others.

In order to cripple Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains who were dependent on bison for their existence, American policies of assimilation and national expansion in the late-nineteenth century emphasized the destruction of bison herds. Native peoples also engaged in the decline of the bison, as they, too, supplied the market with bison hides. Nevertheless, the increase in technology and the explicit destructive intent by Euro-American expansionists were the most significant factors. As Jeffrey Ostler argues:

In the early 1870’s, however, the political economy of bison destruction underwent a significant transformation when capitalists who controlled new tanning technologies opened up new markets for hides . . . non-Indian hunters invaded the Plains, armed with large-bore rifles equipped with telescopic sights and a range of several hundred yards. Great Plains bison became gun belts for British soldiers in India, drive belts for industrial machinery in Liverpool, and luxury furniture in Manhattan townhouses.


301 See Jeffrey Ostler, The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). I discuss this in more depth in my introductory chapter to this dissertation, when I discuss the Azanzana, and pre-reservation and contemporary Nakona historicity. For an excellent discussion of the transformations of Plains Indian cultures caused by equestrian, beaver-to-bison fur trade transitions, and Euro-American expansion, see Pekka Hamalainen, “The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures” Journal of American Indian History 90, no. 3 (Dec. 2003): 833-862.
In conjunction with this over-hunting, the construction of the railroads, the lust for Black Hills’ gold, and conflicts over the Bozeman Trail had the effect of bringing the buffalo to near extinction by 1880. As American forces decimated buffalo herds, and as many Indigenous peoples faced starvation, reservations were established.

In the U.S., with the Executive Order of July 5, 1873, a multiple tribal reservation that included Assiniboine territory within present-day Montana was reduced, its southern border was pushed north and placed at the Missouri River. Then, in the Agreement of May 1, 1888, the three separate present-day reservations at Fort Belknap, Blackfeet, and Fort Peck were established. At Fort Peck, Assiniboine shared the reservation with Sioux and landless Plains Cree; and at Fort Belknap, they lived amongst Gros Ventre and Cree-Métis. Gold mining and railroad rights-of-way in the Little Rocky Mountains reduced the southern boundary of Fort Belknap in 1895, thus ceding even more Assiniboine and Gros Ventre territory. Small-scale agriculture programs, such as gardens and cattle ranching, and the provision of rations were set up on the reservations in response to mass starvations, becoming the main source of Indigenous food.

The near-annihilation of the American buffalo destroyed the self-reliance of Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border. In *Recollections of an Assiniboine chief (Ochankugahe)* (reprinted in 1972), Dan Kennedy, Ochankugahe (Pathmaker), a former Assiniboine chief of Carry the Kettle reserve in Saskatchewan, writes of his first-hand account and his research concerning buffalo decimation and reservation confinement. Kennedy, in a short section of this book titled “Ta-Tanka,” meaning Buffalo, as a boy he remembered witnessing an entire herd of buffalo carcasses: “I am sure it would be earlier than 1883, as the great buffalo herds were wiped out in 1879 and we moved from Cypress Hills to our present reserve in

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302 The Bozeman Trail was a route used by settlers to migrate through Indigenous territories from southeastern Wyoming territory to the gold fields of present day Montana in the 1860s. The U.S. military set up forts along this trail to try to protect these settlers from Indigenous tribes that attacked settlers. For a discussion of this trail’s significance during this period of U.S. imperialism in North Plains Indigenous territories, please see Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 321; also see Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 45.


1882.” Kennedy described a conversation he had with a friend, a veteran of the North-West Mounted Police, Major Thomas W. Aspdin, about the U.S.-ordered buffalo destruction:

I told the Major of the winter of 1880-81 at Cypress Hills, when we had to eat our horses to survive, and the winter of 1881-84, when five hundred or six hundred of my people starved to death at Wolf Point because of the ruthless slaughter of the buffalo by Play-ku-Tay [“white vandals”—expert buffalo hunters hired by the U.S. Government].

An estimated 500 hunters hired by the U.S. government used high-powered, long-range rifles to kill the leaders of the herds between Fort Peck and the mouth of the Musselshell River, after which the herd would “mill” about without stampeding, thus making them easy targets.

Buffalo destruction was a biological and cultural holocaust for the interdependent Northern Plains ecological world, including Indigenous survival. As Kennedy asserted:

The destruction of the buffalo was a mortal blow. We had no alternative but to comply with the provisions of our reserve, where we would receive rations of flour, bacon and tea,” and “[c]onsequently, in the spring of 1882, we left Cypress Hills, our favourite hunting territory—the land of evergreens, chinook winds and running brooks—and moved to our reserve, the Skull Mountainettes—the land of the dead.

Kennedy wrote: “The Assiniboine arrived at Skull Mountainettes from Cypress Hills in June 1882 to take possession of the reserve allocated to us by virtue of our Treaty.” This was a small area, 12 by 18 miles wide. It was named “Win-cha-pa-ghen,” or Skull Mountain, because of two small pox epidemics that wiped out Cree bands in the 1840s Kennedy claimed that, “These hills were littered with skulls when we arrived here in 1882.” The reserve was divided into three parcels named after the chief of each band, and one of which was later named “Che-gha-kin” after Chief Packs the Kettle, or Carry the Kettle, who died in 1923.

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305 See Dan Kennedy, “Ta-Tanka,” in *Recollections of an Assiniboine chief (Ochankugahe)*, ed., James R. Stevens (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 49-50. Kennedy eloquently weaves his own oral history with solid research, such as attorney records for Assiniboine land claims in the United States Court of Claims. Kennedy cites an Indian Agent at Fort Peck here without footnotes.


The effects of this buffalo destruction reached into the western Assiniboine (Stoney) territory, as well. In the introductory chapter of Recollections (1972), editor James Steven writes: “By 1863, most of the buffalo had disappeared from the Red River drainage system,” and further that, “In 1859, when the Earl of Southesk visited an Assiniboine encampment of twelve families close to the Old Bow Fort near the source of the South Saskatchewan River in Alberta, he found that ‘Stonies’ relied heavily on the black tailed deer for meat, the buffalo being scarce in the foothills of the Rockies.”308 The destruction of the buffalo favored American and Canadian expansion and settlement, the disciplining of the land, and the domestication of Indigenous peoples, which ultimately played a major role in dividing and confining Assiniboine to reservations spread out from western Alberta to eastern Montana.

Plains Ojibwa and Cree bands ceded much Indigenous territory of southern Saskatchewan and south-central Manitoba to the Canadian government with Treaty No. 4 on September 15, 1874. Led by Piapot, Pheasant Rump, and Striped Blanket (Ocean Man), bands of Stoney people (Canadian Assiniboine), signed an addition to Treaty No. 4 at Fort Qu’Appelle Lakes on September 9, 1875. In addition, two years later at Fort Walsh, four Assiniboine band leaders—Long Lodge, Man Who Took the Coat, Poorman, and Lean Man—signed Treaty No. 4, on September 25, 1877. Agencies were set up in these locations and rations were distributed. In the 1880s, as a consequence of a series of complicated relocations from the Cypress Hills, the Canadian government established reserves at Carry the Kettle, Pheasant Rump, Ocean Man each named after a tribal leader. Furthermore, other reserves were shared with Cree and Saulteaux at White Bear in southeastern Saskatchewan, and Grizzly Bear, Lean Man, Mosquito, and Red Pheasant in northwestern Saskatchewan.309 Each reserve was originally set with 128 acres per person.

In Alberta, bands of Stoney, identified as Mountain, living along the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and the Wood band, in the northern woodlands of Alberta, negotiated land cessions to the Canadian government in Treaty No. 7 in 1877.310 Morley, which ran 109 square miles along the Bow River near Banff, and two smaller

309 DeMallie, “Assiniboine,” in Handbook, 585-586; and see the map on p. 573.
310 Ian A.L. Getty and Erik D. Gooding, “Stoney,” in Handbook, 596. The authors here claim Stoney are part of the “Sioux-Assiniboine-Stoney”; I claim, according to my elders, that they are Assiniboine. For a
satellite of 5,000 acre reserves, Eden Valley and Big Horn, were made into reserves for the Mountain Stoney; these were inhabited by three bands named after the chiefs of each band who attended the Treaty No. 7: thus, they were the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley (Goodstoney) bands. Fifty miles west of Edmonton, the two most northern bands of Wood Stoney ceded lands in exchange for the Alexis and Paul reserves. Like other bands of Assiniboine, though they had been enemies with Blackfoot and Sarcee into the nineteenth century, the Mountain Stoney allied with Plains Cree, and with the Kootenai and Shushwap in British Columbia. Perhaps the most significant, and also the most detrimental impact to free access on and off reservation land in the U.S. was the enforcement of the 1887 Dawes Act in the 1920s, which established large regions of privately owned land designated with barbed-wire fences.  

Into the early-twentieth century in Montana, Assiniboine people subsisted on a combination of rations and small gardens and fields for farming, until individual allotments were distributed between 1909 and 1913 at Fort Peck, and in 1921 at Fort Belknap. Starting in 1902, the majority of land was leased to settler cattle companies on both reservations. At Fort Peck, lands that had not been allotted were opened to settlers for homesteading in 1917, whereas at Fort Belknap, in 1921, all reservation land was allotted to tribal members. At both Fort Peck and Fort Belknap the discovery of oil in the 1950s led to economic opportunity for tribes. At the same time, the U.S. government

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312 In an excellent study of the tragedy of land dispossession, but also the persistence of Indigenous identity and cultural practices in places, see Melissa Meyer, The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation, 1889-1920, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). Meyer emphasized how the concept of individual property ownership by settlers transformed Indigenous relationships to territory, forcing them into settler concepts. At the same time, she also shows Indigenous persistence of identity tied to ancestral lands and the changing use of land into a commodity. Also, the Industrial Survey Records done by the Office of Indian Affairs in the 1910s and 1920s show photographs and notes regarding families’ “progress” with small-scale farming and livestock, such as numbers of chickens, donkeys, and cattle at Fort Peck and Fort Belknap. archival research conducted in June, 2010. Industrial Survey Records. Reports of Industrial Surveys, 1922-1929. Ft. Belknap – Ft. Berthold. Box 10. PI-163 Entry 762, RG 75, National Archives I, Washington, D.C..  
only approved leases for individual landowners, who would then receive royalties, which thus encouraged individual property ownership.\textsuperscript{314}

Beginning in the 1920s in the U.S. and 1970s in Canada, Assiniboine bands filed land claims for unfulfilled treaty promises for ceded territories. In 1981, after four different attempts over the course of the twentieth century, Assiniboine communities of Fort Peck and Fort Belknap were awarded $16 million for lands lost in the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty. In Saskatchewan, Assiniboine at White Bear filed a land claim in 1974 for the reserves at Pheasant Rump and Ocean Man, which had been relinquished in 1901 under duress when they were forced to join other tribes at White Bear Reserve. After the Canadian government finally awarded them $19 million in 1984, the Assiniboine here used most of that award to purchase land bases; they reestablished Pheasant Rump and Ocean Man reserves in 1990. Mosquito, Grizzly Bear’s Head, and Lean Man reserves also received land claim entitlements of $8.5 million in 1992, which was the amount legally due to them under the original treaty, and with which they used mainly to purchase lands converted to trust status. Carry the Kettle reserve received $24 million for treaty land claims as recently as 1996, the same year that the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks were designated a National Heritage Site.\textsuperscript{315}

Highways, roads, railroads, cattle fences, power, gas and oil lines, in addition to the county, reservation, state, and national boundaries that crisscross this vast region, have irrevocably altered Assiniboine relationships with distinct places within their original aboriginal territory. Reservation, state, and national boundaries that were set in the late-nineteenth century administratively cut lines across aboriginal relationships in a physically violent way, especially with the near extinction of the buffalo. Assimilation policies, agricultural programs, cattle ranching, mining, and oil production changed how Assiniboine related to their lands and water systems. Nonetheless, amidst all of these major impacts, the Assiniboine’s collective ties to sacred sites such as Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock have remained.

How the two boulders came to rest at their present location after three site changes tells a story about the boulders’ persistence as keepers of knowledge, as well as

information about both loss and continuity as it regards Assiniboine and other tribal relationships to sacred sites. The following history of the forced migration of Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock in the twentieth century, and these symbols’ isolation from their original location and herds, demonstrates the persistence of the rocks’ power to keep territorial knowledge alive for Assiniboine people.

In 1995, Chere Jiusto, a non-Indigenous person who worked for the Montana State Historical Preservation Office (MSHPO), consulted with and interviewed eight elders from six different regional tribes in order to evaluate the impact of the rocks’ displacements. Jiusto’s project exemplified a non-Indigenous form of archiving that worked together with Indigenous ways of keeping knowledge alive in order to address some of the impact of national development. Each tribe considered the elders who were consulted regarding the nomination of the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock as part of the National Register as spiritual leaders. These interviews and meetings were conducted to determine whether or not the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks should be designated as a “Historic Place” on the National Park Service’s National Register, and thus protected as a public site. In addition to the interviews held in Billings and Great Falls, Montana over the course of 1995, Jiusto also documented the elders’ statements at a discussion meeting regarding the registration process on November 30, 1995. Jiusto’s National Registration of Historic Places document recorded the elders’ memories both before and after the forced migration of the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock. As historians, in the non-Western, Indigenous sense, their reverence for the sacredness of the rocks as keepers of cultural and historical knowledge should not be undervalued.

The Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks etched a deep living memory in these elders, which predates the rocks’ first removal in 1932. Pat Chief Stick, a Chippewa-Cree, tells the story about how the Sleeping Buffalo was moved for road construction and then returned by its own volition. Pat Chief Stick heard the story from a “Canadian Indian” at Waterton Park, Alberta, which sits on the border of Glacier Park in Montana. According to the story, road workers asked for assistance from a local medicine man, who then performed a pipe ceremony for the mysterious rock which had moved itself

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back to its original position. After the ceremony, the medicine man declared, “That rock is sacred. It doesn’t want to be removed. Let it sit where you found it.”

Representing a collective view held by all of the consultants, Pat Chief Stick also stated the importance of the original location at Cree Crossing: “The Cree Crossing comes from the time of long time ago. When they were hunting buffalo this is where they used to come.”

Moving parties, bands, and groups that crossed the Milk River at this point to hunt buffalo or make exchanges with other tribes considered this site sacred. According to all eight tribal consultants, the original site of these boulders at Cree Crossing remains historically significant for all of the tribes of the greater Northern Plains.

John “Buster” Yellow Kidney, a Blackfeet elder and spiritual leader, whom I once met at a ceremony in 1998, and who was Robert Four Star’s adopted uncle, also affirmed the importance of being instructed in cultural and historical knowledge at this sacred site. In his February 17, 1995 interview with Chere Jiusto, Don Wetzel (Blackfeet), and Paul Putz in Great Falls, Montana, Buster tells how as a young boy his grandfather used to take him to Cree Crossing and the Sleeping Buffalo before its relocation to instill the importance of this place as a living archive. Buster remembers that, “When my grandfather was alive, he took me to these places, he showed me this is what happened here. He took me to the Crossing …. They used to move there and they’d spend two–three days there, nothing but ceremonies involving the buffalo ….”

Jiusto also referenced A. L. Kroeber’s ethnographic records that describe Gros Ventre practices in relation to the Buffalo rocks at the turn of the twentieth century.

Out of the eight tribal consultants interviewed by the MSHPO, three were Assiniboin elders: Leslie Fourstar, Carl Fourstar, and Gil Horn. I also had the great

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318 Ibid.
honor of interviewing Gil Horn in July 2012. I travelled to visit him with Robert Four Star, and was welcomed into his home at Fort Belknap by his daughter, Sis. Robert is an adopted son of Gil Horn, which helped me gain permission to interview Gil. At 94 years of age, with short black and grey hair that still covers his head, he sat and laughed and joked with Robert. He was hard of hearing, so Sis helped to translate.

Many Assiniboine cultural practitioners believe that petroglyphs and pictographs are imbued with spiritual power, and that they were placed there by spirit beings. Gil confirmed the spiritual power that the rocks still emanate when he spoke with me in 2012, as he did with Jiusto at the Sleeping Buffalo Resort in 1995. In 1995, Gil stated that “The picture rock was up north …. They used that when they went somewhere, they prayed to it. Even just passing through they prayed to that picture rock and made offerings. When they come up on that rock they knew what kind of trip they were going to have.” This ritual practice of praying to the Sleeping Buffalo, as the representative leader of buffalo herds, has continued to the present day despite the rocks’ relocations. As Gil confirmed: “Even in prayers, they always talk about these buffalo. They say when they’re praying in Indian [Assiniboine], we want some of your strength …. You have a lot of courage …. Give us some of that so that we can live on.”

The Spirit of the Buffalo remains central in Assiniboine prayers for continued life, even though they do not currently depend on buffalo for sustenance.

In 1995, Leslie Fourstar was the oldest tribal member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine, and according to Jiusto, the last remaining fluent speaker in the “old Assiniboine language.” Leslie, while attesting to the power of the boulders, told one story about how one of his daughters, who was originally born dead, but after his prayers to the “Buffalo Rock,” she began crying 10 minutes after her birth. Leslie Fourstar also declared that, “We Assiniboines consider that Sleeping Buffalo the most sacred thing.” He went on to tell another story of how Assiniboines first came upon the Sleeping Buffalo in its original location, which was a story passed down from his grandfather’s

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321 Gil Horn Interview, July 5, 2012, (with Robert Four Star and Sis Horn present), in his home at Fort Belknap, Montana. See brief bio and description in Appendix A.
322 Gil Horn’s statements and discussion, Sleeping Buffalo Meeting, November 30, 1995, Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs: Chere Jiusto, MSHPO, NPS/NRHP, File number 96000548: Section 8, page 2.
grandfather, and “other old timers [who] told the same story, identical.” The elders’ obviously remembered the time when they were children before the rocks were displaced from Cree Crossing. Unfortunately, in the 1930s, settlers removed the Sleeping Buffalo from this original location on what would later become three forced migrations throughout the twentieth century.

The Sleeping Buffalo was first separated from the herd of other buffalo boulders at Cree Crossing in 1932. It was relocated to a city park in the small town of Malta, Montana. In a local newspaper story in *The Phillip County News*, dated August 27, 1931, and entitled “Sacred Buffalo To Sit On Pedestal In Park,” it states that: “Plans are being formulated for the construction of a cement pedestal upon which the Sacred Buffalo will be permanently set in the city part on Front Street.” According to this article, the Commercial Club instigated this forced migration. What is clear when reading this short, three-paragraph article is that there was a strong non-Indigenous desire to publicly archive historical sites. For example, the article states that, “Henry Hedges, who for many years has been interested in historical matters in this section of the state, has offered to paint the rock with red and blue colors as it was when he first saw it in 1893.” Hedges had seen it in its original location, “on the H. G. Robinson ranch at the Cree crossing of [the] Milk river. The rock overlooked a wide level flat to the south upon which ground the Indians held their sports and games.” The exact reasons why the Sleeping Buffalo was removed is unclear, however, we can assume that non-Native, private landowners desired to claim and control Indigenous territory, and they were the ones who displaced the ancient Sleeping Buffalo to the center of a young Montana town. This was also a form of cultural appropriation to instill a sense of heritage for Montanans. Thus, one of the most sacred artifacts, a sentient being in many Indigenous views, was removed, possessed, and placed on display in a non-Indigenous public space.

After its move in 1932, local legend has it that the Sleeping Buffalo did not like its home in Trafton Park, Malta. Donavon Archambault, a member of the local Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap, relayed some interesting history about Sleeping Buffalo to Don

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Wetzel (Blackfeet) during a phone interview in November 1995. Wetzel was then working with Chere Jiusto for the National Register for Historic Places. According to Archambault, people of the town reported that the Sleeping Buffalo would change directions, moving at night, suggesting it wanted to return to its original location. He said that, “The people in Malta at night would hear these buffalo bellowing, and they didn’t know where it was coming from. So they wanted them out of there.”326 Leslie Fourstar also confirmed this history in the statement: “One night, one of the city patrol heard a cow bellowing and wondered if it was coming from this rock. He got scared and told the other patrol, the police. And they came over and it bellowed again. So they brought it back down to that place where they moved it from.”327 From Assiniboine and other local Indigenous peoples’ view, the Sleeping Buffalo’s reported volition was not unexpected. According to Assiniboine oral tradition and worldview, human beings are quite similar to buffalo in terms of social behavior and how they raise their young. In this sense, humans and buffalo are both social animals with hierarchies, specific role-relationships, and move together in kin groups. So, from Assiniboine peoples’ perspectives, it would make perfect sense that the Sleeping Buffalo would feel unnaturally out of place, alone, and restless.

A short time after the disturbances reported in Tafton Park, Malta, the local American Legion chapter relocated the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks in 1932 to a location east of Malta, along Old U.S. Highway 2.328 At that time, engineers working for the Farm Security Administration built a tall monument of stone and mortar between the rocks where they remained for several decades. An article titled “Gifts Left at Buffalo Rock As by Indians in Olden Times,” written in 1937, stated that travellers at that time left pennies on the Buffalo’s back and on the Medicine Rock instead of traditional tobacco, cloth, or meat offerings. The article speculates about the curious transnational phenomenon of pennies: “In all about 300 pennies have been left at the two Indian rocks. One-third of them have been Canadian coins which may indicate that Canadians are more superstitious or that they believe in following ancient traditions or merely that a great

326 Donovan Archambault Telephone Interview with Don Wetzel, November 1995: Chere Jiusto, MSHPO, NPS/NRHP, File number 96000548: Section 8, page 3.
327 Leslie Fourstar’s statements and discussion, Sleeping Buffalo Meeting, November 30, 1995, Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs, Saco, MT: Chere Jiusto, MSHPO, NPS/NRHP, File number 96000548: Section 8, page 3.
many Canadians visit the Legion plunge … .” This article also reported an interesting lunar cycle: “Clyde Ferris, project engineer, has observed that more coins are left during the full moon than at any other time.”\(^{329}\) Though this article gives some interesting physical accounts of coin currency in the 1930s, and Canadian tourists are discussed in a humorous tone, local Indigenous peoples seem to have vanished altogether in this narrative, replaced by the customs of obscure “motorists” and the “passerby.” Again, after the second forced migration, the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks seem to have been claimed by local settlers.

Moving the boulders from the town park in Malta to this location at the junction of Old U.S. Highway 2 and the “Malta Legion Plunge Road” was strategic. This junction was a few miles from the Malta American Legion Health Plunge, a natural hot springs that the Works Progress Administration had expanded.\(^{330}\) Over 30 years later, in 1967, the Montana Highway Transportation Authority constructed the new Highway 2, approximately two miles north of the old highway. At the time of this change, the Sleeping Buffalo was moved a third time, to where it sits in its present location, a highway right-of-way on the north side of the highway. At the time, they left the Medicine Rock at the Old Highway 2 site.\(^{331}\) This made the Sleeping Buffalo highly accessible to tribal people and the general public on a heavily travelled interstate highway, but also left the Sleeping Buffalo unprotected and separated from the Medicine Rock.

Two decades later, in 1987, Jon Cantway and Roger Ereaux, owners and operators of the Sleeping Buffalo Resort, formerly the Legion Plunge, now named after the sacred rock, petitioned the Montana Highway Department to build a protective structure for the rock and volunteered to be the caretakers of Sleeping Buffalo. Tribal Councils from Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, and Rocky Boy, as well as the Phillips and Valley Counties Historical Societies, all supported the construction of a “shrine” for the Sleeping Buffalo. In addition, they suggested that it be nominated for the National

\(^{329}\) No author, “Gifts Left at Buffalo Rock As by Indians in Olden Times,” *Great Falls Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1937. This article was found in Smith, *The Sleeping Buffalo*, 17.

\(^{330}\) Gladys Costello, “Sleeping Buffalo Revered By Indians for Centuries” *Phillips County News*, Sept. 1962; this article was photocopied and is found in Smith, *The Sleeping Buffalo*, 25.

Register of Historic Places, a petition which was unsuccessful until a decade later. Consequently, at the junction of U.S. Highway 2 and the small road that leads to the Sleeping Buffalo Resort, today one can see the shelter constructed out of wood and stone discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To mark the completion of this shelter, the first Sleeping Buffalo Days Celebration was held in September 1987. A temporary arbor was built where members from local tribes performed dance ceremonies.

More importantly, because of consultations held with local Native elders, the Medicine Rock also was moved for a third time, this time migrating from the Old Highway 2 location, where it had been left behind, to again join the Sleeping Buffalo. At this ceremonial event, local spiritual leaders Ken Ryan (Assiniboine), Max White (Assiniboine), and Donavan Archambault (Gros Ventre) conducted a pipe ceremony. According to local people, this was an improvement and a more convenient location. Cultural practitioners from multiple tribes that know the history of these sacred rocks stop to give prayers and offerings. In addition, the maintenance by the owners of the Sleeping Buffalo Resort helps to protect the rocks, which also presents an interesting tourist attraction for visitors.

Nevertheless, as Chere Jiusto points out in her description, the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks’ “... exposure to the public leaves them vulnerable to desecration and vandalism. Many days, trash, broken glass and other things are mixed with the offerings, defiling the site and the buffalo rock.” Unfortunately, I have observed the same condition. It is quite painful for an Assiniboine cultural practitioner to see broken beer bottles scattered around these sacred rocks. In sum, then, the present shelter for the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock provides both protection from, and exposure to, the public as a designated National Historic Registered site.

Jiusto concludes the nomination narrative by quoting Carl Fourstar, from statements he made, and from the deliberations held at Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs in November 1995. Regarding the discussions about the historical importance that the Sleeping Buffalo holds for local tribes, Carl attested that, “All these things that we are hearing, what these people are talking about is not centuries old. What they’re talking

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332 Jiusto: Section 8, page 4.
333 Jiusto: Section 8, page 4.
334 Ibid.
about is a way of life that exists today and will exist as long as there are Indian people. We’ll never be anything else.”

Carl Fourstar’s statement gives strong credence to an important Assiniboine perspective, one which sees sacred sites as keepers of cultural knowledge. Another elder, Bill Tallbull, a Northern Cheyenne man, explained the significance of Cree Crossing: “The ridge itself is like a church and the buffalo is like an altar. When the buffalo was moved, it was like taking the altar from the church.” While some would like the rocks returned to their original site, they still keep knowledge alive for Indigenous people at their present location. The sacred rocks’ persistent importance, despite their forced migrations, parallels Assiniboine peoples’ endurance in the face of the pain they experienced when they were dispossessed of their territory, by the U.S., when it created the national, state, and reservation borders.

Reservation, state, and national boundaries are imaginary lines drawn onto political maps; yet, they have had real effects on Assiniboine lives. On the other hand, borders do not limit the Assiniboine people. Routes predating Euro-American contact have been conduits for trade in goods and bodies of cultural knowledge, across the vast stretches of areas that Assiniboine people have long considered their homelands. Assiniboine people have always been on the move, dwelling in places and gaining knowledge from sacred sites that span a massive region, from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes, and from the Yellowstone River in Montana to the Athabascan River in Alberta.

As the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rock kept knowledge alive from the late-nineteenth century through the twentieth century, even when settlers removed them from their original home, the period of established reservations and assimilation programs failed to destroy Assiniboine connections to their original territories. Similar to the rocks’ continued existence as sentient beings along Highway 2, now sheltered in a National Historic Registry shed, Assiniboine have adapted to modern economic systems and international boundaries to fit their own purposes.

335 Carl Fourstar’s statements and discussion, Sleeping Buffalo Meeting, November 30, 1995, Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs, Saco, MT: Chere Jiusto, MSHPO, NPS/NRHP, File number 96000548: Section 8, page 5.

336 William Tallbull’s statements and interview with Don Wetzel and Chere Jiusto, November 2, 1995, Billings, MT: Chere Jiusto, MSHPO, NPS/NRHP, File number 96000548: Section 8, page 5.
Almost a decade after the sacred rocks’ enshrinement in 1987, representatives from various communities throughout northern Montana held “The Sleeping Buffalo Meeting” at Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs Resort in November 1995. This meeting exemplified the complex relationship between the rocks, local Indigenous peoples, the public’s interest as represented by the National Park System and the state’s transportation agency, and a small private resort. The owners of the resort, Jon Cantway and Roger Ereaux, were strong supporters of the Indigenous elders’ views. The elders at the meeting argued that the sacred rocks’ exposure along a national interstate highway for decades presented a significant offense to local Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, relocating them back to their original location at Cree Crossing also was not a viable option for two reasons. First, the rocks originated from privately held ranchland. Second, it would be a major obstacle for elders to visit the location given the current roads and fences in place.

On May 17, 1996, the location of Sleeping Buffalo Rock and the adjacent Medicine Rock were designated a ceremonial site by the National Register of Historic Places. There was a great deal of local controversy over this designation. The Native elders who were interviewed were from six different tribes, but all shared a common history with the Buffalo Rocks. These tribes included the Blackfeet, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Chippewa, Cree, Northern Cheyenne, and Crow. Several of those consulted were Assiniboine relatives of some of my interviewees, while others were people who I had known personally. Some individuals wanted the rocks returned to their original location; some wanted them to remain for their appeal to tourists; and some wanted to keep them at this site as easy access for elderly Indigenous peoples. All the Indigenous consultants considered these rocks imbued with sacred power.

After this consultation with local elders, the National Park Service officials signed the nomination form and listed the rocks as a “Historic Place” in April 1996. Even though no one owns the rocks as private property, today they reside under the jurisdiction of the Montana Department of Transportation. Jiusto affirmed in the introduction to the nomination form that:

In assessing the integrity of ceremonial objects such as the Sleeping Buffalo Rock, those most qualified to gauge the level of integrity are the traditional users themselves. The rocks have a strong presence of their own … . The continued relationship and ceremonial use of the Sleeping Buffalo Rock by the traditional community is evidence of their perception that the rocks maintain their power, significance and meaning … . The integrity of the rock itself and its cultural link to the native peoples of the high plains remains unbroken.338

In a larger frame of reference, the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks represent the issue of sacred sites as keepers of knowledge for Indigenous peoples. Many of these sacred sites, and the Indigenous groups that sustain relationships to them, were able to survive land dispossession, starvation, and reservation and national boundary designations. For Indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains, the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks are sentient beings—keepers of knowledge—who help them perpetuate their territoriality. In acknowledging this continuity, Jiusto asserted that:

Despite tremendous changes during the historic period, tribal groups on the Northern Plains today continue to trace an uninterrupted affiliation with their aboriginal territories and a continuance of the cultural fabric, although some of their lifeways have changed and adapted to new conditions. To them, the power of the Sleeping Buffalo remains undiminished.339

As a result of the recognition on the National Register of Historical Places in 1996, it was decided that the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks would remain at their present location, and that the owners of the Sleeping Buffalo Resort would be caretakers.

Fifteen years later, the controversy over Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks’ placement continued. In a very fine U.S. history paper written in the spring of 2011, titled “Will the Sleeping Buffalo Be Able to Rest?,” local Malta High School students Landon Costin and Lauren Buechler interviewed Don Klinko, a local, non-Indigenous Malta resident, and Roger Ereaux, the owner of the Sleeping Buffalo Resort. According to Costin and Buechler, Ereaux confirmed that he wanted to respect Indigenous views about the sacred rocks’ placement first, but also admitted that they were a tourist attraction. On the other hand, Klinko claimed that sacred objects and revenue incentives were inimical. The writers reported that, “Klinko expressed that the Native people felt that a lot of things

were being done at their expense, and that they were kind of getting tired of being exploited. Roger Ereaux wanted to have the Native American’s blessing or not have a part of it.” These continuing, contrasting viewpoints as they regard the sacred and the secular are indicative of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.

Even though there continues to be disagreements over where the sacred rocks should be placed, local Indigenous elders’ views have been recognized by the National Park Service, the Montana State Historical Places Office, and local public newspapers. In addition, the designation as a public National Historical Place is more akin to Indigenous values than the concept of private property. The resilience of the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, and the reverence that Indigenous peoples continue to show them today, parallels Assiniboine peoples’ preservation of territorial cultural knowledge both on and off the reservations.

The Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks are just one example of how sacred sites have sustained bodies of cultural knowledge. As discussed above, there are many other examples of important sites that Assiniboine draw meaning from. While some sites are within reservation boundaries, others span the wide breadth of Assiniboine ancestral territories. Deep in the heart of Fort Belknap, I had the honor of staying with Teddy Bell, Robert Four Star’s adoptive brother. Teddy lives in what is called the Iron Cradle, a pristine environment of pine forests, and limestone, shale, and sandstone cliffs, that form a kind of cradle at the north side of the Little Rockies. Parts of the Little Rockies were excluded from the reservation, and they were the location where the company Landusky and Zortman Mines contaminated the land while reaping millions in profit, none of which the tribes ever saw. In Assiniboine, the Little Rockies are called Iyagheh Widana (Rock Island). Teddy stated that there are a lot of elk, mountain lions, bear, and deer that live around his home. Like many residents of reservations in Montana, people hunt many of these animals for subsistence, and not for trophies. Even so, Teddy does not allow any hunting, as he sees himself as a caretaker of the land, “living in harmony with nature.”

His name, Inkmu Yahaza means Mountain Lion Protects Him.

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340 Costin and Buechler, “Will the Sleeping Buffalo Be Able to Rest?”: 2.
The Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks, as well as the rocks of the Medicine Wheel near Armand MacArthur’s home, the Iron Cradle sites that protect Teddy Bell, and other sacred sites protect the continuity of Assiniboine territoriality. Sacred sites for Assiniboine keep cultural knowledge alive through relationships of mutual interdependence. In the Northern Plains of America, settlers decimated the bison and imposed the reservation system on the Assiniboine. This forced them to adapt their practices to small-scale ranching and government bureaucracy. Today the Assiniboine have their own herds of bison, and a tribally managed Fish and Game Department (FGD). Even though Assiniboine people, bison herds, and the Sleeping Buffalo and Medicine Rocks have been displaced by forced migrations to reservations and reorganized by government structures through the late nineteenth century to the present, the Assiniboine view of bison and rocks as living relatives and keepers of sacred knowledge remains strong. This is evidenced by Assiniboine literature about their historical experiences under government pressures to assimilate during the long twentieth century that I discuss in the next chapter.

342 Along with the Inter-tribal Bison Cooperative, since only about 1997 have Assiniboine and Sioux of Fort Peck and Gros Ventre and Assiniboine of Fort Belknap fostered a small herd of buffalo originally from Yellowstone Park.
Chapter 5: Assiniboine Literacy- *Land of Nakoda*[^343] and other Assiniboine Literature

Our legends, as told by our ancient ones, must be preserved and studied. We need to continue to record our true history. We need to do our own research. We need to talk to as many elders as we can before they have all gone to the Spirit World. Elders with traditional knowledge, along with Indigenous youth and children, must come together to remember the stories. We must preserve these traditions, and future generations must continue this journey—knowing our traditions and oral history—if we as a people are to survive, grow, and flourish in the future.

– John Snow (Stoney)[^344]

Our claims to an indigenous perspective don’t rest on identity politics, or some inherent connection to ancestral voices; it’s about understanding literature from a perspective embedded in long-standing sources of knowledge. We are part of a philosophical conversation, which did not emerge only in the last twenty years but has been ongoing on this continent for millennia.

– Lisa Tanya Brooks (Abenaki)[^345]

As I mentioned in my Introduction, between the years 1996 and 1998, while I was living at Wolf Point on the Fort Peck reservation, and during my visits in the summers ever since, I have spent many days and nights with Oliver Archdale, a medicine man and the first person who guided me at Fort Peck. Sometimes we would converse in his home, around his small kitchen table or in his living room in his three-bedroom house. His house, on the south end of Wolf Point, was government-funded, and painted powder-blue to distinguish it from the other houses of different colors, which otherwise were exactly the same. At other times we would talk, as much in humor as in serious philosophical discussion, while driving on the reservation to gather medicine, or hunt, or during long drives to other reserves for ceremonies that he had been called to conduct, when he would tell me the history of the land. Relaxing around his kitchen table one summer day, with a pile of books his wife at the time, Rosella, had gotten from the local library, he told me


[^344]: John Snow, *These Mountains are our Sacred Places* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1977; Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 228.

that he did not like to read books on Native American studies, especially those regarding sacred issues. Oliver did not want to confuse his own internal cultural information or consciousness—his dreams, for example—with knowledge he would acquire from texts. Nonetheless, Oliver was quite literate, specifically in Assiniboine and Native American studies, and taught Assiniboine language in Wolf Point schools before he died. Oliver once told me that in his twenties he had almost graduated with B.A. degree from the University of Minnesota, but that he was just a few credits shy.

Oliver used to tease me that some day I would write a book about Assiniboine cultural knowledge: a contribution to the New Age canon of Native spirituality texts. Though he said this only in jest, his underlying concern was that I would write about sacred or secret knowledge, such as how to procure certain medicinal plants or conduct healing ceremonies. At his funeral in 2002, many people spoke strongly about Oliver’s commitment to Assiniboine cultural practices, and discussing these practices as a way of life integral for rising generations of Assiniboine. Oliver believed that these cultural practices were important for his peoples’ survival, and though he was open to sharing these bodies of knowledge, he rejected the idea of writing about these practices for outside audiences or for profit. At the same time, he often referenced Assiniboine-produced literature, and he wrote some articles for the Nakodabi: the Assiniboine people, a locally produced Assiniboine cultural magazine published in the early 1990s. Oliver’s view on the written word and cultural knowledge was that the writing should promote the well being of his community first and foremost, which also exemplifies how Assiniboine people have embraced literacy in the Western sense.

This chapter discusses Assiniboine-produced literature and Indigenous-produced histories more broadly. Throughout the twentieth century, the Assiniboine have worked to sustain Assiniboine cultural knowledge by producing their own literature and historical texts. This Assiniboine literature involves a tension of divergent views regarding who has the authority to write about Assiniboine cultural knowledge and history, what is permissible to express in words, and the audience of the literature. Each Assiniboine person has their own perspective about what is and is not acceptable to write about, and

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there is a range of differing opinions about who has the authority to tell the multiple histories or describe the culture. Notwithstanding this diversity, the majority of people that I spoke with and interviewed agree that Assiniboine people writing about their own history and cultural knowledge has benefited their communities’ cultural continuity and understanding of how things happened in the past.

For Assiniboine people, sustaining their knowledge through printed literature has been an effective way to preserve bodies of knowledge, which also works in concert with the oral tradition, Assiniboine language, and settler archives. The Assiniboine printed literature discussed in this chapter include within their pages various imagery, such as maps, pictures, and photographs, as well as stories translated from oral histories spoken in the Assiniboine language. Rather than conflicting with oral traditions or ceremonies, the texts have been integral in maintaining and recirculating cultural knowledge through word of mouth and its integration in school programs and local newspapers.

Nevertheless, Indigenous printed literatures are limited in some ways. Assiniboine literature alone, without the other ways of keeping their knowledge alive, as discussed in each chapter of this dissertation, will not suffice to preserve and sustain Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge. In addition, from an Assiniboine perspective, there are some things that should not be written down, and further, some things that cannot be known solely through reading and writing. In this chapter, I argue that literacy in the form of written historical texts by the Indigenous community has been a significant contribution to Assiniboine knowledge-keeping and cultural survival in several ways.

I have organized this chapter into three sections around an analysis of Assiniboine literature. In the first section, I draw from scholars of Indigenous literacy in order to examine why and how other Indigenous peoples have written their own histories for their own people, as well as for outside audiences. In the second section, I discuss how Assiniboine literature sustains cultural survival by recording in written form the histories and cultural knowledge that Assiniboine people have preserved from one generation to the next. Here I address the effects of residential schools that were set up during the early-twentieth century in Assiniboine territories. I look at these schools in the context of a type of cultural genocide of forced English education, and how Indigenous literacy prevailed in the face of this pressure to help maintain Indigenous cultural knowledge.
With that background history, I focus on the preservation of cultural knowledge and identity that resulted from the *Land of Nakoda* originally published in 1942. This book was republished as *The Assiniboine* in 1961 and then reprinted a third time in 2004 with the original title, *Land of Nakoda*. The three editions of this book, each with different introductions and editors, forged a legacy through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. These histories have countered the early- to mid-twentieth century American and Canadian goals of erasing Indigenous cultural knowledge through education and English literacy, as well as the misrepresentations and misappropriations by settler ethnographies and White historical narratives. Lastly, in the third section of the present chapter, I discuss several other Assiniboine texts written some thirty years after the first printing of *Land of Nakoda* to show a more political as well as cultural assertion. These texts include *Tatanga Mani: Walking Buffalo of the Stonies*, a biography published in 1969; *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief* by Dan Kennedy (Ochankugahe) published in 1972; *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places: The Story Of The Stoney Indians* first published in 1977, and with a new edition in 2005, written by Chief John Snow; and *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000* written by Dr. David Miller, Dr. Dennis Smith, Dr. Joseph R. McGeshick, Dr. James Shanley, and Caleb Shields, which was published by the Montana Historical Society in 2008. In this section, I extend my investigation into historical consciousness, political implications, memory, and the act of writing as a result of literacy found in other Assiniboine texts. In some instances, these productions have worked in reciprocal relationships with settler archives, museums, libraries, and other institutions. Subsequently, Assiniboine authors turned forced assimilation through education into self-determined education from the early- to the late-twentieth century.

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Indigenous-produced histories and archives do not have to be always diametrically opposed to Western historicity and Western methods of archiving information about and drawn from Indigenous peoples. The genealogy of Assiniboine-authored texts discussed in this chapter, demonstrate how Assiniboine scholars and cultural leaders have worked with non-Indigenous people and institutions to better represent histories about Assiniboine people from Assiniboine peoples’ perspectives.  

This chapter reveals that there have been two audiences for texts written by Assiniboine people: the first has been for Assiniboine communities themselves, and the second has been for the general American and Canadian public. Self-representation differs from representation by outsiders, mainly because certain symbols and signs are explained in terms of what they mean to the originating community and without the intermediary of a translator or ethnographer. In this chapter I examine the relationships between internal Assiniboine communities and certain external communities, such as academic or the public contexts, as both interested audiences for histories written by Assiniboine people. Internal-external relationships between Indigenous audiences and the general public are essential in addressing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous archival processes in terms of the conflicting and reciprocal relationships of these two populations. Assiniboine writers have produced historical and cultural representations for their own community audiences and their own future generations as well as for outside audiences for different purposes. For Indigenous audiences, these productions intend to keep knowledge in circulation internally for Indigenous peoples; whereas for external audiences, these same productions assert Indigenous self-determination within settler structural systems, such as with national, state, and public institutions for land claims or treaty rights.

From the early-twentieth century to today, the reservation era to the present, the Assiniboine have blended systems of thought, such as found in oral traditions, with the writing and systems of thought of colonizers, meaning the Anglo-American and Anglo- 

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Canadian English. Of course, there are other instances in the history of Indigenous contact with colonizing forces throughout the world, where Indigenous people became voluntarily literate in the language of the colonizer in order to sustain or assert their own body of Indigenous knowledge in textual form. To better understand this layering of Indigenous and colonial/settler systems of communication I draw on Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of the “contact zone.” In the chapter, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Pratt defines the “contact zone” as: “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.”\textsuperscript{351} Pratt uses the ethnographic term “transculturation”, as defined by Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, “to describe processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”\textsuperscript{352} The Assiniboine exemplify this transculturation—a result of the contact zone found in residential schools set up on Assiniboine reservations in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The Indigenous literature that has been produced in settler contexts involves the issue of authority to write about Indigenous cultural knowledge as well as the issue of historical legitimacy. These discursive spaces often remain contested in regards to what counts as legitimate history and what does not. Here I draw from Chadwick Allen’s \textit{Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts} (2002), to clarify this contested legitimacy through Indigenous historical texts. Allen explores post-WWII Maori and American Indian literature as political assertions of Indigenous identity, or indigeneity. He argues for the juxtaposition in purposes found in literature between indigeneity in Indigenous literature, on the one hand, and settler nations’ sense of national or collective identity on the other. He defines “the Fourth World condition” as one of contention, “between ‘native’ indigeneity and ‘settler’ or

\textsuperscript{351} Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” in David Bartholomae and Tony Petrosky, eds. \textit{Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers} (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2005), 519.

\textsuperscript{352} Pratt “Arts of the Contact Zone”: 523. Pratt uses Guaman Poma’s example of writing in 1613 Cuzco, Peru, \textit{The First New Chronicle and Good Government}, which blended Incan and Catholic Spanish images, meanings, and values, and meant for King Phillip III of Spain. Pratt argues that Guaman Poma used both his Quechuan language and cosmology with his acquired Spanish literacy to advocate for the moral treatment of Quechuan and African slaves, both Catholic and Quechuan, thus he placed the Quechuan moral universe at the center.
New World indigeneity.” Specifically, Allen argues that:

Indigenous minority assertions of prior claims to land, resources, languages, and cultures … is a struggle over definitional control (who will be allowed to define themselves as “indigenous”) in which the stakes continue to be high: the right to claim tangible resources such as land … as well as the right to claim intangible resources … political, social, and symbolic resources such as authenticity and legitimacy.

As Allen’s title suggests, blood represents ancestral identity, whereas memory represents narrative. Allen further argues that Maori and American Indians used colonial discourse, what he calls “treaty discourse,” to “re-recognize” or re-assert their sovereignty and identity through writing. Less concerned with political contestation than Allen’s study of Indigenous literature, the Assiniboine histories and literature produced in the twentieth century asserted their presence in the cultural and social fabric of American and Canadian societies.

The Assiniboine texts discussed in this chapter demonstrate what I call reciprocity, which is a corollary of hybridity. The texts are neither Western constructions nor purely Indigenous; instead, each demonstrates a unique Assiniboine perspective that combines sacred cosmology, ceremonial practice, artwork, photography, and writing with references to previously written documents. In this way, Assiniboine histories exemplify Homi K. Bhabha’s idea of Indigenous hybridity, as they are Assiniboine narratives written in Western textual forms and disciplinary methodology. Bhabha argues that Indigenous literature as a cultural production in colonial contexts, “… from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation,” and claims that this hybridity “… represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority.” In contrast, unlike Bhabha’s theoretical assumption that this displaces colonial discourse about Indigenous expression, the Assiniboine texts discussed

354 Allen, Blood Narrative, 9.
355 “Blood memory” is a concept he borrows from Kiowa literary giant N. Scott Momaday.
356 From Homi K. Bhabha, Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), first quote found on page 2; second quote found on page 113. I borrowed this citation form Allen Chadwick’s Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pages 10 and 18, respectively.
in this chapter center on Assiniboine perspectives, authorities in their own right for Assiniboine audiences primarily, and non-Indigenous audiences secondarily; rather than a blend of tactics shaped into a hybrid form, Western and Indigenous manifestations work with each other informing, each being informed by the other through a reciprocal relationship. For Assiniboine texts, this reciprocity was exemplified by the references to _Land of Nakoda_ (1942), along with contemporary oral history recordings, to designate Sleeping Buffalo Rock a “Nationally Registered Historic Place,” as discussed in Chapter 4.

The Assiniboine texts that I discuss in this chapter help to reconceptualize Indigenous methods of weaving oral tradition, sacred or supernatural knowledge, and writing as multifaceted ways of sustaining knowledge and asserting cultural as well as political importance in settler structures. The complex relationships between writing, the oral tradition, and sacred knowledge differ from secular empirical structures of writing found in settler societies. Like other Indigenous texts, Assiniboine texts have blended these different systems together. In a study similar to mine, _Brushed by Cedar_ (1999), Crisca Bierwert has examined Coast Salish epistemologies found in their oral histories and written texts that have transformed structures of power by settler institutions. In this work, Bierwert claims that Coast Salish “… ways of knowing that are imbricated with colonial transformations rather than being in the grasp of state power.”

Bierwert demonstrates that Coast Salish communities asserted their authority to speak about their own culture in their own terms, to “negotiate structures of thinking that saturate their daily lives and shape their oral and written texts.” Echoing this complex negotiation of difference, Assiniboine histories reveal blended structures and narratives that sometimes contradict and sometimes support one another.

In the written texts and interviews that I examined, I found that Assiniboine do not have a “master narrative”; instead, their multiple narratives about a particular history, legend, or practice are decentered and non-hierarchical. I borrow from Bierwert, who calls this narrative pluralism for the Salish a “laterally distributed power,” and from James Clifford, who calls this polyvocal, meaning many voices telling the same story.

358 Bierwert, _Brushed by Cedar_, 5.
differently. For the Assiniboine people residing on the nine reserves across Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, the existence of multiple community perspectives complicate this idea of narrative pluralism. To add to this complexity, there are many tribes that share those reservations and reserves, such as the Sioux, Gros Ventre, Cree, and Saulteaux, which resulted from government strategies to manage, organize, and dominate Indigenous nationhood. Thus, as Bierwert claims for the Salish, so too for the Assiniboine: “[t]he ‘text of culture’ is episodic, open to accretion of meaning.” This “accretion of meaning” identified by Bierwert’s study with the Salish texts may also be seen in Assiniboine texts into the twenty-first century. Through many instances of enforced literacy into American and Anglo-Canadian education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as faced by Salish and Assiniboine people, this “episodic” “accretion” of meaning is revealed from the interview questions I asked the interviewees about Assiniboine literature broadly speaking.

Many of my interviewees are direct descendants or are related in some fashion to some of the individuals that authored or gave oral histories in the texts I discuss throughout this chapter. My questions for each interviewee assessed their knowledge and opinions about the historical importance of Assiniboine texts, as well as the difference between Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine authorship about Assiniboine cultural history. All of the interviewees that were familiar with one or more of these books reported that they felt this piece of historical writing was an important accomplishment, and our discussion often seemed to have them have a renewed interest in reading it again.

The interview questions I conducted also revealed that for the majority of Assiniboine, they felt that writing their own histories was integral to maintaining their cultural knowledge, not at the expense of oral history or ceremonies, but in addition to these traditions. It is important to note here that the older interviewees, especially those who were Canadian, reported having traumatic experiences with residential and local schools designed to assimilate Native peoples and erase their Indigenous identities. This was certainly the most emotional aspect of my research, both for my interviewees

359 Ibid.
360 Bierwert, Brushed by Cedar, 6.
361 Interviews with Elsie McArthur, and her daughters, Joan and Sarah, June 23, 2012, in their home Whitebear Reserve, Saskatchewan; and Interview (phone) with Wilma Kennedy, July 3, 2012, at Carry the Kettle, SK. Please see Interview Bios in Appendices A.
and for me.

There were a few potential interviewees who declined to be interviewed. These individuals felt that writing about Assiniboine culture was wrong and another form of appropriation or greed. The majority of my interviewees, however, advocated for literacy—for writing, recording, and archiving Assiniboine cultural knowledge and history from Assiniboine perspectives—and did not see a conflict between oral history and written history, or between the sacred and the secular.

Almost every Assiniboine text one reads states that sacred beings, such as the bison, or a star or a special rock, exercise agency, and this opinion was confirmed with almost all of the interviews that I conducted. For Assiniboine, this is often addressed in their written histories, and individual authors (both written- and oral-form authors) decide for themselves what may or may not be documented or recorded. Assiniboine narratives bonded to specific communities with shared histories have multiple centers connecting contemporary generations to their ancestors through reading Assiniboine-produced histories that often express respect for the wakan (sacred). Paralleling this concept regarding Assiniboine-produced texts, the Indigenous ways of producing histories often conflict with Western historical assumptions about knowledge. As Crisca Bierwert declares in *Brushed by Cedar* (1999):

> The fundamental difference between intellectual traditions of Native American peoples and those of Western humanism and social science is that for Native Americans the chronicling and commentary of social life involves—wholly and unequivocally—relationship to other sacred beings that have agency in and of themselves.  

These differences of written histories in intention and purpose affected communities within Coast Salish longhouse ceremonial contexts between their oral tradition and their writings. Bierwert, for example, discusses a cultural center that Sto:lo people directed in the 1980s where they conducted various projects including ones aimed at language preservation, a published newspaper, and an archive, all which involved writing, video recording, and publishing. At one point, the Coast Salish were open to outsiders writing about their ceremonial knowledge, but later felt betrayed by outsiders.

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Subsequently, more reciprocal relations developed as long as outsiders agreed to follow certain protocols.

Other Indigenous people had been writing their own literature, including histories, in their colonizers’ languages long before Assiniboine literature was first produced in the early twentieth century. Over two centuries before, as Lisa Tanya Brooks shows in *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (2008), Indigenous peoples had used the literacy of early colonial languages to empower their own survival as a distinct people. In particular, Brooks clarifies how Indigenous people of the Northeast, such as the Abenaki or Haudenosaunee, quickly embraced the English and French languages as early as the late-seventeenth century, wanting to preserve agreements in writing for political and cultural reasons. According to Brooks, “The skill of literacy was sought by Native people because they recognized the rising impact of writing in Native space.”

Since the early colonial period and the time of national American and Canadian expansion, which for Assiniboine people was the late-nineteenth century, Indigenously produced histories and literature show that preserving cultural and historical knowledge through writing has supported both cultural continuity and political struggle to the very present.

Similar to the first Assiniboine literature, which was published a little over 50 years after reservations were established by American westward expansion beyond the Missouri River, a few other Indigenous authors wrote in English. Some of these Indigenous writers produced works in northeastern America in the first 50 years after America was established as a nation. In her essay “Digging at the Roots: Locating an Ethical, Native Criticism,” Lisa Brooks discusses how Samson Occom, and later, William Apess, wrote philosophical literature with moral implications for newly established national and colonial audiences. Authors such as these built on and incorporated their Indigenous systems of thought and oral traditions, and worked towards formulating in writing their own political, social, and cultural thoughts. As Brooks

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argues, during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, building on the strong roots of Indigenous networks that predated colonial contact,

far from being “corrupted” by writing, Algonquian and Haudenosaunee people frequently resisted the role designed for them by their missionary teachers and used the skills they acquired to compose petitions, political tracts, and speeches; to record community councils and histories; and, most importantly, to imagine collectively the means through which their communities could thrive.365

Brooks’s examination emphasizes how between these indigenous networks, “Samson Occom and his relations used writing as a transformative activity to reclaim land, to maintain relationships, to send news between communities, and to preserve and enact the decisions of ‘the whole’.” 366 As Occom and Apess’s writings documented transformations in “Native Space” in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Assiniboine literature also preserved and altered cultural, political, and social contexts for Assiniboine in the twentieth century despite enforced literacy through American and Anglo-Canadian residential schools.

Though residential schools varied across Assiniboine reservations, the Office of Indian Affairs attempted to implement common institutional goals to complete an assimilation process of having Assiniboine people join mainstream American and Canadian societies through compulsory education. Forced education went hand in hand with other federal reservation policies, such as military forts and agriculture, in an effort to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Schools at Fort Peck Reservation exemplified uniform assimilation goals in other residential schools on Assiniboine and Indigenous reservations in America and Canada. Government Indian Agents intended to turn Indigenous people into farmers, cattle ranchers, laborers, and domestic workers. Beginning in 1875, Agent William W. Alderson, a former resident of Bozeman, Montana, started the first federal day schools at Fort Peck and Wolf Creek, which were small log cabins with sod roofs. Fort Peck and Wolf Creek would later become part of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and

Sioux Reservation. The first teacher quit after only six weeks, and these small schools failed overall. Through the 1880s, often called the “Starving Years,” under the direction of Agent Nathan Porter, “. . . agency day schools at Wolf Point and Poplar River were utter failures for many reasons, but lack of student attendance was the principle one,” as Dennis Smith claims. The first agency boarding school established at Poplar River in 1881 marked an increased attempt to transform the nomadic Assiniboine, who lived in camps at the time, into “civilized” labourers. As Dennis Smith states, the school administrated by the Methodist Episcopal Church “… was both symbolic and a tangible example of the enormous cultural changes converging at the time.” This school grew exponentially in size, from a small log building to a two story dormitory style unit that could house a little over two hundred students: “By 1891, the Fort Peck Boarding School was ten years old and well established, and its operation quite typical of other federal on-reservation boarding schools.” Though these boarding schools enrolled only the primary grades one through four, Indian Agents forced parents to enrol their children into these schools with a heavy hand, often by employing “Indian Police.” In 1890, Agent C. R.A. Scobey reported that this “compulsory attendance ‘has been enforced to the letter.’” An elder who lived through this experience describes the trauma: “A lot of boys ran away from the school and went home, but as fast as they got home, the Indian police brought them back. They were punished by whipping and confined in rooms by themselves.” In the late-nineteenth century, the reservations were already deplorably underfunded and riddled with extreme poverty, including starvation. Subsequently, the boarding schools put the Indigenous students to work so that the schools could be as self-sufficient as possible; they started having small garden

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370 Ibid.
371 Ibid.
374 See James Long’s account in the last pages of his book, where he quotes an unnamed elder describing his personal experience of reprehensibly forcing children to go to this school by using armed “Indian Police,” which includes an illustration of these “Police” by William Standing in Land of Nakoda, (Helena, Mont: Riverbend Pub. in cooperation with the Montana Historical Society Press, 2004), 209-210.
plots, poultry coops, blacksmith shops, and had the girls sew their own clothes.

In these reservation boarding schools, the type of instruction and military-type organization, such as the Fort Peck Boarding School, were modeled on the first Indigenous boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, established in 1879 by the federal government under the leadership of Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt. As Dennis Smith states, with off-reservation schools “Pratt’s goal was complete cultural assimilation … because federal day and on-reservation boarding schools universally failed to assimilate children.” On-reservation schools also followed half-day programs designed by Pratt, in which students spent half the day in academic study emphasizing English literacy, and the other half of the day in “industrial and manual” education, such as boys learning how to farm and girls learning how to cook. Nevertheless, as Smith points out, the on-reservation schools not only failed to assimilate Indigenous peoples, but also, “proved unable to overcome the cultural persistence of tribal families and communities.” Boarding schools on Assiniboine reservations, as well as some parochial schools, included Christianization, such as at the Fort Peck Boarding School, which in the 1890s was under the direction of the Presbyterian Church. Forced English literacy by the direction of the Indian agents and superintendents was thus implicated within the larger American and Canadian agendas of cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. Fortunately, their missions failed. As evidenced by Assiniboine texts, Assiniboine used literacy to maintain their cultural knowledge, and not have it be erased from memory.

From 1905 to 1917, management of the Fort Peck reservation bureaucracy changed, creating slightly better options for Indigenous students on the reservation. Day schools were added to boarding schools under the administration of the newly titled “Superintendent of the School and Agency,” Charles B. Lohmiller, both to reduce costs to the government and to allow students to return home to be with their families. As a consequence, Assiniboine students began attending on-reservation boarding schools, off-reservation boarding schools, and parochial schools. In addition, some ineligible people,
or “half-bloods,” went to public schools, though these public schools had a tuition cost for the untaxed Indians, which varied across blood quantum measurements, from “full-blood” to “mixed blood.” The day schools gradually increased in size and enrollment over time, and in some ways, conditions in serving its Indigenous students improved. Despite these minor improvements, well into the 1920s, all of these schools continued the model of attempting to assimilate the Native students into American and Canadian economic systems and under the umbrella of Christianity. Nonetheless, that did not deter Assiniboine people from getting an education. As David Miller claims, “Students at the Fort Peck Boarding School in Poplar were not satisfied to complete only the first six grades . . . . By 1929, the boarding school was teaching courses through to the eighth grade. . . . The move to public schooling continued.” These attempts at the repression of Assiniboine identity and historicity through enforced literacy had unintended consequences. One of the most notable of these was the 1942 publication of the seminal printed work of Assiniboine history, *Land of the Nakoda: The Story of the Assiniboine Indians, From the tales of the Old Ones told to First Boy (James L. Long), with drawings by Fire Bear (William Standing).*

In this kind of compulsory educational context, James Larpenteur Long (First Boy), the author of *Land of Nakoda,* was born in 1888 in Oswego on the Fort Peck Reservation. Long learned how to read and write English and embraced Christianity like many of his fellow Assiniboine people, but without giving up their Assiniboine language, core identity, or cultural knowledge. As Long, states in his autobiography, at age seven, “I was baptized by the Rev. Father Fredrick Hugo Eberschweiler in the midsummer of 1896. Since then I have been active in spreading the white man’s religion among our people,” and further, “I finished eighth grade at seventeen and started to work as clerk and chore boy for the Wolf Point Trading Company.” With his eighth-grade education, and years working as a cattle rancher and eventually at a general store that he owned, Long listened to his elders tell stories, which later formed the basis of *Land of Nakoda* (1942).

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Concerned with writing down the wealth of cultural and historical knowledge still held in the memories of Assiniboine elders in the late 1930s, Long set out to write *Land of Nakoda* (1942). This beautiful cloth-bound book, measuring seventeen by eleven by four inches, was one of the few books specifically by and about the Assiniboine. *Land of Nakoda* may also be one of the very first tribal history books by an Indigenous people based on oral histories collected in their native language in North America. All of my interviewees in Montana and a few of my interviewees in Canada were familiar with the original *Land of Nakoda*. Many of them stated that at one time someone in their family maintained a copy of this now rare book, but have lost it.^{382}

Long based *Land of Nakoda* on oral histories that he translated from the oral Assiniboine language into English written text. These oral histories conveyed information about what pre-American contact looked like regarding Assiniboine culture, as well as descriptions of Assiniboine peoples’ encounters with the first White men before White settlement occurred in their territory. It was a cohesive recollection drawn from the memories of Assiniboine elders, who were between the ages of 80 and 104 in 1939 when these histories were collected by Long. Their stories were gathered from their parents, and some stories go back several generations; in fact, some of their narratives could possibly stretch back over a hundred years. Long and the illustrator, William Standing (Fire Bear), were Assiniboine, and further, they were cousins directly related to Azana’s father, Chief Iron Arrow Point. Long was fluent in the spoken and written language, as well as the Plains Sign language. James Long’s grandfather was the French fur trader, Charles Eugene Larpenteur, mentioned in Chapter 2. Long not only interviewed and recorded his elders, he also researched settler archives and previous histories about Assiniboine people, as is evidenced by his bibliography. Long’s book is probably the first native history by natives and for natives in North America.^{383} Assiniboine hands primarily produced *Land of Nakoda* in 1942 under the sponsorship of the Writers’ Project of the New Deal’s Works Project Administration program.

The contents of *Land of Nakoda* are organized into eight parts, with three to seven

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^{382} On the Amazon book website, I recently saw that there were two used copies available for over $444.

short histories about events or cultural practices within those parts: “Tribal Legends,” “Tribal Life,” “Lodges, Food, and Games,” “Hunting,” “Ceremonies and Societies,” “Medicine Men and Spirits,” “Coming of the White Men,” and the “Appendices.” The “Appendices” contain short autobiographies of James Long, the author, William Standing, the illustrator, and each of the elders who were interviewed. For each interviewed elder, this information includes their age, where they were living, their band, and a few sentences about their significant experiences.

Long’s main purpose of *Land of Nakoda* was to archive the oral histories about pre-reservation Assiniboine life. Several of the elders that he interviewed in the late 1930s were born in the 1830s and ‘40s. In Long’s account, as told in the tribal legend, “How the Summer Season Came,” stated that, “A long time ago, the Assiniboine people were in country almost always covered with snow. There were no horses and only dogs were used to carry things.” While impossible to know precisely how long ago that was, it does imply that there had been a long period of time when the Assiniboine predecessors had lived in the snow-bound northern regions of the continent, possibly during the little Ice Age, the period of cooling that took place between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In my interviews with Robert Four Star, he told me of his interpretations of Long’s *Land of Nakoda*, and specifically, his thoughts on the origin stories. He said this was mostly a reliable account of the origin stories, and perspectives of history from the oral tradition of the old-timers. Nevertheless, this was not a uniform account; many other Assiniboine versions of their origin stories exist, and particular histories distinct from Long’s are heard across Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Any interpretation of Assiniboine “ways of being” are implicated in the historical, cultural, environmental, and political contexts from which they emerge. For Robert, as for most of my interviewees, Assiniboine histories delivered by Assiniboine people, whether orally or in written form, carry equal weight, thus this is true for the histories found in *Land of Nakoda* or those told by elders. For elders, such as Robert Four Star, and authors, such as James Long, written history and oral history go hand in hand.

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Just as I have been told several times about the origins of Assiniboine band names through oral histories, Long wrote a similar account long ago. Long gathered significant information about how the Assiniboine identified themselves as distinct groups or bands of people, in relation to their customs and regarding the places where they dwelled. He stated that before the late-nineteenth century, they were hunters, and,

The separate groups lived alone and each occupied a district. The different locations of the bands brought about many new habits; and costumes [customs] were adopted which were most suitable to the country occupied. In that way the habits and costumes differed among the bands.\(^{385}\)

Furthermore, as some bands moved away with population increases those bands that remained would name the bands that moved according to the type of geography or in ridicule, such as “Osnibi, People of the Cold . . . or Wazinazinyibi, Fat Smokers.”\(^{386}\) Long claims that before contact with Europeans, or White men, the only way to estimate the population was by counting the number of bands and the number of people in each one. He stated, “At the peak of their population the Assiniboine tribe consisted of thirty-three bands which had from 700 to 1,000 persons in each band.”\(^{387}\) Long refers to previous historiography as well, such as fur trader and explorer’s journals. Long refers to some previous non-Indian writers who wrote about the Assiniboine: “In 1823, Renville estimated the number [of Assiniboine] at 28,000 (7,000 warriors and 3,000 lodges). By 1908, Curtis placed the Assiniboine population at 1,217 in the United States and 873 in Canada.”\(^{388}\) This shows that Long was working with both the oral histories he collected, his own internal cultural experience as an Assiniboine, and with settler archival documents.

Throughout *Land of Nakoda* there are several references to early-twentieth century life and the then-contemporary context when the book was produced. Perhaps one of the most significant parts of this book for my examination here is in “Part VII: Coming of the White Man.” In this last section to his book, Long describes the Assiniboine perspective of the changes that the elders had witnessed since the contact


\(^{386}\) Long, *The Assiniboines*, 16.

\(^{387}\) Ibid., 16.

\(^{388}\) Ibid., 16.
with Anglo-American and European settlers, and then the subsequent reservation occupation. In the first few stories, elders talk of how the Assiniboine discovered the “white man” and invited them to trade, allowing them into their communities and to intermarry with them.  

Long felt compelled to write the oral histories spoken in Assiniboine by the elders of his time in English. In his last chapter, “Treaties and Reservation Life” of “Part VII,” Long described the various stages of the Indian Agents, the Police, as they heavily enforced boarding school education beginning in 1892, allotment in 1913, and certain agricultural programs. After briefly describing the contemporary condition of public schools on the reservations in the late 1930s, in the last sentence, just before “THE END,” Long tells the import of this collection of oral histories from his own perspective: “The old way of life has almost vanished.” From this statement, I assume that Long felt an urgent need to preserve these oral histories for future generations. This indicates what I will call (borrowing from Ann Stoler’s “epistemic anxiety”) an Indigenous epistemic archival anxiety that is repeated in subsequent narratives, including those found in my interviews. However, for Long, I am not entirely sure that the values or cultural practices inherent in the old ways of life had truly vanished. While subsistence living, such as buffalo hunting, was no longer an option, Assiniboine people found creative ways to sustain their ancient cultural knowledge within the context of modern reservation life.

James Long’s Assiniboine name was First Boy, derived from the Assiniboine name for Grandfather First Boy of the South, or Summer Direction, Honkshee-tu-gapa, who brought the original ceremonies to the Assiniboine from the spirit world, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the Appendices, in a section entitled “The Author,” Long asserts the importance of having an Assiniboine name and the genealogy of that name: “The Assiniboine name, First Boy, was given to me at the age of ten by He Wets It, a

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389 This history is cited on page 26 of Peter Nabakov’s Native American Testimony to demonstrate the reversal in narrative discourse and agency regarding who discovered whom – Indigenous or colonial-settler. Nabakov placed Long’s story “Lone White Man,” told by the elder Bad Hawk, in the second section of his Native American Testimony, entitled “Face to Face,” however he re-titled Long’s story as “A Different Kind of Man.” Nabakov’s selection of this Indigenously produced oral history in text form demonstrates the purpose of Native American Testimony: namely, to center on Indigenous voice and agency in the historical drama of contact, settlement, reservation life, and the forging of their future.

noted warrior and later, in his old age, a medicine man.” Long frames the narrative stating some important factors about his background. He was born in 1888 on the reservation and grew up in a small town that is now called Oswego. His father was a government official of English descent, and his mother’s mother was Assiniboine; her father was the famous French fur trader Charles Eugene Larpenteur, mentioned in Chapter 2. Long himself wore many hats: he clerked in a trading post, worked as a cattleman, owned a small grocery store, advocated politically as a tribal official, and participated ceremonially as a member in a secret warrior society. He passed away at 84 years of age at Wolf Point in 1973.

Long asserts the potential misinterpretation from writers outside the tribal culture. For example, referring to the non-Indian writings from fur traders, missionaries, and government officials that he reviewed, he states:

These writers attended a ceremony . . . and got the meaning of it through an interpreter. Then they added what they thought. Some interpreters are not wholly familiar with a custom or a ceremony; others cannot pass the meaning of it correctly to a researcher. In such cases, the fault of most white writers on Indian tribes is the tendency to use their own theories about what they have seen or were told about.

Long goes on to say that a person’s perspective from outside an Indigenous community will be a limited view that already filters a given interpretation of reality based on that person’s norms, values, and cosmology. Long’s statement acknowledges that any hermeneutic will have the interpreter’s mental filter, which alters the clarity, scope, and contrast of that knowledge in transmission. It also implies that people inside the community, in this case, Assiniboine people, will have their own cognitive filtering system as well; but in this case, it comes from people who have lived through their own history, heard the oral history from their predecessors, and already have an inside view of their own cultural values as they are applied to the outside world. Long posits that:

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393 Long, The Assiniboines, lxv.
Only a person who is a blood member and has lived in close contact with his people is able to understand thoroughly the true meaning of the customs and ceremonies of the Indian. The meaning and purpose of some of the religious organizations is so deep that words translated into English are meaningless. A person has to be one of them to really understand.\footnote{James L. Long in Michael Stephen Kennedy Ed. The Assiniboines: From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Larpenteur Long. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), lxv.}

Long describes the significant difference of interpretation of culture and historical events from the perspective of being inside the group, from the people themselves, in this case, Assiniboine people. This is a good example of self-determined history.

Long suggests that an inside view should more accurately depict the Assiniboine. That does not mean that only Native Americans or Assiniboine people may have the capacity to tell their own version of their history or describe their culture. Even James Long had his own, already-given system of knowledge that is too difficult to deconstruct and separate between indigenous and Western parts. When written or oral evidence emerges from Assiniboine peoples’ voices that does not automatically make it a uniform or pure body of knowledge. However, at the same time, his criterion of being a “blood member,” excludes members of the community who may also know the people, stories, history, culture, and language deeply, but have no Assiniboine blood. It is important to point out that Long’s statement does not mean that outsiders are always completely mistaken in their interpretations, but rather, analyses need to distinguish the differences between views from inside a community versus views from outside that community. Assiniboine identity and sense of belonging to a collective group emerges from within the context of shared views about Assiniboine history and the degree to which cultural knowledge is maintained over time. These views are shared differently between various sub-groups within Assiniboine societies. It is interesting to note that Long became an Indigenous researcher for his own people long before this became a current issue in academia. Though I have not yet personally analyzed the manuscripts currently held in the Montana Historical Society, I assume that Long edited the interviews of the elders to formulate his own narrative structure. I asked Robert Four Star about this, because he has examined those manuscripts, and he said that there are some things in the manuscripts that were not included in Land of Nakoda.
Historically, non-Assiniboine authors who wrote about Assiniboine history saw these peoples’ history from a slightly different position than Assiniboine people themselves. Michael Stephen Kennedy edited and republished *Land of Nakoda* in 1961, but changed the title to *The Assiniboines: From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Larpenteur Long)*. He was the Supervisor of the Montana Writers’ Project during the New Deal, and the 1942 version. Kennedy’s extensive introduction reveals a different emphasis, interpretations from a review of the literature, and his own non-Assiniboine biases.\(^{395}\) From Kennedy’s perspective the Assiniboine are placed historically in relation to other Indigenous tribes and European colonial forces and patterns of settlement rather than from an Assiniboine perspective that places them at the center of a historical story. Even so, he does amplify the validity of Assiniboine historical consciousness. In the preface to the 1961 edition, Kennedy states:

> As First Boy [James Long’s Indian name], brought up in the Assiniboine way by his fine halfblood mother, Annie, and his venerated grandmother, Makes-Cloud-Woman, Jim Long had a first-rate entrée to the exclusive circle of Assiniboine hierarchy best qualified to unveil the subjective story of their people.\(^{396}\)

This thus positions Long’s written work as a production from an Assiniboine perspective.

As Kennedy posits, Assiniboine people had been interacting with Chippewa, Ojibway, and Cree before their first contact with Europeans, and not only did these other tribes speak a different language, Algonquian, but that they, too, were a fusion of previous people. Kennedy states:

> Since the derivation of the name *Assiniboine* comes from the Chippewa tongue and means ... “one who cooks by the use of stones,” and since this was the name applied by the earliest Canadian Jesuits, it is obvious that the Assiniboines had, for a considerable time, been in contact with Chippewas (xxvi).

Additionally, Kennedy posits in his introduction to Long’s book, that the small-pox epidemics between the 1820s and 1840s almost exterminated the Assiniboine as a people, and according to, “the first U.S. Indian report (1843) in which they figured, the Assiniboines numbered 7,000 ... in 1904, but 2,600,” compared to about 3,900 in 1961 (xlvii). What is important in the comparison between Kennedy’s introduction and Long’s


\(^{396}\) Kennedy, ed., *The Assiniboines*, xii.
is that the Assiniboine version is less concerned with the Assiniboine origins and relation to the Sioux, and more concerned with sustaining Assiniboine peoples’ interpretations of their own cultural history on their own terms.

Kennedy’s introduction to the 1961 version is very informative as well, because he extensively reviewed the existing literature on the Assiniboine, much of it was no longer in print, which briefly covers George Catlin’s journals of the 1830s to the writings of the French adventurer Sieur de la Verendrye in the 1730s.397 In the middle of the book, Kennedy also included several paintings of Assiniboine people by Charles Bodmer, Paul Kane, and George Catlin, such as the one of Azana, discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

In his introduction, Kennedy described Assiniboine people as, “remnants of what was once one of the largest, boldest, handsomest, most able buffalo hunting, gregarious, picturesque, peripatetic and most individualistic and iron-willed of all of the northern Great Plains Indian tribes.”398 Regarding the profundness of James Long’s book, Kennedy also writes that, “Many of these old people retold facts and incidents related to them by their parents, grandparents, great- and even great-great-grandparents, which of course predated Lewis and Clark and almost any semblance of white influence on their primitive life and culture.”399 Though Kennedy’s “Introduction” romanticized Assiniboine life, he did posit that they have been overlooked by historians, ethnographers, and popular culture. Kennedy’s purpose was to introduce and historically contextualize for non-Indigenous audiences the Assiniboine people that were self-described in James Larpenteur Long’s book. In so doing, he still gives an outside perspective.

In an effort to keep cultural knowledge alive through an Assiniboine text, the original 1942 version of Land of Nakoda was even more recently republished in 2004, reverting to the original title, published in the form of a much smaller paperback version. In my interview with Anita Scheetz, the Library Director at the Fort Peck Community College, she stated that she led the efforts to have the Montana Historical Society

397 Kennedy, ed., The Assiniboines, xix.
398 Ibid., xx.
399 Ibid., lviii.
republish *Land of Nakoda* in a more accessible form.\(^{400}\) Anita also directs the new Fort Peck Community College archive, opened in August 2012, and which I discussed in my “Introduction” to this present dissertation. This newest, 2004 version has a new forward by Jim Shanley, Stands in the Eagle Lodge, President of the Fort Peck Community College.\(^{401}\) In my interview with Anita Scheetz, the reciprocity between her traditional “Western” academic training and the information that she has learned from Assiniboine and Sioux people shined through clearly.\(^{402}\) Through her years of service, she has become more literate in Indigenous epistemologies, and in return, has helped her Indigenous clients become more literate in Western epistemologies.

Jim Shanley’s “Forward” to the 2004 version of *Land of Nakoda* gives credence to Assiniboine agency and control over their narrative and pictorial histories: it also exemplifies a powerful assertion of Indigenous archiving that utilizes literacy.\(^{403}\) When affirming Indigenous agency, Shanley states:

> It is obvious that respect for oral tradition dominates the content of this book. Despite musing by anthropologists and historians about the origins, kinship and alliances of the Nakoda, that oral tradition has considered the Nakoda as a singular, unique people from long before contact with Europeans. Fort Peck Community College is delighted and thankful that this essential book is being reprinted. It will enable students of the future to understand the lives and ways of their ancestors.\(^{404}\)

Herein lays the key word: the “ancestors.” Shanley recently retired as President of the Fort Peck Community College, a position he served for over 20 years. In an interview with him in his home in Poplar, Montana, he mentioned that James Larpenteur Long, was not only bilingual but also spoke several other Native languages in addition to

\(^{400}\) Anita Scheetz Interview, June 26, 2012, in the basement of the Fort Peck Community College Library, Poplar, Montana. I discussed the “storage-locker archive model” in more detail in the Introduction.


\(^{402}\) Anita Scheetz interview, June 26, 2012, in the basement of the Fort Peck Community College Library, Poplar, Montana. Also, I interviewed both Anita and another librarian at Aaiiih Nakoda College Library, while at the ATALM Conference in Honolulu, Hawai‘i in September 2011.


Assiniboine, including Dakota, Cree, and Blackfeet. This, he said, shows that Long was multilingual and devoted to preserving Indigenous cultural knowledge and languages. According to Shanley, Long was also quite active politically with the tribal council, and at the state level, advocated tirelessly for Assiniboine culture, sovereignty, and rights. Counter to the assumption that forced English literacy would inevitably erase Indigeneity, Long, equipped with an eighth grade education, showed how to sustain cultural knowledge through writing the oral histories in printed and illustrated forms.

*Land of Nakoda* in each form, from its original manuscripts through the 1942 and 1961 versions, and up to the 2004 version, exemplifies a powerful and distinctly Assiniboine way of archiving knowledge that combines oral tradition, ceremonial knowledge, artwork, and writing. *Land of Nakoda* also demonstrates an “authentically remade,” self-determined Assiniboine identity—an interpretation emerging from Assiniboine peoples’ perspectives.

Similar to the efforts of writing the tribe’s histories from an Assiniboine perspective in the original *Land of Nakoda*, there were at least three other books written from the Assiniboine perspective in Canada about a generation or two later. Biographies about or by Assiniboine chiefs represented their communities, as examples of collective narratives. In 1969 Dr. Grant MacEwan, former Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta, published a biography about a Stoney chief titled *Tatanga Mani: Walking Buffalo of the Stonies.* Though the author takes a somewhat romanticized, and also somewhat tragic approach to the narrative about Aboriginal Canadian history, he also declares that, “Chief Walking Buffalo of the Stoney Indian tribe stands unquestionably with the important heroes of Western history” for good reasons. Tatanga Mani was also known as George McLean, a name given to him by John McLean, a frontier missionary who adopted him as a small boy. MacEwan, a former academic professor of agriculture, interviewed Tatanga Mani while he was in his nineties, along with conducting an extensive amount of research in the Glenbow archives and by archival research of local newspapers.

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405 James Shanley, Interview in his home, June 19, 2012, Poplar, Montana.
408 From the inside cover dust jacket.
Mani was born in 1871 and died in 1967, living through the first reserve establishment and into the political resistance movements that transformed societies in the 1960s. Though MacEwan served as a mouthpiece for Tatanga Mani, Tatanga Mani’s voice clearly guides the narrative thread through this book—his voice clearly stands out.

Similar to the elders interviewed for *Land of Nakoda*, the memories of pre-reservation times held by Tatanga Mani were important when crafting the written narrative. Tatanga Mani witnessed the signing of Treaty 7, the presence of the Mounted Police, the first rails laid down by the Canadian Pacific railway in the 1880s, and the North West Rebellion of 1885. Throughout his life, Tatanga Mani stood for the “brotherhood of man,” for his Stoney (and thus “Indian”) culture. He was also likened to an “ancient philosopher” by John Laurie. He posed for many photographs in his traditional regalia, and was involved internationally with the Moral Rearmament movement. At the age of 87, in 1958, Tatanga Mani was invited to Mackinac Island in the middle of Lake Michigan. While there, he was inspired by a multi-cultural themed play called *The Crowning Experience*. This was a play about an African American educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, who supported the Moral Rearmament movement (formerly called the Oxford Group Movement), which was founded by Frank Buchman. Tatanga Mani had adopted Frank Buchman 24 years before at the Banff Indian Days, giving him a name similar to Azana, “Ao-Zan-Zan-Tonga,” meaning “Great Light out of Darkness,” for his advocacy of peace and his stance against racism.

Throughout his long life, Tatanga Mani travelled much of the world, covering a total of almost 95,000 miles. Between 1959 and 1961, he visited dignitaries at Buckingham Palace in London, and many others in South Africa, Brazil, Germany, and New Zealand. Tatanga Mani remained a cultural leader over the course of his life,

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409 Treaty 7 was one of the Numbered Treaties signed between Aboriginal peoples (First Nations) and the Crown (Canadian government) between 1871 and 1921. Treaty 7 was signed in 1877 at a place called Blackfoot Crossing between several Aboriginal tribes of what is now called Alberta and Queen Victoria.

410 In 1885, Louis Riel led a group of Métis people living in the District of Saskatchewan Valley in an uprising against the Canadian Government. For an excellent graphic history that could be useful in history courses please see Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*, (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2010).

411 In 1938, Frank Buchman of the Oxford Group founded the Moral Rearmament movement to advocate for the moral repair of society, such as world peace.

including as a leader of a “Sun Dance” and as a “medicine man.” He served as a hereditary chief for 15 years, retiring in 1935, and lived a traditional life in Morley, Alberta, close to the sacred mountains, plants, and animals that sustained Stoney ways of life.

Numerous authors have quoted Tatangi Mani in Indigenous histories, including Vine Deloria’s *God is Red* (1973).\(^{413}\) This biography places an important life story in the larger context of Assiniboine history, and even more broadly, Canadian, North American, Western, and Indigenous histories against the global background, especially in regards to keeping ancient Aboriginal values and practices alive inter-generationally through the writing of oral histories. On the inside front and back plates of the 1969 edition, a colored map, similar to one found in *Land of Nakoda*, showing both Stoney and Assiniboine territories north into the “Canadian West,” as well as adjacent “Indian Tribes (and Linguistic Groups).” Some of these groups include typical, general categories of that time, such as “Eskimoan,” “Algonkian,” “Siouan,” “Athapaskan,” and “Salishan, Kootenayan and West Coast Groups.” Specific tribes are also designated, such as Stoney or Piegan, and the cities are pinpointed, such as Calgary, and places such as Lake Minewanka (which means “Sacred Water” in Assiniboine). In the book, there are also several photographs of important people that Tatanga Mani encountered, such as the Reverend John McDougall, Hector Crawler, Crowfoot (Blackfoot “Chief of Chiefs”), Colonel James F. Macleod, Guy Weadick (“father of the Calgary Stampede”), and his adopted father, Reverend John McLean.

In summary, even though MacEwan slightly romanticized Indians in his biography of Walking Buffalo, he also depicts an important historical Indigenous person that contributed to the larger fabric of Canadian society and international affairs. MacEwan quotes Tatanga Mani’s concerns about the dilemmas that his people and other minorities faced in the late 1960s, in the last few years of his life:

“It’s strange,” he reflected, “but in trying to find solutions to Indian problems, the authorities speak to nearly everybody except the Indian. … I hope my children will live in a world where people of all colours can sit and work together without

having to conform completely to the majority’s will.”

Tatanga Mani’s legacy lives on in the written and oral histories of Stoney and Assiniboine people, other First Nation/Aboriginal peoples, and in non-Indigenous contexts, such as the publication *Mother Earth News*; he is well-known today for his commitment to his own people, to humanity, and to nature.

A few other Assiniboine chiefs wrote their autobiographies, such as *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief* by Dan Kennedy (Ochankugahe), edited by James R. Stevens, and published in 1972. Kennedy, born in 1874, lived to be over 100 years old. He was a Chief of Carry the Kettle, an Assiniboine reserve in Saskatchewan. He also lived through the traumas of the Cypress Hills Massacre, the establishment of reservation life, residential schools, and the suppression of the Sundance.

Before Canadian and American colonization, the creation of reservations, and enforced assimilation programs, Assiniboine individuals had meaningful names, and many had several names. Over the course of one’s life, a person might be given names to mark events, transitions, or important transformations. Regarding his original Assiniboine name, Dan Kennedy states in the chapter entitled “Education,” “Ochankuga’he, Path Maker was the name bestowed on me by my grandfather to commemorate his warpath exploit … I am very proud of my name.” Nonetheless, he goes on to say that the system of Canadian education attempted to erase this name: “In 1886, at the age of twelve years, I was lassoed, roped and taken to the Government School at Lebret. Six months after I enrolled, I discovered to my chagrin that I had lost my name and an English name had been tagged on me in exchange.” He was told by the interpreter at

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414 Walking Buffalo, as cited in *Grant MacEwan, Tatanga Mani: Walking Buffalo of the Stonies.* (Edmonton, Alta: M.G. Hurtig, 1969), 203.
416 In 1873 a group of 23 Nakoda were killed after a drunken dispute between Canadian and American bison and wolf hunters, whiskey traders, and some Métis erupted at Battle Creek in the Cypress Hills of present day Saskatchewan. For a thorough history of this event please see Walter Hildebrandt, Brian Hubner, and Walter Hildebrandt, *The Cypress Hills: An Island by Itself,* (Saskatoon: Purich Pub, 2007).
417 The Sundance was outlawed in Canada in the late 19th century: please see my discussion in Chapter 3.
419 Kennedy, *Recollections,* 54.
the school that, “When you were brought here … the Principal remarked that there were no letters in the alphabet to spell this little heathen’s name and no civilized tongue could pronounce it.” Indigenous peoples felt the traumas caused by residential schools in Canada long after the schools ended in 1971. This may be why one of the most important events in an Assiniboine’s life is their receiving an Assiniboine name within a ceremonial context (see Chapter 3).

Drawn directly from an Assiniboine perspective, Kennedy’s autobiography describes important transitions in Assiniboine history, from the reservation era, to the year of its publication in 1972. Like the other Indigenous texts, it gives a more complex understanding of Aboriginal history for First Nations of Canada and the U.S. within the Northern Plains region. Their narrative views re-center the focus of Assiniboine and other Indigenous peoples’ survival vis-à-vis westward expansion pursued by Canada and the U.S., including these countries’ respective nation building and assimilation programs.

James Stevens, the editor of Dan Kennedy’s Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief, was a non-Indigenous scholar at the Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He approaches this book in a similar fashion to Michael Kennedy, who edited the 1961 edition of Land of Nakoda. Stevens also provides the reader with a thorough historical background in his 35-page “Editor’s Introduction.” He cites several early fur trader and explorer journals, such as those by Alexander Henry, De La Vérendrye, and George Catlin, to demonstrate that the Assiniboine can be read about in the earliest French and English journals in the seventeenth century as a woodland, canoe-paddling people, to the late-eighteenth century when they were known as expert buffalo hunters. Stevens claims that throughout the explorers and traders’ journals, the Assiniboine established strong reputations: for their cleanliness, for their hospitality to other ethnic groups and newcomers, and by some, for their horse thievery, amongst other characteristics. Recollections was significantly inspired by the 1961 version of Land of Nakoda. For example, Stevens’s introduction cites The Assiniboine book right from the start, and at its end, it replicates the Assiniboine “The Months of the Year” and Assiniboine “Bands,” as originally written by James Long. A map adorns the inside cover of this book, front and back, which shows Assiniboine territory extending from the

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420 Kennedy, Recollections, 54.
Missouri River north to the Saskatchewan River, and from the Red River northwest across Manitoba also to the Saskatchewan River in Northern Saskatchewan. In addition, in a section titled “The Way It Was,” several photos of Assiniboine people precede Dan Kennedy’s narrative. These images include activities and ceremonies, such as the Medicine Lodge (or Sundance), and people on horseback, hunting, their tipis, and their artifacts. 

After Stevens’s introduction, Kennedy provides a chronological record of short historical stories, legends, and oral histories that are supported by several Western documents, ranging from the U.S. Court of Claims to local newspapers. He tells of the horrible experiences that he witnessed as a young teenager, such as the Cypress Hills Massacre, the North West Rebellion, and the slaughter of the Buffalo that led to 300 deaths by starvation at Wolf Point, Montana in 1883-84. Kennedy claims that, “…in 1897 Major Thomas W. Aspdin, a veteran of the North West Mounted Police, told me the inside story of the wanton slaughter of the buffalo.” The stories that Kennedy records include several important historical moments, such as the return of a prisoner of war in WWII, and a reunion between a father and son in a “Sundance.” Kennedy states:

At one of the sun dances right after World War II, a pair of worshippers (father and son) entered the sacred lodge… . The son was in the King’s uniform—a returned prisoner of war. He had been reported missing after the Dieppe raid but after a lapse of six months it was found he was alive and a prisoner of war in Germany. As the father and son danced in thanking before the sacred tree, the hearts of those who witnessed this finale throbbed in unison with the worshippers.

Kennedy goes on to say that even though the federal government had prohibited the Sundance, “some devotees” still practiced “secretly in remote parts of the reserve.” From Kennedy’s representation here, he felt that there was no conflict between respecting the sacredness of ceremonies and his writing about them; simply, it was another practice
of preserving that knowledge for future generations.

In my interview with Wilma Kennedy, an educator and elder living on the Carry the Kettle reserve in Saskatchewan, she responded enthusiastically regarding my question about her opinion on *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief*. Wilma felt this was an important way of preserving the history, but also stressed that it was not perfect, or a total account, by any means. She stated that Dan Kennedy was a good chief and highly influenced by Cree relatives, as well.

In addition to the biography about Tatanga Mani, and the autobiography by Dan Kennedy, the Stoney of Alberta produced another autobiography that asserted stronger political aims alongside their wish to sustain their cultural values. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Chief John Snow wrote *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places* in 1977, and then republished it with a new introduction and epilogue in 2005. Snow was born into a family of 11 siblings in 1933, and has led a renowned life as a cultural, political, and spiritual leader. His accomplishments include the fact that he became the first ordained minister of the United Church from the Stoney Nation, and that he holds two honorary doctorates, one in law from the University of Calgary, and one in divinity from Cook College and Theological School of Tempe Arizona. Ten years after the Canadian Bill of Rights was passed in 1960, giving Aboriginals the right to vote, Snow was the principal host for the North American Indian Ecumenical Conference, held annually between 1971 and 1985 on sacred grounds in Stoney Indian Park. The Ecumenical Conference brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples together from all over North America and the world, including Maori and Hawaiians, all in order to share traditional knowledge within a spiritual context. Twenty years after the last Conference, Snow writes that:

> The Conference was a renaissance for Indigenous peoples after having been deprived of the freedom to worship the Creator and to practice our spiritual ceremonies, our culture, and our way of life for so many years. During the first half of the twentieth century, Canadian laws prohibited the sundance, the potlatch,

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427 Interview with Wilma Kennedy, July 3, 2012.
and other Native ceremonies.\footnote{Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, 236.}

Snow also discusses how Indigenous communities exposed the traumatic impact caused by Canadian residential schools, which continued into the 1960s. Subsequently, Snow claims that one of the main purposes of the conference was to “return to our Native traditions… encouraged by the elders to go back to their roots, to their sacred places, to relearn the Native philosophy of life in harmony with nature and respect for the Creator’s Creation.”\footnote{John Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places: the Story of the Stoney Indians} (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 237.} In addition to this last Conference, Snow was responsible for inviting the sixth triennial World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) to Morley in August 2002, which I attended with Robert Four Star (as I mention elsewhere in this dissertation).\footnote{Within a few miles from Banff, Stoney Park is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, with tall pines, grassy hills dotted with purple and white flowers, and giant granite, glacier-capped peaks surrounding a serene valley. My lungs filled with crisp clean air scented with cedar and pine. The streams and rivers were clear and cold to the touch. While there I felt somehow “purified.” Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, 227.}

\textit{These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places} remains the most comprehensive history of the Stoney Nakoda, based on oral histories recorded from elders and archival documents that John Snow began researching in 1969, compelled by a sense of responsibility and care for his people. Snow served as an elected Chief of the Nakoda-Wesley First Nation between 1968 and 1992 and between 1996 and 2000. Regarding the decision to record and write down the oral histories of the elders, in his “Epilogue” (2005 version), under the subchapter “Oral History,” Snow poignantly states that:

When I began to write \textit{These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places}, I struggled within myself whether to put our sacred history on the written page and in a foreign language… . Our history had always been an oral tradition… a living history passed on through the generations, from father to son or mother to daughter… . I did not want to break this tradition by transforming our history into writing… . In a way, I was forced to put my story on paper because many of our land claims are based partly on government archival records. In order to solidify our land claim, I had to write it on paper and present it to the governments or to their court systems… oral testimony as given by our elders was not accepted in the courts of Canada. Twenty-two years after this book was written, the oral history of our people was accepted by the courts as a result of the 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Delgamuukw case.\footnote{Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, 227.}
Snow goes further to explain how the oral history “is a record of our experiences and relationship to the earth, sun, moon, stars, the elements, the seasons, the winds, the waters, the fire, and the weather.”\textsuperscript{433} The decision to write and record oral traditions, to include the sacred sensibilities, like James Long did 40 years before, must have been difficult for John Snow, yet necessary under the pressure of the Canadian government’s reliance on archival records—written documentation—that nation-states utilized to dispossess Indigenous people of their land and their sovereignty.

Snow’s declarations inform an Indigenous theory of archiving by tying together what Snow calls four interrelated braids that keep Assiniboine culture alive, on Assiniboine terms, as they continue to negotiate with the Canadian nation-state. These four braids include a profound acknowledgement of the validity of the oral tradition, a respectful understanding of Assiniboine sacred cosmology and ceremonial practice, a belief in forms of nature and sacred sites, such as a mountain, as sentient beings, and bicultural literacy and writing in Assiniboine and English, including archival research of colonial documents, such as treaty records. Snow’s central argument, which of course comes from an Assiniboine perspective, runs throughout this important Indigenous-produced history: that human relationships to land integrate the spiritual, the physical, and the social, so that humans and non-humans are mutually interdependent. This worldview not only asserts First Nations’ sovereignty and land rights, but also may inform non-Indigenous views about relationships to the natural world in contemporary global crises, including resource extrapolation, consumerism, and the rapidly changing, and perhaps irreversible ecological conditions in which humans live today. This book, more than any of the others discussed here, is both a political and cultural assertion of Indigenous sovereignty and identity—a way of being Assiniboine. In John Snow’s narrative, a centennial arc between the past and the present connects two key turning points: these are highlighted by the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877 and the reforms to the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1977 for Aboriginal peoples.\textsuperscript{434} As Director of the Indian Association of Alberta’s Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research, on behalf of the 44 First

\textsuperscript{433} Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, 228.

\textsuperscript{434} In regards to the political struggle and holding the British Crown accountable to the sacredness of the Treaty 7, John Snow and others are quoted with First Nations’ oral histories discussed by Treaty 7 Elders in their publication \textit{Treaty 7 Elders, with Walter Hilderbrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and Sarah Carter, The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7} (London: McGill-Queen’s University, 1996).
Nations of Alberta, John Snow was deeply committed to land claims issues and treaty rights. With *These Mountains*, Snow carried forward one of his primary goals, which was to examine and document treaty rights and land claims issues. In the “Introduction,” Ian Getty, who has served as Stoney Administrative Research Director since 1980, describes several important contributions of Snow’s work. After leading several years of research and collecting oral histories, Chief John Snow presented a land claim’s report, “The Kootenay Plains and the Big Horn Wesley Stoney Band – An Oral and Documentary Historical Report, 1800-1970,” to the Minister of Indian Affairs in April 1972. According to Getty, this was the “first documented land claim to be received by the federal government from an Indian band.”\(^{435}\) Unfortunately, the Department of Indian Affairs rejected this land claim. Though this has been reasserted through Canadian courts, most recently redrafted in 2005 as a Treaty Land Entitlement, the claim to this Aboriginal Nakoda territory in the Kootenai Plains is still unresolved. Getty talks of the political, as well as cultural importance of this Nakoda driven archival process: “This collection of interviews with Stoney Nakoda elders was recorded in the Nakoda Siouan language to preserve their stories for future generations.”\(^{436}\) In this sense, *These Mountains* was both politically charged, as an ongoing lands claim according to Indigenous treaty interpretation, and meant to be similar to *Land of Nakoda*, as a way of documenting oral histories from a Nakoda perspective and accomplished specifically by Nakoda hands.

Getty points out that John Snow was a key leader in broader Aboriginal political activism that was asserted in Canada during the 1970s. Snow helped the National Indian Brotherhood and other Aboriginal organizations “… defeat the Liberal government’s ‘White Paper’ proposal to amend and eliminate the Indian Act, in 1969-70.”\(^{437}\) The key principle that Snow demonstrates through his book and by his political work of over 30 years was biculturalism. Getty states the important role that Snow and this book performs for Nakoda, for Aboriginal people, and for the broader Canadian public:

He envisioned and implemented a model of empowerment and self-determination that combined traditional Nakoda values with the modern concept of local governance, in effect, a fusion of band custom with some of the administrative provisions of the Indian Act. His philosophy was to select the best of both worlds

\(^{435}\) Snow, *These Mountains are our Sacred Places*, xiv.
\(^{436}\) Ibid.
\(^{437}\) Ibid., xvi.
to create a balance between traditional tribal practices and modern democratic principles of fairness and justice and to articulate the advantages of living in a bicultural (Nakoda-Canadian) and bilingual (Nakoda-English) world.\footnote{438}

Snow’s philosophy inspired him to take several actions beginning in the early 1970s. Some of these actions included his assistance in establishing an Oral History Program. Additionally, he supported the Stoney Language Program, which produced a phonetically based writing system in Nakoda that uses a modified English alphabet. Also, he sponsored the Stoney Cultural Education Program, which trained Stoney teachers via university-based classes that were brought to the Morley Reserve, and produced a printed local curriculum in both Nakoda and English. In addition to the land claims work that the oral history recordings supported, Snow then turned his attention to using this body of research to write his autobiography, \textit{These Mountains}, in 1977, the centennial commemoration year of Treaty 7.

According to Getty, “John Snow’s philosophy was to share the elders’ teachings found within the Stoney land claim report with the wider non-Stoney community.”\footnote{439} At the reenactment ceremonies during the centennial on September 22, 1977 for the Treaty 7 at Blackfoot Crossing, Siksika Nation Reserve, a leather-bound copy of \textit{These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places} was presented as a gift to Prince Charles. In the “Epilogue” to the 2005 version, Snow describes an intimate vision, previously not shared in print; one that he had after he conducted four sacred pipe ceremonies in London in the summer of 1976.\footnote{440} Snow was travelling with a delegation to invite Queen Elizabeth to commemorate the signing of Treaty Seven in 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing. Prince Charles stood in as the representative for the Queen, as she was unable to attend. This moment exemplified weaving Assiniboine ways of archiving knowledge with English ways, which together were ceremonial, oral, and written—what Snow defines as bicultural. Snow provides a moral opinion on the sacred agreements made a hundred years before between John Snow and Prince Charles’s ancestors: sadly, these are agreements that remain unfulfilled in Indigenous eyes.

Snow focuses on Assiniboine resilience against Canadian domination in the 12

\footnote{438} Ibid.
\footnote{439} Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, xvii.
\footnote{440} Snow, \textit{These Mountains are our Sacred Places}, 229.
chapters of his book, which are organized into five sections. In the first section, “The Old Path,” Snow describes the original intent and the perpetuation of ancient Assiniboine values, such as sacred relationships to the land and the cosmos. In the second section, “The Crossroads,” Snow explains the conflicting interpretations inherent in the initial treaty-making process between Aboriginal nations and the British Crown from 1876 to 1890. Those conflicts arose from the incommensurability between Indigenous ways of being and knowledge and the dominant society, caused by initial and on-going misinterpretations, betrayals, and the destruction by Canadian colonial-settler government officials, whisky traders, and newly introduced technology and values. In the third section, covering 1885 to 1948, “The Long Rocky Trail,” Snow critiques the dispossession of lands and the disregard of Aboriginal rights by federal and provincial Canadian officials through the first half of the twentieth century. In the fourth section, “Rediscovering the Path,” Snow shows how “Self-Government” arrived on the Stoney reserve in the period of 1930 to 1969, and how a religious and cultural resurgence was renewed from 1969 to 1977. In the fifth section, and perhaps the most important, “The New Trail,” Snow provides his vision of “The Next 100 Years,” discusses his definition of “biculturalism,” and expresses his hope for his people’s future well-being.

Similar to other Assiniboine authors’ esteem for their own Assiniboine names, as discussed above, John Snow retells his story about how he received his Nakoda name. Intebeja Mani, Walking Seal, was the name given to him when he was born by the hereditary Chief, Jonas Goodstoney. Jonas was a descendent of Chief Jacob Goodstoney, “who signed Treaty Number Seven with the British Crown at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877.” Chief Jonas Goodstoney announced the author’s Nakoda name at a community gathering before John Snow’s parents even knew: they did not attend the gathering due to the cold weather, which was an obstacle to them travelling with their newborn. 441 Jacob’s wife, Mary Goodstoney, told John Snow that his name carried a special purpose, because the “seal can survive in all kinds of weather on land or at sea …with great determination to live.” 442 As mentioned before, Nakoda names are very important and personal for Assiniboine people, and this is clear for John Snow.

441 Snow, These Mountains are our Sacred Places, xii.
442 Ibid., xiii.
Giving much respect to his ancestors, John Snow describes Jonas Goodstoney as “...one of the keepers of wisdom. He was a ceremonial leader, an oral historian, and a hereditary chief of the Nakoda people.” In his preface, John Snow claimed that he carried on this tradition by writing *These Mountains are our Sacred Places*: “The teachings I have learned over the years from our elders are still with me today. I was taught that we are part of this beautiful land and this beautiful land is part of us. We are all related” and, “[t]his might be called mythic history by non-Native historians, but it is my history. I have experienced it, I have lived it, and I treasure it today.” Snow also expresses the importance of the oral tradition as an ongoing way of keeping knowledge alive, but he also shows that writing helps to keep that knowledge in circulation and can be used as a mechanism to continue sacred practices alongside political struggle.

Assiniboine communities in Montana continued to keep written oral histories in circulation in the 1980s. Paralleling an Indigenous renaissance throughout North America, Assiniboine people produced local historical texts which were used in schools, echoing some of the same themes found in *Land of Nakoda*, with emphasis placed on Assiniboine culture and the importance of writing down oral histories heard from their elders. The book *Wachaga*, which translates as “Way of Life,” was produced by Frazer High School in 1985, and includes oral histories, artwork, student articles, and histories written by elders, such as Jerome Four Star, who also taught at Montana State University in Havre. The Fort Belknap Education Department published a “Curriculum Development Project” in 1982, entitled *Recollections of Fort Belknap's Past*, which is a collection of oral interviews of Gros Ventre and Assiniboine elders, focusing on the period between 1910 and 1945, to show how Gros Ventre and Assiniboine peoples contributed to the national efforts to overcome the Great Depression and World War II.

Sustaining a legacy, parts of *Land of Nakoda* were used in locally produced texts

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443 Snow, *These Mountains are our Sacred Places*, xii.
444 Ibid., xiii.
in Wolf Point, Montana between 1992 and 1993. A small non-profit organization called Friends of the Assiniboine Foundation published three cultural history news magazines in color called *Nakodabi: the Assiniboine people*, which drew from *Land of Nakoda*.\(^\text{446}\) Contributing authors to these three volumes included Bob Sandon, Robert Four Star, Oliver Archdale, Kenny Ryan, and several others. Especially important to these volumes were a number of illustrations and excerpts from *Land of Nakoda*, which informed readers of the continuity between contemporary cultural practitioners and the representations depicted in the 1942 book. These magazines demonstrated a written conversation between Assiniboine cultural leaders of the past, as recorded in *Land of Nakoda*, and present leaders such as Robert Four Star, Kenny Ryan, and the late Oliver Archdale, all so that future generations might know their culture’s accumulation of knowledge, practices, and history. This recycling of written and illustrated oral histories continues to be an important mechanism for Assiniboine people to keep their knowledge alive.

Assiniboine people have also continued producing collaborative history texts into the twenty-first century. In 2008, four of five authors, including Dr. Dennis Smith, Dr. Joseph R. McGeshick, Dr. James Shanley, and Caleb Shields, all Assiniboine, Sioux, or Chippewa except for Dr. David Miller, wrote chapters in *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000* (2008), which was published by the Montana Historical Society.\(^\text{447}\) This book contains several chapters about general Assiniboine and Sioux history from 1800 to 2000, with the intention of becoming a textbook to be used in local schools. Though it does not give a central historical argument, it is an important collection of history about tribal council documents, local newspapers, and much Assiniboine history that I, too, cite throughout this dissertation. It also includes numerous historical photographs. My interviewees have had varied opinions about this book, but the majority felt that it, too, was an important step in recording and writing down the history from Assiniboine people.

Also, as recently as 2010, Mary Helland, a non-Indigenous filmmaker, of the


Glasgow-based Valley County Historical Society, released a DVD film entitled *In The Land of The Assiniboine*. This film includes primary sources from 42 interviews, including Henry Archdale; Iron Cradle; Last; First Eagle; Shoots Them; Stephen Standing; and Cloud Man: depositions of the 1929 J-31 Court of Claims case, the Assiniboine Tribe v. the United States Government. It also includes reenactments of historical events by several of the interviewees’ descendants, historical photographs, a running narrative, and several interviews of Assiniboines (both elders and younger generations) living at that time, many of whom I also conversed with, such as Robert Four Star, Tuffy Hegelson, and George Redstone. The main point of this film is to show how Assiniboine survived starvation and the reservations, and continued to preserve their cultural knowledge and history for future generations.

Assiniboine literature, as represented by *Land of Nakoda* and the other texts discussed here, exemplify what I call a tripartite approach to a nascent Indigenous theory of archiving. First, Assiniboine literature produced by the Assiniboine has worked to preserve their understanding of history and cultural knowledge. Second, Assiniboine produced histories also counter the negative impacts of appropriation and misunderstandings caused by ethnographies and historiographies produced by writers who are often biased in their Western training and by their location outside—or otherwise unfamiliar with—those Assiniboine communities. Third, and most intriguing, is how Indigenous efforts to preserve and protect their cultural knowledge and histories inform political claims and archival institutions reciprocally, both internally within their own communities, and externally, with nation-states and newcomers to their lands.

In addition to a way to keeping bodies of cultural knowledge alive for future generations, Assiniboine histories represent a powerful Indigenous decolonizing methodology. These decolonizing efforts inform ongoing political contestation with settler institutions, such as mining companies, universities, museums, archives, and state and federal government bureaucracies. In Elizabeth Cook-Lyn’s words, “Writing in Indian Country is a sacred responsibility if the nations are to protect sovereignty.”448

Citing Jacques Derrida, Cook-Lynn declares, “The real issue for American Indians is whether writers and critics want to understand history in terms of opposition, which is a

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political matter, or whether they want to simply cling to cultural and literary theoretical language.” Rather than focus on individual subjectivities, Cook-Lynn argues that Indigenous scholars should keep their “eye on the prize” for their communities, nations, and peoples: “That prize, for American Indians, is the sovereign condition of institutions and systems.” Indeed, several Assiniboine texts, which I discussed above, have been cited and used for land and resource claims or for treaty rights. In this regard, the Western sense of separation between the sacred and the secular runs counter to many Indigenous ways of producing and archiving their histories and cultural practices through writing. For the Assiniboine, as my interviewees have reported, producing and archiving histories through writing, and in particular, oral histories imbued with distinct cultural knowledge and practices, carries a moral, “sacred” responsibility.

449 Cook-Lynn, New Indians, Old Wars, 90.
450 Ibid., 91.
Chapter 6: Assiniboine Knowledge Keeping through Artwork

Art is power and art is compassion … it can be owned by no man … and always remains an expression of culture from which it comes.
– Nathan Beaudry

[The Indian’s] art like himself is indigenous to the soil of his country, where, with the survival of his latent abilities, he bravely offers the best productions of his mind and hand which shall be a permanent record of the race.
– Angel DeCora 1911

When I witnessed the Assiniboine Medicine Lodge for the first time in 1996, I gravitated toward the activity in the middle of the circle to watch artists carve and paint the Chawakan (Sacred Tree). For the dancers, the Chawakan stands for the center of the universe; it is the focus of the dancers’ attention during the Medicine Lodge. Douglas Runsthrough and Nathan Beaudry, both of whom are artists, had been given the sacred tasks of carving and painting the Chawakan. On the north side of the tree, Runsthrough and Beaudry carved out the bark and painted a blue Thunderbird at the top with a blue lightning bolt zigzagging down to the base. On the south side, they carved out and painted a rainbow at the top with a red straight line descending to the bottom. Every piece of bark that was carved out was considered holy, giving properties of good health and healing to the families who were given a piece of it. Oliver Archdale explained to me what the symbols and colours meant for the Assiniboine, such as the rainbow and Thunderbird, which stand for life-sustaining forces that bring rain at the space between sky and earth. By creating these symbols and colours to form the Chawakan at the center of the Medicine Lodge, Assiniboine artists produced artwork to help sustain bodies of cultural knowledge.

Fourteen years later, in June 2010, during my research in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian archives, Cultural Resource Center, I was surprised to discover other work by Runsthrough. A Montana state pamphlet, dated 1978, described paintings by Runsthrough in a gallery in Helena. At that very moment, I realized that just a week prior I had been participating in a very sacred ceremony with

Runthrough during the 2010 Medicine Lodge, north of Aswego, without knowing that he had previously sold paintings in the art market. For Assiniboine, artwork can be both sacred and secular, and for some, both a way of life and a way to make a living. The lines between ancient and contemporary art, sacred and secular functions, and art for the public art market and those “not for sale,” sometimes blur. As art historian Leslie Ross states, “Many Indian languages lack a distinct word for art, since there is no distinction between art and life. Art is life. The two are inseparable.”

For individual Assiniboine artists and viewers the lines between the sacred and the secular are negotiated and contested within Assiniboine communities and with non-Indigenous audiences. As Beaudry claims, to be an artist means to be a “cultural emissary … to continue to reclaim and reaffirm Indian identity.”

In this chapter I explore how Assiniboine artists kept cultural and historical knowledge alive, from the reservation period to the present, through their visual artwork, such as paintings, sculpture, and textiles. I analyze Assiniboine artwork as both a process and a product in order to see the artwork as both a way of archiving and as an archive itself. I argue that Assiniboine artworks deepen and enlarge the preservation of cultural knowledge in several ways, both internally for Assiniboine communities, and externally to inform non-Assiniboine audiences.

Artwork is both similar to and different from other ways of keeping knowledge alive for Assiniboine people, such as using the oral tradition or written texts. Artwork engages the visual aspects of human consciousness via the formation of images, often correlating with other senses, including audio, visual, and kinaesthetic feelings, as human beings acquire knowledge and sustain memory. Similar to print literature, permanent visual arts, such as paintings, may be seen as products designed to last. On the other hand, artwork differs from written texts, in that the produced imagery enhances meaning for both internal and external audiences through visual symbolism. Similar to the oral tradition, artwork engages internal audiences in a process within specific contexts in a temporal present, such as sewing a quilt in someone's home, or utilizing a decorated object in a ceremony. Oral tradition, written histories, and artwork each carry stories for

454 Nathan Beaudry Interview, June 26, 2012, at his home, Wolf Point, Montana.
Assiniboine people in different ways.

In this sense, Indigenous artwork communicates values to audiences both within and outside Native communities, thus sustaining cultural knowledge for many. This communicative process varies, based on the particular time, space, and social gathering where the artwork is displayed within a community, differing from one cultural context to another. Through their artworks, Assiniboine artists have not only sustained bodies of knowledge for their own communities but also informed non-Assiniboine artists, anthropologists, curators, collectors, and the general public about Assiniboine cultural knowledge. Internally, Assiniboine artwork functions as a conduit of shared symbolism for Assiniboine community audiences; externally, it serves as a medium that informs external audiences about Assiniboine worldviews. A ceremonial pipe-bag may have specific Assiniboine colours and designs known by Assiniboine people to carry a specific meaning, while at the same time, it can be seen as an object that elicits aesthetic admiration for non-Assiniboine observers, who may not understand the symbolism of the pipe-bag.

Visual arts mean different things to different audiences, yet, at the same time, those arts can sometimes transcend specific sociocultural contexts. Indigenous communities have used artwork as vessels to carry stories, symbols, values, and histories for internal and external audiences over generations. This is due mainly to the use of internal symbolism—symbols that mean something unique to those inside an Indigenous community—as Julie Cruikshank discusses in her article “Negotiating with Narrative: Establishing Cultural Identity at the Yukon International Storytelling Festival” (1997). At the same time, in some instances, Indigenous-produced artwork may connect to an external, almost-universal symbolism, such as by evoking emotions of suffering or joy in a viewer.

This chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I explore the history of collecting Assiniboine objects, including mutual exchanges between settler-

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455 In his article, “Looking Several Ways,” James Clifford points out that many diverse voices, inequalities, and discords, even within specific communities involved in these projects, go unheard, unknown, and unexamined. This is the case of my study: it is, of course, impossible to represent all Assiniboine perspectives regarding Assiniboine artwork. See James Clifford, “Looking Several Ways: Anthropology and Native Heritage in Alaska,” *Current Anthropology* 45 (2004): 5-30, 20.

artists who painted and sketched Assiniboine people in their regalia, as well as explorers, fur traders, and ethnographers’ descriptions of Assiniboine art. In the second section, I look at innovative artwork done by the Assiniboine artist William Standing (Fire Bear), to illustrate the production of artwork internally as a process and externally as a product, which can inform non-Assiniboine audiences about Assiniboine knowledge. In the third section, I discuss how contemporary Assiniboine artists have continued Fire Bear’s legacy to sustain their cultural knowledge.

Assiniboine-produced artworks help to inform a unique Assiniboine cultural identity, but also express the diversity of Assiniboine arts globally. In addition, for Assiniboine people living away from their reservations, Assiniboine art connects them to their communities and aboriginal territories. Furthermore, in some cases, Assiniboine artists have used their art to assert Assiniboine agency within the social and political fabrics of diverse American and Canadian societies. Thus, I examine the practice of art as an act of cosmopolitanism produced and circulated by, Assiniboine communities for internal and external uses. By looking at art as a conduit of meaning, I define cosmopolitanism as the state of being aware of mutual respect, humanity, and dignity between people from different cultural contexts or systems of thought in the past and the present. To use Maximilian Christian Forte’s term, “Indigenous cosmopolitans” are rooted in their local cultural community, while also interested and experienced in movement, travel, and other local cultural phenomena; they are “… both rooted and routed, nonelite yet nonparochial, provincial without being isolated, internationalized, without being de-localized.” Assiniboine artists exemplify this connection between the local and the global, and show an appreciation not only for their own cultural knowledge but also for different forms of artistic expression.

For Assiniboine communities, the ways in which artwork is circulated internally

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differs from the ways in which Indigenous artwork has been collected and exhibited externally. In James Clifford’s essay, “On Collecting Art and Culture,” in The Predicament of Culture (1988), he contrasts Western ways of collecting ethnic art and artefacts and their display in museum exhibits with Indigenous ways of giving art as gifts within their communities. Clifford argues that while it may be almost universal for human beings to gather objects and symbolic markers around “the self and the group … a marking-off of a subjective domain that is not ‘other’” in order to foster a cultural identity or imagined boundary of peoplehood, Western assumptions of “collecting” differ from Indigenous ones.460 In contrast to Western notions about collecting, Clifford argues that for some Indigenous groups, such as those in Melanesia, “… one accumulates not to hold objects as private goods but to give them away, to redistribute.”461 This is similar to Assiniboine “giveaways,” of everything from hand-made star-quilts to wash towels, when families are marking a transition, family death, or achievement. In these cases, “giveaways” are a standard ceremoniacl act which can be observed at numerous occasions, such as during local Powwows, exchanges between a few individuals, and at Medicine Lodges. This stands in stark contrast to Western ideas, as Clifford argues, where “… collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authority.”462 Furthermore, the Indigenous arts and artefacts held in Western archives and museums will almost certainly foster different meanings, depending on who participated in their storage, display, or interpretation.

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century interactions, Assiniboines and non-Indigenous artists, anthropologists, and collectors encountered one another in very different cultural contexts, and within different, unequal power structures. European and American painters painted Indigenous peoples and collected Indigenous objects during nineteenth-century westward explorations into the Northern Plains. Two particular painters, George Catlin and Karl Bodmer, painted Assiniboine people dressed in their regalia, and while in the act of performing activities, such as hunting or ceremonial gatherings; they also created images of Assiniboine lodges and representations of entire

461 Ibid.
462 Ibid.
their communities. Their intentions may have been to represent and collect cultural knowledge about a people they assumed that either America or Canada would eventually absorb. Notwithstanding the fallacy of this assumption, the artwork they produced and the objects they collected helped to fill non-Indigenous archives.

When living communities of Indigenous peoples, and in particular, artists, have access to and authority over these collected objects and paintings, they interpret this archival knowledge through their own systems of thought. In the article “Anthropology in and of the Archives” (2012), David Zeitlyn points to the direct connection that descendant communities, families, and individuals might find with access to records held in archival collections: “Thinking about archives, traces left by people in paper records or as archaeological remains, illuminates the complexity of interrelationships across time and space.” By making use of these forms of archival knowledge in their own artworks, Indigenous artists may bring bodies of cultural knowledge back to life, which can further sustain their communities’ cultural histories.

Recently, Indigenous peoples, including the Assiniboine, have gained more authority over the artwork and artefacts that they had produced historically which were located in museum, archive, and gallery collections. As Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh addresses, “The legacy of objects representing complex cultural beliefs is additionally challenging because of the now-recognized legal rights of Indigenous communities to reclaim cultural items.” To appreciate the significance of paintings depicting Assiniboine images and Assiniboine objects held in archives, it is important to gain a historical understanding of non-Indigenous produced images of Assiniboine people and

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464 For a similar study that looks at ways that archival canons have been used and driven by an Indigenous communities, see Leslie A. Robertson, Standing Up with Ga’ayta’las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), xvi, 12, 13, 55, 110, 406. Robertson states that: “The problem with finding one’s place in the past is that, for many, it affects where and how you stand in the present” (p. 55). Additionally, see a discussion of an Indigenous use of artwork held in non-Indigenous archives in Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, "Sketching Knowledge: Quandaries in the Mimetic Reproduction of Pueblo Ritual," American Ethnologist 38, no. 3 (August 2011): 451-67.
465 For a discussion of the movement to listen to Indigenous authorities regarding their objects held in museums by one of the pioneers of that movement, see Michael M. Ames, “Museums in the Age of Deconstruction” in Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes The Anthropology of Museums, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 151-168.
the collecting of Assiniboine art. Seen in relationship to each other, non-Indigenous and Assiniboine arts about Assiniboine people contribute in some degree to the preservation of Assiniboine cultural knowledge, by connecting the past to the present.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, which opened to the public on September 21, 2004, contains over 400 works of art about or produced by the Assiniboine. Many of these objects carry messages of Assiniboine knowledge regarding their past. Perhaps the earliest example of Assiniboine-produced art that I examined was a dance club. It was made of wood, horsehair, iron nails, red paint, glue and rawhide, and depicted a horse with an arrow carved into the center of the horse’s body. According to the catalogue, this club was created about 1860. It measures approximately 56 by 24 by 2.5 centimeters in size. The Smithsonian acquired this club for their collection in 1928 from an unknown source in Blaine County, Montana, on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The artist’s name is identified as Medicine Bear (Ma-to-Wakan-Na-be), an Assiniboine (Stoney), who lived circa 1838 to 1919. On the original acquisition card, a narrative about this club describes the importance of this staff to Medicine Bear. As archived by the NMAI:

Wooden horse, painted red. This was made by Medicine Bear in memory of a war pony owned by him when he was a young war chief. This pony was famous as a buffalo runner and met his death in the following manner: While leading a war party in the bad lands of the Missouri River in Northern Montana near where the Musselshell River flows into the Missouri, Medicine Bear encountered and was attacked by a large war party of Blackfoot Indians. During the battle Medicine Bear singled out and engaged the Blackfoot War Chief, who was a very brave warrior killing Medicine Bear’s famous horse with two arrows in the body and a bullet through the thigh. Medicine Bear, however, succeeded in dismounting his enemy and drove him into and killed him in the waters of the Missouri. After the battle, which the Assiniboins [sic] won, Medicine Bear fashioned this wooden horse, using the mane and tail hair of his dead pony.467

This dance club was a key piece in the NMAI’s exhibition “Song For The Horse Nation,” originally displayed in the George Gustav Heye Center in New York from 2009 to 2011,

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and then at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. from 2011 to 2013. Medicine Bear’s horse, memorialized by this dance club, kept an important relationship and history protected and archived for the present day. Perhaps, in ways similar to the seller of this dance club, non-Indigenous fur traders, painters, collectors, and ethnographers were often unknowingly implicated in extracting Indigenous cultural knowledge. Collectors’ contributions to archives, such as this dance club given to the Smithsonian, have preserved Indigenous cultural knowledge for future generations. Additionally, however, the travelling exhibit “Song For The Horse Nation,” exemplifies a turn in the last few decades towards a new respect for Indigenous perspectives regarding their own artefacts.

Before, during, and after contact with American and Canadian settlers, Assiniboine artists visually recorded their own histories on hides, clothing, dwellings, rock, and bark. In the mid-nineteenth century, fur traders described some of these Assiniboine illustrations as art. In The Assiniboin, originally written in 1854, Edwin Thompson Denig gives a very brief description of Assiniboine “picture-writing.”

Denig had been working for the American Fur Company at Fort Union between 1833 and 1856, and he had married one of Chief Iron Arrow Point’s daughters, Deer Little Woman, who was also Azana’s sister. In 1854, Denig wrote his report to Isaac Stevens, Governor of the Washington Territory. According to Denig, tribes of the “Upper Missouri,” such as the Mandan, Assiniboine, and Sioux, drew pictures on hides, tipis, shields, and rocks.

Similar to the “Winter-Count” that Sioux used to describe important events that had happened the previous year, which were illustrated in the form of a spiral, the Assiniboine also used picture writing to record important events and movements of bands.

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468 For a discussion of the turn towards respect for Indigenous authority over their own artefacts, see James Clifford, “Museums as Contact Zones,” in Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 188-219.


or raiding parties. Denig states that the Assiniboine would draw pictures of lodges, horse tracks, and territorial migrations on bark, often directly into the trees, and occasionally also on pieces of hide, in order to inform other Assiniboines and allies where they had been, where they had moved, and what had transpired in the course of the prior year. Denig’s observation of various ornaments and pictographs on robes, lodges, and other surfaces, written in the context of mid-nineteenth century Anglo-American perspectives of Indigenous peoples, seems to respect these objects as art, albeit not “fine art” in the Western sense. Denig wrote: “they also have the art of melting beads of different colors and casting them in molds of clay for ear and other ornaments of various shapes, some of which are very ingeniously done.” 471 Further, Denig also reflects on their pictorial works as art:

These are the only forms the pictorial art of the Indians takes. It is more largely applied to the designs represented on their robes and mythological subjects, when appearing on their lodges, fetish envelopes … . The value it may be to a people who are without letters is mostly apparent in the instances where it denotes rank and standing of individuals when painted on their robes. 472

One example, reprinted in his report, shows an anonymous drawing on ledger book paper of a “bison surround,” a device Assiniboine and other tribes used to corral bison, entitled “Anonymous Assiniboine map of buffalo park” (circa 1853). 473 An Assiniboine bison surround, as this map shows, involved a whole village of people lined up to form a V-shape, with a circular, fenced corral at the point of the “V,” where horse-mounted hunters would drive the bison herd. There are other drawings and pictographs on ledger paper by an “anonymous Assiniboine,” including the exterior of a tipi cover with animal designs displaying what looks like a bison in the top portion of the tipi panels, and an alligator in the lower portions. 474 These Assiniboine drawings expressed their history visually and

472 Denig, The Assiniboine, 211.
were also utilized in their oral tradition. Fortunately, newcomers like Denig interpreted these drawings as “artwork,” and helped preserve them in their records.

Other published journals of Canadian explorers in the early- to late-nineteenth century also reveal illustrations of various Indigenous designs that they encountered on the Northern Plains. Henry Youle Hind, for example, documented a Crown-sponsored surveying expedition across a vast Assiniboine (and other tribal) territory in “The Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858.” Hind’s thorough journal record contains several illustrations that reveal information of subtle cultural signifiers, such as canoe designs, tipi covers, and bison surrounds. I have found the designs on the nineteenth-century tipi covers consistent with patterns still used today. One illustration, done as a black sketch, titled “Prairie Portage, Assiniboine River,” shows three tipis in front and between two fenced Victorian-era buildings under construction, likely illustrating the Red River settlement. The tipis show a pattern of three horizontal parallel panels (rows), with either pictures or patterns on each panel, such as spots, lightning strikes, or animals. As part of their material culture, the tipi covers also exemplify local Indigenous artwork of that time and place. One of my interviewees, Dale White, explained the custom of storytelling through the panels on the lodge covers. According to Assiniboine tradition, each panel, which is supposed to be read from the bottom of the tipi to the top, tells the owner’s history with respect to which band they belong to, the meaning of their name, and important events from their life.

Several European and American artists in exploration parties painted Assiniboine in their regalia and collected their objects throughout the nineteenth century. In fact, John C. Ewers claims that there are over 700 artists or collectors of Plains Indian art documented before 1900. By the early-twentieth century, Edward Curtis followed in

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477 For a similar patterning, see Adolf Hungrywolf, Tipi: Traditional Native American Shelter (Summertown, TN: Native Voices Book Pub. Co., 2006).
the footsteps of these earlier artists, photographing Assiniboine and other tribes of the Northern Plains. The paintings and artefacts made or collected from these earlier times contain cultural information and historical markers that are significant to contemporary Assiniboine people. Many of these objects are presently housed in museums and archives around the world, from Munich, Germany to Washington, D.C.

George Catlin, perhaps one of the most well known American painters of that time, can also be described as one of the first ethnographers, as exemplified by his extensive writings, paintings, and collections. One large and elaborately color-illustrated book, *George Catlin and his Indian Gallery* (2002), shows how Catlin sketched and painted detailed illustrations of Assiniboine carved pipes, and the pipe dance and other rituals he observed during his stay around Fort Union in 1832. The painting of Azana, entitled “Wi-jún-Jon, Pigeon’s Egg Head (The Light), a Distinguished Young Warrior,” that exhibits him before his journey to Washington, D.C., hangs in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. today, adjacent to the painting showing his pre- and post-bifurcation. In contrast to the bifurcated image used to exemplify the “corrupted Azana,” “Wi-jún-Jon, Pigeon’s Egg Head (The Light), a Distinguished Young Warrior,” shows the distinct style of porcupine quillwork on a circular breastplate on Azana’s buckskin shirt, with a black-and-white checkerboard design radiating from its center; his hair is fashioned in five braids, two of which are wrapped in white fur. These are stylistic qualities unique to the Assiniboine, as explained to me by elders such as Robert Four Star, as he has come to understand these traditions through their oral tradition. As I discuss below, I also received a great deal of information from Robert Lowie.

Other artists besides George Catlin painted and collected objects of Assiniboine and other Indigenous peoples of the North American Plains, including the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer. Bodmer accompanied German explorer Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied into the upper Missouri River region between 1832 and 1834. Bodmer not only painted many of the Indigenous peoples he encountered, such as the Mandan (who are close allies to Assiniboine), but he also taught some individuals to use pencil, watercolour, and European art techniques. Four Bears (Mato Tope), a Mandan, who was

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depicted by both Catlin and Bodmer in some of their finest works, also examined and studied Bodmer’s art techniques during his sojourns to Fort Clark. As a result of these exchanges, he sketched and painted in a style that blended pictographic Indigenous forms with the use of pencil and colour, and thus has become known as the first “Named Indian Artist in the American West.”

Four Bears, while at Fort Clark, similar to Azana at Fort Union, was involved in keeping the peace between traders and Natives. Mutual exchanges in knowledge and artistic techniques between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists such as described here demonstrate concepts that Mary Louise Pratt called “transculturation” and “autoethnography.” In her essay, “Arts of the Contact Zone” (2005), Pratt uses these terms to describe exchanges in text and language produced by Guaman Poma in the “contact zone” between Indigenous Quechua and Spanish colonizers in sixteenth-century Peru.

Pratt defines “autoethnographic text” as, “. . . a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have of them.” She goes on to state that, “[a]utoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speaker’s own community. Their reception is thus highly indeterminate. Such texts often constitute a marginalized group’s point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture.” Likewise, Indigenous-produced art circulates through non-Indigenous national and international institutions, such as museums and galleries, usually in metropolitan environments. This form of visual self-representation that engages the archived knowledge by non-Indigenous hands can be better understood through the concept of transculturation. Pratt uses transculturation “to describe processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials

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481 See Mary Louise Pratt’s discussion of transculturation as exemplified by Guaman Poma in sixteenth-century Peru in “Arts of the Contact Zone,” in David Bartholomae and Tony Petrosky, eds., Ways of Reading: an Anthology for Writers, (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2005), 517-534. Also, see Erika Bsumek, Indian-made: Navajo culture in the Marketplace 1868-1940 (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008). Bsumek claims that, “. . . by showing the ways in which Navajo artisans responded to market demands, negotiated trades, consumed goods, and otherwise actively participated in the modern market economy, it shows that whites’ investments in the meanings of Navajo goods cannot be divorced from Navajo agency” (p. 5).
482 Ibid., “Arts of the Contact Zone,” 519.
483 Ibid., 520.
transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture.” Assiniboine artists demonstrated a form of transculturation through the autoethnographic artwork that they produced, which were also influenced by non-Indigenous art.

In fact, non-Indigenous artists and collectors seem to have helped preserve the Indigenous arts of the past for contemporary Indigenous artists. As John Ewers claims about the explorer-artists involved in westward expansion, “All relied upon graphic art to supplement their own written observations of Indian life. Their own involvement in art made them especially sensitive to the art of Indian peoples, able to relate closely to Indian artists and to judge the importance of those artists’ contributions to a better understanding of Indian life.” In the chapter “Artist’s Choices,” Ewers argues that the earliest non-Indigenous artists and explorers who collected Indigenous-produced artefacts appreciated these objects as aesthetic artworks, but also understood that these objects portrayed and exemplified culturally meaningful symbolism for Indigenous people from whom they collected. Ewers gives several examples of Assiniboine and other tribes’ artefacts held in collections to demonstrate how “Indian and white artists shared a common interest in communicating through pictures, which seemed to draw them together, even though their styles may have differed greatly.”

Ewers points toward this mutual exchange in knowledge, a form of transculturation, to illustrate these rare moments of common ground found between non-Indigenous and Indigenous artists from divergent cultural contexts.

As Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists exchanged techniques and knowledge in this “cosmopolitan” way, they helped Indigenous peoples preserve their history, identity, and names. Several of Catlin and Bodmer’s paintings depict Assiniboine and other local Indigenous artwork of the time, such as tipi covers, ceremonial hide-shirts, and several other objects that display Native visual symbolism.

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484 Ibid., 523.
485 Ewers, Plains Indian Art, 53.
486 Ibid., 159.
487 For a discussion of transculturation and issues of unequal power relations, see Mark Millington, “Transculturation: Contrapuntal Notes to Critical Orthodoxy,” Bulletin of Latin American Research 26, no. 2 (2007): 267. Here, Millington discusses that, “[t]here has been some emphasis in recent discussions of transculturation on interaction, but I think that we need to be clear about what we take that term to mean, because interaction may not imply equality and mutuality. Influences may operate back and forth between cultures but be asymmetrical in quantity and quality…. ” He then continues, “… we need to try to understand how these processes affect people’s lives and the social relations in which they live” (p. 267).
Assiniboine artwork as a type of archive, and as a way of archiving, requires a window into Assiniboine ways of understanding the world, rather than an examination which imposes non-Indigenous normative values.

Some German museums contain and preserve many Assiniboine objects collected by Maximilian, such as fully decorated pipe bags, buckskin shirts, and moccasins. Invited by a friend, Klaus Koppe, a German who has studied Assiniboine culture for many years, Robert Four Star travelled to Germany and previewed these exhibited and archived artefacts. When I asked him what he thought about these objects, he said that he was glad that they were being preserved instead of being lost to time; however, he said, he was curious who had been the original owners of these pieces and wondered how the exchanges had taken place.488

In addition to highlighting examples of non-Indigenous artists preserving images of Indigenous art at early points of contact, Ewers discusses how anthropologists helped sustain Indigenous cultural knowledge in the early-twentieth century. In “Plains Indian Artist and Anthropologists” (2011), Ewers states that anthropologists, “… guided Indian artists in picturing subjects that were inadequately or imperfectly known …” and “… as staff members or associates of permanent research institutions, saw to it that the artists’ records were preserved—not as quaint examples of ‘primitive art,’ but as valuable cultural documents.”489 Art collections that contain visual arts from and about Indigenous peoples are much more than historical records of Indigenous and settler relations: these artefacts and artworks also represent and sustain sacred stories for the living Indigenous peoples that they originated from.

By Western standards, Indigenous artefacts too often were considered as simple craft objects or “primitive art.” Still, many of these artefacts are found today in galleries, antique stores, private collections, museums, and archives.490 As Leah Dilworth asserts in Imagining Indians (1996), non-Indigenous collectors and artists did not even begin to consider Indigenous-produced artefacts or cultural objects as “art” until 1931, with the

488 Robert Four Star Interview #3, July 9, 2012, in the home of Larry Smith, Wolf Point, MT.
489 Ewers, Plains Indian Art, 180.
490 For an excellent study of non-Indigenous categorization of Indigenous artwork as a form of “primitivism” as seen in the exploitation of Indigenous artists in the Southwest in the late-nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, see Leah Dilworth, Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).
“Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts” in New York. This exhibition, though curated by Western aesthetic categories, as Christian Feest explains, was long overdue: “By showing side by side traditional crafts and watercolours by modern artists, it identified both as part of the same tradition and thus elevated the ethnographic specimens to the status of art.” Other exhibitions followed suit, showing Indigenous-produced cultural objects as art, such as at the Golden Gate Exhibition in San Francisco’s World’s Fair of 1939. Likewise, as Elizabeth Hutchinson argues in The Indian Craze (2009), collecting Indigenous artefacts in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century in private “Indian corners,” private collections on display in peoples’ homes for example, influenced knowledge preservation in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Similar to the mutual knowledge exchanged between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, Hutchinson’s work shows that, “[t]he Indian craze was a transcultural phenomenon that brought Indians and non-Indians together,” from reservations to non-Indigenous urban centers. Hutchinson claims that, “[i]t is useful to understand the Indian corner as a ‘contact zone,’ a term defined by anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt as a space of intercultural negotiation in which European Americans and Natives encounter each other’s practices and values, albeit under conditions of radical inequality.” Though the encounters I discussed above between Assiniboine artists and non-Indigenous artists took place in the mid-nineteenth century, they are similar to the unequal contact zones that Hutchinson discusses in her own research.

Although they often categorized Indigenous arts as “craft” or “primitive” art at the time, some early-twentieth century trained anthropologists described information about Assiniboine artwork that is important to contemporary Assiniboine people. In his anthropology papers, The Assiniboine, published in 1909, Robert Lowie describes the Assiniboine and Stoney art and music that he had studied as an ethnographer at Fort Belknap in 1908 and at Morley in 1907. His work is also based on his review of several texts and images produced by missionaries, explorers, ethnographers, and fur traders,
ranging from Pierre-Jean De Smet to Edward Curtis. Working from these accounts and his fieldwork, Lowie gives superficial generalizations about Assiniboine art. The items that were physically available to him at the time of his reports were hand drums, quillwork, moccasins, parfleches, medicine bags, and the paintings and illustrations created by nineteenth-century explorers, such as Maximilian.

Lowie has several illustrations of these works in his brief description of Assiniboine art, and claims that, “There is a close relationship between the art of the Sioux and that of the Assiniboine,” and that “both employ a considerable number of designs shared by other tribes,” such as triangles for tipis, or patterns that look like step-pyramids. Lowie adds, however, that the Assiniboine and Stoney designs are different from the others, as they are “… distinguished by the decidedly more frequent use of the square (box), cross and ‘feather’ patterns, the last of these being a lozenge formed by two differently colored acute-angled triangles.” Lowie also reports that the Stoney seemed to have developed a more complex colour symbolism.

As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, ethnographies produced up to the 1930s often resulted in flawed attempts to capture a peoples’ past and culture before they were to vanish under the grip of assimilation. Over half a century later, as John Ewers points out, anthropologists such as Lowie who studied Plains Indian art in the first quarter of the twentieth century, made four faulty assumptions. First, that the history of this art could be reconstituted by comparing museum specimens without questioning the time in which the objects were created and collected, and thus, museum records often missed specific tribal attributions. Second, that Plains Indian art developed autonomous of non-

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498 Similar to a modern bag or suitcase, a parfleche was a device used to store things. They were made from animal skins that had been rendered into rawhide, which is very stiff and durable, and folded into a rectangle or square similar to a satchel. These were often painted with tribal designs.
499 Medicine bags are usually made from animal hides that have been tanned and processed with the animal’s brains, or in modern times, commodity eggs. They are often soft like velvet and naturally white or various tones of tan when smoked (particular plants when burned with the tanned hide covering the smoke). They are called “Medicine,” because the owners typically store sacred pipes, utensils, sacred plants, rocks, or animal parts that contain sacred powers to them. They are often decorated with specific designs that carry special meaning for their owners.
501 Ibid., 20.
Indian influences, except for trade materials such as glass beads, metal arrowheads, and textiles. Third, that the innovations in the Indigenous art that they studied could be determined by “relative technological complexity or breadth of tribal distribution.” Fourth, that the American Museum of Natural History was assumed to be the central authority up through the 1930s at the expense of studying collections at older repositories, such as the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University or the U.S. National Museum in Washington, D.C., and those abroad, such as in Britain, France, or Germany. Nevertheless, the Assiniboine artist Fire Bear (William Standing), who produced autoethnographic art from the 1920s to the 1940s, illustrates how limited these assumptions were.

When I opened the original book, *Land of Nakoda* (1942), for the first time, I was struck by the artistically rendered map on the inside cover by Fire Bear. This color illustrated map in black, red, and tan combines art and cartography. This representation also implicitly contains Assiniboine discourse on a collective sense of belonging to a territory and their relationships with other peoples. There are several drawings of actions on this map: an image of a dog pulling a travois with a man walking behind the dog as they emerge from the south-western Hudson Bay shores; a hunter dragging a deer; a canoe paddler moving in a westward direction near Lake of the Woods; men on horses in the middle of the image chasing buffalo; a tipi village and trees in the far north; a battle between horse-mounted warriors; and a man with a bow in Blackfoot Country near the Rocky Mountains. In between these images, animal tracks or directional arrow pointers indicate the movement or importance of these events in places close to certain lakes, rivers, and mountain ranges along the Missouri River, as well as specifically at Fort Union. Several other figures and place names and tribes, such as Cree, Blackfeet, and Sioux, adorn this simple, but important map. Fire Bear’s map and drawings dispersed through out the pages of this book help readers to visualize the symbolic meanings recorded by the written narratives. Collectively, these illustrations visually demonstrate the importance of the Assiniboine stories collected in *Land of Nakoda*. As visual stories, they show complex, interrelated bodies of cultural knowledge, such as the Assiniboine relationship with their Aboriginal territory. Fire Bear’s artwork blended Assiniboine

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503 Ewers, *Plains Indian Art*, 5.
historical cultural knowledge using typical Western genres of art.

Fire Bear claimed that he was a descendent of Azana, a name he translates into English as “In the Light,” stating:

Maybe I am something like my ancient ancestor In The Light. He was an independent man too. It is told that long, long ago (1832) In the Light, or Azan-\textit{zan-na}, was the first one of our Assiniboine people to go to the Great White Father in Washington . . . It is told he thought the white council house at Washington was one of the greatest medicine places there could be . . . When In The Light returned to our people he is said to have told of strange things he had seen . . . They called this early ancestor of mine “greatest liar in the world.” But he never changed. He told the truth.\textsuperscript{504}

Fire Bear’s assertion as an artist and a descendant of Azana exemplifies why it is important for Assiniboine artists to express their own interpretations of history. While the painting by George Catlin of Azana is important for historians’ analysis of images created by non-Indigenous people about Native American history, Assiniboine peoples’ perspectives about their ancestors, such as Fire Bear’s, reveal a focus on Assiniboine individuals and their actions. Events, such as Azana’s trip to Washington, may be better understood from multiple angles, both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Fire Bear was a descendent of Chief Iron Arrow Point, who led the effort to establish Fort Union. For Assiniboines, as for many others, genealogy is very important to them, as it helps them to remember the significant historical contexts of their ancestors. During his lifetime, William Standing preferred the name of Fire Bear:

Because I am a full-blooded Assiniboine, I have different names. In the white men’s custom I am William Standing after the first name of my old father, Standing Rattle. My father called me Looks In the Clouds. My own choice of names is Fire Bear; this was my grandfather’s name and also the name of my Canadian-Sioux wife. It makes no difference to me. If people want me to sign a name on pictures in white man's way and buy more that is all right. But I'd rather be Fire Bear.\textsuperscript{505}

Fire Bear’s paintings depict pre-reservation Assiniboine ways of life, as well as reservation life as he experienced it in the 1930s and ‘40s. His work appears to have been influenced by the American Western genre of C. M. Russell, who was known for featuring “Big Sky Country” landscape paintings. Fire Bear’s illustrations, over 110 of

\textsuperscript{504} Fire Bear (William Standing), in \textit{Land of Nakoda} (2004), 218.
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid.
them, and his testimony in *Land of the Nakoda*, show that he saw artists who worked on the old-time lodge, buffalo hide, and rock as carriers of ancient knowledge living in contemporary settings. According to Fire Bear, he, too, was carrying on important traditions, but rather than drawing on lodge covers or rocks, he had chosen to illustrate *Land of Nakoda* and to paint on canvas. His illustrations in *Land of Nakoda* animate the stories and legends. They also show a wide range of topics, including tipi covers, log homes with adjacent tipis, ceremonies, dances, and specific sacred sites, such as Sleeping Buffalo.

Fire Bear was born near the settlement of Oswego, on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, on July 27, 1904.\(^{506}\) He states that, as a child, he had always wanted to paint. In his biographical section of *Land of Nakoda*, he writes that his desire to paint may have emerged from his “… mother’s side of the family. Her brother Lance was considered a noted painter of medicine lodges.”\(^{507}\) His formal education began in a mission school at Wolf Point. In this school, he writes that, “[t]he Government agents decided I, like all young Indians, should learn the white men’s ways at what they called the agency day school near Oswego. Here I became more like a white man. I took off my leggings and the barbers cut my braids.”\(^{508}\) Ironically, with some humour, Fire Bear also reported that, “… when I went to Washington to exhibit paintings [later in his life], the white men decided I looked too much like them and gave me horse hair braids to wear with my Indian clothes.”\(^{509}\) In an ironic turn of events, “[h]e had been taken to Washington where he was presented to President Hoover with a grand headdress of eagle feathers.”\(^{510}\) This was considered quite comical, not only for its outward expression but also because the headdress was not Assiniboine.

Fire Bear’s artwork became both nationally and internationally recognized by the time he was in his mid-twenties. John Ewers, in his article, “William Standing (1904-1951): Versatile Assiniboin Artist” (1983) reports that a German man named August Knapp supported Fire Bear’s development. Knapp had immigrated to Oswego in 1912

\(^{508}\) Ibid.
\(^{509}\) Ibid.
\(^{510}\) Ibid.
and ran a small store with James Long called the Pioneer Store. Ewers interviewed Knapp in 1953. Knapp would buy materials for Fire Bear, and many of his finished paintings were done mostly in the store. Through this act of transculturation, Fire Bear then exhibited some of this work in Knapp’s collection in the Washington Arts Club in 1931. As a result, Fire Bear was photographed with then-Vice President, Charles Curtis, a member of the Kaw Nation. Later, this collection travelled across the Atlantic, to the Colonial Exhibition held in Paris, France in 1931. Together these events demonstrate Fire Bear’s then-cosmopolitan qualities.

According to his autobiography in *Land of Nakoda*, Fire Bear’s formal education culminated at the Haskell Institute in Kansas between 1920 and 1924. He claims in a sardonic tone that at Haskell, in addition to his education, he was also trained to paint the outside of buildings. After his four years at Haskell, and after travelling through many states selling his drawings and paintings, Fire Bear returned to Fort Peck Reservation, got married, and painted even more than before. He also illustrated humorous postcards and calendars which depicted local reservation life, and people who were both Indian and non-Indian.

Through his own direction and training, Fire Bear used the “cowboy,” Western style of drawing and painting to depict the ways of life of his ancestors and his own experiences on the reservation, thus blending the old with the new. In terms of archiving as an artist, he writes that many of his images were inspired by talking with “… the few humpback (buffalo) eaters still alive. Old-timers, like Walking Bull, Blue Cloud, First Eagle, Shooter and my old father, too, have told me stories which make me appreciate the old way of life.” Fire Bear declared that, “I can understand old time Indian way of life and have tried to show it in the drawings for this book—not the imitation Indian but the real one who hunted humpbacks in good old days.” This statement reveals his specific motivation to preserve the old timers’ knowledge. It also contrasts starkly with Catlin’s concern that these “real Indians” would vanish; that inevitably they would be assimilated into Anglo-American and Anglo- and French-Canadian societies. In the following

514 Ibid.
quotation, he describes his methodology for illustrating *Land of Nakoda* and many of his paintings: “I asked old timers many questions about the way they cooked meat … or dressed up for a grass dance; how bows and arrows looked, medicine pipes or old fashion leggings and moccasins with right designs—not drug store imitations.”\(^{515}\) His methodology, though similar to non-Assiniboine ethnographers’ methods, highlights his autoethnographic artistic expression. In addition, as another level of trying to express “truth” in his works, after completing his drawings, he would show them to the old timers for their approval.

Fire Bear exemplifies a mode of transculturation, or what Brian Dippie calls a “meshing” of ancient Assiniboine memories with his modern, Western, C.M. Russell-inspired artworks which were briefly promoted by government programs and public-awareness campaigns during the New Deal era.\(^{516}\) Fire Bear’s descriptions of his work demonstrate his main intention to tell “the truth” for both Assiniboine and settler audiences. In the conclusion to his biographical section, Fire Bear discusses his commitment to his ancestors, as well as to future generations of Assiniboines, and to changing how the settlers viewed Assiniboines: “In making the drawings for this book I have tried to help James Long tell young Assiniboines the truth about the old timers. I hope the book will also help the white men understand the Assiniboine’s old ways of life.”\(^{517}\) In his final sentence he states: “Maybe my grandfathers and grandmothers in the Happy Hunting Ground will feel better if they know that white men are being more friendly because they understand the old time Red Men better.”\(^{518}\) Fire Bear’s descriptions and illustrations affirm artwork as one of the most effective self-determining methods of archiving, and how they can then stand, in and of themselves, as archives for the Assiniboine people. While Fire Bear was killed in an automobile accident 40 miles south of Malta, Montana in 1951, this same commitment lives on in contemporary


\(^{516}\) For a thorough discussion of how Native arts were promoted in the United States in the 1920s to garner public support for the reforms of Indian policy as suggested by John Collier, and how the New Deal era effected change in Native American arts, which then, in turn, influenced U.S. Indian policy, see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 326-327.

\(^{517}\) Fire Bear (William Standing), in *Land of Nakoda* (2004), 220.

\(^{518}\) Ibid.
Assiniboine artists.\textsuperscript{519} Fire Bear is well known by some individuals within local Assiniboine communities. Mandy L. Smoker, who is presently Montana’s Director of Native American Education for the Office of Public Instruction, wrote a book of poetry entitled \textit{Another Attempt at Rescue}. Many of the poems in this book portray a deep respect for ancestors, Assiniboine ceremonies, cultural knowledge, and archiving history. One of Fire Bear’s finest “traditional life” paintings, titled “Medicine Lodge Dance” (1929), is on the cover of \textit{Another Attempt at Rescue}.\textsuperscript{520} This painting is currently kept in a non-Indigenous archive at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, and it is occasionally displayed in its permanent collection. This painting shows the most important Assiniboine ceremony, the Medicine Lodge, and the dancers it portrays are actual ancestors living at the time when he painted it, including his father, Standing Rattle. According to Mandy’s father, Gilbert Broadus, Mandy Smoker’s grandmother, named Cloud Woman, is also depicted in that painting, which is all the more significant because she was the only woman dancer who danced in that Medicine Lodge in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{521} As Fire Bear’s artwork demonstrates, contemporary Assiniboine artists are more than capable of maintaining important historical events and memories of individuals through the production of art for their own people, which, simultaneously, also informs the non-Indigenous general public about the Assiniboine.

Assiniboine artists, including three of my interviewees, Nathan Beaudry, Douglas Runsthrough, and Mike Lonechild, are still active as painters and sculptors. Like other artists, they each choose which work to sell for income and which artwork is produced solely for ceremonial purposes. Contemporary Indigenous artists blend ancient values and cultural practices with new forms and styles. Similar to the path that Fire Bear took in the early-twentieth century when he chose to become an artist in order to both perpetuate the Assiniboine ways of life and to make a living, several artists continue his legacy today. During my summer research trip in 2012 at Fort Peck, I stopped in Poplar,
Montana, the reservation’s capital, to assess artwork in the local museum that sits across Highway 2 from the Fort Peck Community College. To my dismay, the Poplar Museum was closed for long-term repairs; the iron bars around the windows looked very rusty and the overall structure appeared dilapidated. Not being able to enter the museum, I decided to visit the much better looking Fort Peck Community College Bookstore, an octagon-shaped building that stood adjacent to the Poplar Museum. Once inside, I surveyed the artwork on display throughout the small store. One painting showed a familiar face, Dale White, who was also one of my interviewees. Dale is a traditional younger cultural practitioner in his thirties, an educator, and the son of Judy Four Star, Robert Four Star’s wife. The artist’s name on the painting was by Errol Standing, a young Assiniboine artist. A few weeks later, I learned from Cleo Hamilton, another interviewee, that Errol Standing is also related to Fire Bear. This painting shows Dale standing on a prairie hill in a white ceremonial skirt adorned with red, blue, and yellow ribbons. He is bare-chested, and is blowing an eagle bone whistle with his right hand raised. He is shown with long black hair. The painting was for sale for one hundred dollars. A foreign tourist who is unfamiliar with Indigenous peoples of the North American Plains stopping by this bookstore would probably not understand the specific Assiniboine symbolism shown in this painting, for example, the specific colors and the eagle bone whistle. Nonetheless, the overall scene might still be recognized as a gesture of reverence for the natural world, as one might experience on the High Plains, and thus perhaps transcend specific cultural symbolism. Thus, this painting shows the perpetuation of Assiniboine sacred significance within a local Assiniboine context, as well as the potential to elicit meaning for non-Assiniboine public audiences, as well.

After my visit to the bookstore, I visited the Fort Peck Community College and coincidently ran into a local artist. As I walked around the corner of a building, I met Douglas Runsthrough. I gave him my interview consent forms and some tobacco while he painted blue, yellow, red, and white paint onto four wooden frames that were shaped as bison. This was on the northern exterior wall of the maroon-coloured Fort Peck Community College. He said he also worked on the construction site of the new archive building being built a block away. My discussions with him confirmed the idea that

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522 I discuss the significance of the construction of this new archive in the Introduction.
Runsthrough produces artwork as a keeper of Assiniboine knowledge for ceremonial purposes, but also does this other artwork for additional income within the public sphere. For him, no matter what he is working on, art is part of his daily life.

Two years before, I was able to examine and photograph a pamphlet about Runsthrough’s paintings in a different archival setting, at the Cultural Resource Center archives of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. In the Center’s library, I found several black-and-white prints on beige-coloured pamphlets describing Assiniboine artists and their work, including one about Runsthrough. The pamphlet promoted an exhibition of his work in 1978, and included photographic images of him, three of his paintings, and a brief biography.

This pamphlet showed a similar kind of transculturation that Fire Bear embodied forty years prior. The text of this pamphlet stated that Runsthrough, identified as Assiniboine and Sioux, and born in 1951, grew up in the small town of Frazer on the Fort Peck Reservation. He attended Eastern Montana College in Billings and majored in art. He served in the United States Army from 1971 through 1972, and while serving at Fort Lewis, Washington, he undertook art and draftsmanship. According to the pamphlet, Runsthrough’s art emphasizes nineteenth-century “Plains Indian” warrior societies, as represented in numerous works present in private and public galleries. For example, it states that he worked for the Fort Peck Tribal Education Department, illustrating locally produced bilingual books and teaching art and cultural concepts in local schools. The pamphlet states: “Runsthrough is part of a new generation of Indian artists, young and proud of their pride in and knowledge of their tribal history.” The same could be said of other contemporary artists, such as Errol Standing: pride and knowledge of their cultural history remains strong, and the embodiment of this feeling is presented in new artistic modes and styles. My observation of Runsthrough in action, as he painted the

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523 This was during my research trip with ATALM in June 2010. The pamphlet was titled “Paintings by Douglas Runsthrough: An Exhibition, April 2 to April 28, 1978” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of The Interior; Rapid City, SD: Indian Arts and Crafts Board Sioux Indian Museum and Crafts Center, 1978). “Douglas Runsthrough,” Art and Artist Files, National Museum of the American Indian Library, Cultural Resource Center (Suitland, Maryland).

wooden bison in the four Assiniboine colors onto the Fort Peck Community College walls, and my interviews with other Assiniboine artists brought the message contained in this pamphlet to life.

More effective than the text, the four watercolour paintings represented in this pamphlet convey important knowledge for contemporary Assiniboine people who are disciplined in Assiniboine cultural practices. These paintings include a cover image of six warriors on horseback facing forward, and on the inside, three more reproductions of other paintings: “Scalp Dancer,” “The Offering,” and “The Crossing.” From my education in Assiniboine cultural practices, I am personally familiar with what particular numbers, such as six, various colours, and different patterns in these paintings might mean for Assiniboine people. They emit bodies of cultural knowledge. “The Offering,” for example, shows a man kneeling on the edge of a butte, with a river and valley below, four mountains are staggered in the distance, and two eagles are flying in the sky. The man’s hair is unbound, with one eagle feather tethered. His arms are held up to the sky above while they hold a pipe; smoke rises from the bowl. His shield lies on the ground next to him. On the shield there is an image of a turtle below six black circular spots. For those relating to the symbolism in this work, they understand that Assiniboine cultural practitioners untie their hair during ceremonies to embody humility, and six of any item usually represents the six directions (Above, Below, South, West, North, and East). In the painting “The Crossing,” two men are on horseback, the first on a spotted horse crossing a river at a shallow point, and the other behind him coming down a hill wrapped in a blanket or a hide decorated with a Thunderbird; there are also hand images on the shoulder of the man’s covering. Snow-capped mountains lie in the distant background, and a lone tree stands on the far side of the barren river, indicating winter. This is an image of Cree Crossing on the Milk River, as discussed in Chapter 3. Cree Crossing is above present-day Malta, Montana, near the original Sleeping Buffalo site. For Assiniboine people these paintings keep bodies of knowledge and history alive.

My interviews with Assiniboine artists also revealed Assiniboine artwork as a form of autoethnographic text. On June 26, 2012, I interviewed the Assiniboine artist, Nathan Beaudry, whose Assiniboine name is Wamnee Daison (Eagle Tail). Beaudry, similar to Runsthrough, produces art for both ceremonial purposes and for the art market.
Born in September 1956 at the Poplar Indian Health Center Hospital, Beaudry grew up in one of the last historic log cabins in Wolf Point, recently taken down in 2011. To the community he is Assiniboine, though his heritage is Chippewa-Cree and Metis. Growing up in Wolf Point, Beaudry stated, “I thought we were rich … we had horses … chickens … well water.” He learned to draw from a young age: “we had no TV or electricity … grandma and grandpa gave me pencil and paper … by lamp … loved comic books … drew dogs and horses … .” He was educated in the local schools of Wolf Point, where he was taught to discount his Indigenous heritage. Much later in his life, in 1977, he attended college and studied art, First Nations studies, and treaty rights at what would become the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College at the University of Regina. At that time, he was what he called a “disgraced” veteran of the Vietnam War, and he was suffering from alcohol abuse. After viewing Beaudry’s art, both what he showed me in his home and what I saw at the Fort Peck Community College, I observed that his work portrays themes of pre-reservation stories, veterans returning from war, and romantic visions of love. When he returned to Fort Peck, after a decade of self-exile in Canada, he was asked by Dr. Kenneth Ryan (His Black Horse) to carve and paint the lodge pole, the Chawanka (Sacred Tree); His Black Horse was the Lodge Leader in 1989. With deep humility, Beaudry affirmed the sacred honour of carving the Chawanka: “When His Black Horse asked me to carve the center pole I sat back with my mouth open … I can’t do this … I am not worthy … he said ‘no … you’re home now … go carve those poles look at how we carve those … anybody ask you what gave you the right to carve this pole you tell them because God said so.’” Beaudry told me the story of how he had received a dream many years prior to this event, which told him how to proceed with this sacred honour. His dream had images of the Thunderbird and Rainbow. He also said the images he carved and painted on the Chawanka were only for that one work, and that he does not use those images in any of his other artworks. Beaudry makes several distinctions between the art he creates for the art market and the art which he does not sell. This confirmed that individual Assiniboine artists choose, on their own terms, the type, style, and symbolism of the art that they produce for ceremonial purposes versus art

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525 Nathan Beaudry Interview, June 26, 2012, at his home, Wolf Point, Montana.
produced for the art market. Beaudry has also done works for local community projects, such as a carved buffalo stone sculpture for a youth center, which he donated to the center. On the other hand, many of his paintings are for sale. In his personal opinion, he told me that Fire Bear should not have painted the inside events of a Medicine Lodge. This remark demonstrates that individual Assiniboine artists can have contradictory opinions regarding the public display of art depicting ceremonies. Nonetheless, Beaudry believes that Indigenous art,

… is not [stagnant] in our dynamic … I use acrylic paint and oil … electronic publishing technology [and that as an artist] … you have to have a sense of identity … it didn’t just sit there … it adapts and changes … it cuts through your value system … materialism selfishness … people saying that you don’t exist no more … you’re a beaten people … you’re a vanquished race, and how can that be when you’re still here when you’ve contributed so much.527

Beaudry declared that by being an artist, “I would like to leave some kind of legacy – let the picture (visual) speak a thousand words instead of just talking about it … communicate through line, color, form, and texture.”528 From his experiences growing up on the reservation, serving in the military, being an activist in Canada, living elsewhere in the United States, and then returning to Fort Peck, Beaudry proclaimed that he has learned to “take the best of two worlds and walk with one spirit … simple.”529 Perhaps this is a straightforward path, but it is also profound in an Assiniboine transcultural and cosmopolitan way.

In an unexpected moment of serendipity, I was able to interview yet another Assiniboine artist who exemplifies transcultural auto-ethnographic art. On June 28, 2012, during my second trip that summer with Robert Four Star to White Bear reserve, Saskatchewan, we stayed with his adopted brother, Francis Lonechild, a Cree, and his wife Yvonne, an Assiniboine.530 Five days before, on my previous trip to White Bear, I noticed some fine artworks by a renowned Cree/Assiniboine artist named Mike Lonechild, who is related to Francis and Yvonne. Mike Lonechild’s paintings were displayed in the White Bear Casino, a few miles down the road from Francis and

527 Nathan Beaudry Interview, June 26, 2012, at his home, Wolf Point, Montana.
528 Ibid.
529 Ibid.
530 Francis and Yvonne sponsored the 2012 Medicine Lodge and have a long history of connection to Assiniboines and ceremonies at Fort Peck and Fort Belknap, as well as other Assiniboine reserves.
Yvonne’s home. Francis and Yvonne also had some of his art on the walls in their living room. I asked them if they knew of Mike Lonechild’s whereabouts. Yvonne said yes, and called him right away. He came over to the house and later agreed to be interviewed. In my interview with him, he said some important things about how his art represents daily life in different historical time periods, such as hunting elk in the early reservation era, or actions and items of the contemporary world. Sometimes he also portrays older pre-reservation values, such as the remaining poles that form the circular skeleton of a Medicine Lodge on a specific hill. As Michael Ames argues in *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (1992), Indigenous-created artworks fulfill multiple purposes simultaneously. They are not only there for ceremonial functions, historical stories, or political aims, but also meant to express aesthetic beauty or modern expression in traditional Western mediums and styles that may transcend the limitations of time and place.

Besides the Assiniboine artists that produce art for income, artwork also shows up in Assiniboine peoples’ daily life as a cultural practice. On July 5, 2012, when I visited Gil Horn, a decorated veteran of World War II, who is in his 90s and who lives on the Fort Belknap reservation, for an interview, I observed his daughter making a star-quilt. Gil’s daughter, Sis Horn, welcomed us into the house. I presented a braid of sweetgrass, some tobacco, and a fleece blanket that was still in its package with artwork depicting warriors on painted horses. I chose this blanket from a local store in Wolf Point because horses represent warrior culture to many tribes of the Northern Plains. As Robert had instructed me over the years, it was customary to present a gift when visiting an elder and making a request of him or her. As we entered the house, I noticed Sis was working on her star-quilt, which was stretched out on a framing table in the middle of their small living room. Small diamond-shaped pieces of cloth, coloured white, purple, green, and gold, were carefully being sewn together from underneath and above into a precise and beautiful pattern of stars.

Star-quilts may be seen as archival representations of Assiniboine histories. They circulate both locally, in peoples’ homes, and outside of Assiniboine communities, in

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532 Gil Horn Interview, July 5th, 2012, in his home at Fort Belknap, Montana. See Gil Horn in Interview Bios in Appendices A in this dissertation.
national museums. Traditionally, star-quilts are made by women, often matriarchs, and are designed with distinct stories and meanings. As I have personally observed, the creation of these quilts often involves sharing stories within families and visiting guests. Star-quilts are amongst the most prized giveaway items in ceremonies, such as weddings, graduations, funerals, memorials, and so on. It takes a long time to sew together the numerous small coloured diamond-shaped pieces. Amongst the people I know on Assiniboine reservations, there are only a few people still making star-quilts.

I lived with an elder who made star-quilts, the Swedish mother of Larry Smith (Assiniboine-Frog Creek Band), who passed away in 2003. She learned the craft from Assiniboine matriarchs. I remember her working on the quilts in her small sewing room, or while out in the living room, telling stories about working on the farm, feeding ranch-hands, and gatherings of Assiniboines in Canada. Almira Buffalo Bone Jackson, who passed away in 2004 at age 87, was perhaps the most famous star-quilt maker living at Fort Peck, with many of her quilts donated to the National Museum of the American Indian by collectors in 2007. My personal favourite, created sometime between 1968 and 1988, titled “The Story of the Assiniboine: Red Bottom Tipi Quilt,” which used red, various shades of blue and grey, black, and white diamond-shaped cotton-cloth pieces, depicts eight tipis arranged in a circle in a “Star of Bethlehem” pattern, with four tipis, one in each corner, making 12 tipis in total, all within a four-pointed star. From each tipi doorway, a red path and arrow patterns point to the center. Some of her other quilts show a particular sense of time and place, such as “Blue Sky Star,” “Night Time Sky,” “Hunting Time With Flying Arrows,” “Spring Time With Cherry Blossoms,” all created between 1968 and 1988. I can only imagine the stories that Almira told to family, friends, and visitors as she made her quilts.

Star-quilts exemplify another form of transcultural autoethnographic art. In some of my interviews, individuals stated that star-quilts are not “traditional” in their view, since sewing quilts was something learned from non-Indigenous people. Others, however, stated that star-quilts are Assiniboine and neither traditional nor modern: they

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533 Choke cherries and other berries were a very important food source and still gathered and used in the present for certain ceremonies. Some months in the Assiniboine calendar are named for the time that berries are ripe.
serve important purposes as aesthetic expression, storytelling, and as giveaway items.\footnote{I also have many photos of star quilts now housed in the NMAI and Smithsonian.}

During the fur trade, up to the late-nineteenth century, it is fairly well known that the Hudson Bay Company’s wool blankets with red, green, blue, or yellow stripes, were quite popular amongst tribes of the Northern Plains. Before the fur trade, hides, such as moose, elk, buffalo, deer, antelope, bear, wolf, and fox, were prized as giveaway items and gifts of exchange, according to the oral tradition, and as I was personally told in multiple settings. These items were usually adorned with some porcupine quills, shells, or elk teeth, and the patterns were painted by hand. A few Assiniboine artists still produce artwork on tanned hides, such as David Chase.\footnote{David Chase is a very good friend of mine, who gave me a hide that depicts my Assiniboine name. He also paints hides for sale, and some of them are on display in the Fort Peck Community College Bookstore.} Even so, throughout the nineteenth century, as the bison herds and other animals were decimated by the fur trade, settlers introduced new textiles, blankets, and quilts, which have largely replaced hides as ceremonial gifts.\footnote{For a critical discussion of ideas about “modern” and “traditional” categories of art, please see Ruth B. Phillips, "Making Sense Out/Of the Visual: Aboriginal Presentations and Representations in Nineteenth-Century Canada." \textit{Art History} 27, no. 4 (September 2004): 593-615; \textit{Academic Search Complete EBSCOhost} (accessed January 25, 2014). Phillips asserts that, “Leaders of indigenous communities also stress, however, the urgency of a reconstructive project that entails the recovery of traditional practices of image- and object-making that have been lost and/or interrupted by centuries of colonial domination” (p. 593).}

Contemporary Assiniboine artists, as evidenced in my interviews with Nathan Beaudry and Mike Lonechild, as well as through my observations and participation in community activities, have produced autoethnographic artwork that serves to sustain bodies of cultural knowledge for their communities. The act of envisioning and producing artwork through Assiniboine symbolism is a way of keeping knowledge alive in a process between maker—the artist—and the receivers—their communities. Additionally, their artwork functions as a more permanent product of historical knowledge, more so than oral histories or ceremonies, and in some cases, it can transcend cultural barriers to inform external audiences about Assiniboine worldviews.

Assiniboine-produced artworks, similar to autoethnographic texts, emerge from a transcultural historical relationship that began in the early-nineteenth century and has continued to the present day. As non-Indigenous artists painted Assiniboine and other Indigenous peoples, thereby exchanging knowledge with the people whom they depicted,
both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists learned new techniques and knowledge from one another. In addition, as the collections that housed the artwork of and about Assiniboine people became more accessible in the late-twentieth century, Assiniboine artists have reclaimed authority over these artefacts and artworks. While the collection of Indigenous objects often removed important cultural objects from Indigenous communities, this action also sometimes preserved cultural knowledge of the people, and Indigenous peoples today have access to these objects for their own research and other purposes. Even further, in some cases, artefacts have been returned to their communities of origin.

Throughout the twentieth century, Assiniboine artwork transgressed the false binary of “traditional” and “modern” art, oftentimes because it stood outside of both categories. Assiniboine artists adapted ancient themes or symbols that, according to their oral tradition, predated contact with Europeans. These artists painted, carved, or sewed these themes and symbols into contemporary forms, often associated with Western artistic styles. Assiniboine artists kept their cultural knowledge alive for future generations: for both Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine audiences. Origin stories painted on canvas or sewed into beadwork were transmitted visually through the imaginations of the artists, and their visual receptions worked similarly to as reading a text or hearing a story.

Like other twentieth-century Indigenous artists, Assiniboine artists produced art for multiple audiences, both internal as well as external, often expressing a mix of sacred, secular, and aesthetic values. Artwork by Assiniboines, such as that produced by Fire Bear, often asserts an autoethnographic, or “self-determined,” cultural representation. Also, in some instances, concepts were appropriated, or countered, using stereotypical images generated by non-Indigenous artists, who sometimes illustrated Indigenous peoples as an almost-extinct people, whether noble, savage, drunk, or overly sexualized. In contrast to these images about them, Indigenous artists have created, and continue to create, surviving Indigenous cultural knowledge on their own terms.

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537 See Michael Ames, “The Definition of Native Art,” 75. Ames uses Holm’s analysis of Willie Seaweed to assert that, “Seaweed’s work … is both deeply embedded in a complex cultural ecological system and transcends it … singularly as artifact-in-context or as art-standing-by-itself, and binocularly as a creative work possessing both local history and comparative significance” (p. 75).
There is a nascent relationship between settler archives and Indigenous archiving methodologies; in particular, this is true when it comes to collecting and displaying Indigenous artwork and artefacts. More recently, this relationship is more reciprocal than it has been, such as with pre-1960s museums, or the act of earlier archiving by non-Indigenous anthropologists, curators, and archivists. As James Clifford states in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997), “… the familiar argument in major art and anthropology museums over the relative value of aesthetic versus scientific, formalist versus culturalist, presentations seems to be giving way to tactically mixed approaches.”\(^{538}\) Clifford is correct in his assertion that, “… when non-Western artists, culture makers, and curators enter Western museums on their own (negotiated) terms, the collection sites of art and anthropology can no longer be understood primarily in terms of Promethean discovery and discerning selection.”\(^{539}\) More recently, this relationship has turned to first value Indigenous authors’ perspectives about their own cultural objects, artwork, and artefacts, and whether or not they should be exhibited, and if so, when and in what contexts.

At the same time, Indigenous methods of keeping cultural knowledge alive by creating artwork, which has been sustained from an older practitioner to an apprentice, continues within local communities through ceremonies, through giveaways, and through local art markets. Assiniboine artists, such as Errol Standing, Nathan Beaudry, Mike Lonechild, and others continue to paint, sculpt, do beadwork, and otherwise create ceremonial objects for local reception and for the public art markets.

Since the late 1990s, as the very founding of the NMAI shows, Indigenous peoples, including the Assiniboine, have regained more control over their artefacts and art exhibitions. The viewing or perception of artwork by different communities, both internal and external, exemplifies a type of cosmopolitanism as expressed by Assiniboine artists themselves. The Assiniboine artists that I have discussed above illustrate this approach by looking at Indigenous art as an expression of collective cultural identity, or peoplehood, and as a way of sustaining their history as a living archive. Each carries on an archival legacy that originated much earlier, by their predecessors. Yet, they also

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539 James Clifford, *Routes*, 201.
assert their own images, of themselves and their communities, sometimes in stark contrast to images produced by settler society.
Chapter 7: Conclusion, O’ihage (The Ending of This Story)

Sitting with Robert Four Star in his truck outside the Medicine Lodge in 2012 one rainy evening, he turned to me while pointing at the Lodge and told me something that has stuck in my mind to the present day. He said that there were only a few younger Assiniboine cultural practitioners who have sincerely dedicated their lives to keeping Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge alive for future generations, and without the transmission between elder and apprentice, much of this knowledge would be lost. I believe that he told me this to encourage me to carry on with the work of this dissertation. In *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (2002), Peter Nabokov cites a Lakota attorney, Mario Gonzales, who discussed the Bigfoot Memorial Ride in the 1990s, which was an event initiated to heal the wounds of the 1890 Wounded Knee Creek massacre a century earlier. Gonzales stated, “…the ride became ‘a story in itself, a reminder that indigenous people all over the world, in protecting themselves and their histories, are protecting something that is precious to all human kind, the right to possess memory and imagination.’” Assiniboine people have protected their histories and bodies of cultural knowledge from the reservation era in the late-nineteenth century up to the very present by engaging in different methods of keeping that knowledge alive. These methods have been discussed in detail in this dissertation.

During the summer of 2012, while conducting interviews for my research, the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes completed the construction of their archives on the Fort Peck Community College campus in Poplar, Montana. Robert Four Star conducted a ceremonial blessing at the inauguration of the archives building. Tribal management of conventional archives is vital to Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty, and almost all of my interviewees stated their interest in having their own tribally managed archives, including those from Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation, Fort Belknap Reservation, Carry the Kettle, White Bear, and Pheasant Rump. Nonetheless, conventional archives alone are not enough to sustain the vast array of cultural knowledge for future generations. In addition, within Assiniboine communities, questions

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remain as to who has the authority to archive cultural knowledge, what knowledge should or should not be archived, and who is qualified to manage those archives. These kinds of questions will be contested and open-ended for Assiniboine communities and the other Indigenous communities they share reserves with.

During the process of conducting my research in conventional archives, reviewing literature about archival theory, and discussing cultural preservation with many Assiniboine individuals, I became cognizant of alternative methods of keeping that knowledge alive for Assiniboine people. Having started with oral tradition as found in Azana’s story, the other ways of keeping knowledge alive that I have discussed emerged. Various methods have helped them sustain some of their most vital cultural knowledge despite the travesties of American and Canadian colonization, buffalo destruction, military occupation, forced reservation residency programs, and the erection of missions to Christianize the Assiniboine in the late-nineteenth century, not to mention the assimilation programs, boarding schools, and forced land dispossession throughout the twentieth century.

In contrast to conventional archives, the practices that Assiniboine people have used to keep knowledge alive are experienced within their own symbolic systems, in the form of storytelling, performing ceremonies, in relation to sacred sites, through texts, and artwork. At the same time, these ways of keeping knowledge alive require community participation in order to be maintained and passed on from one generation to the next. That is why I attempted to describe Assiniboine stories through partial windows into Assiniboine symbolism, in order to give some degree of expression to their own diverse subjectivities. Drawing from Antoinette Burton’s ideas about “archival power,” this dissertation has examined how Assiniboine cultural practitioners, writers, and artists are archivists that have used different ways of keeping knowledge alive for their communities that shape their own histories and defy containment by conventional archives.541 These ways of keeping knowledge alive that differ from conventional archival methods help Assiniboine knowledge keepers alleviate what Ann Stoler has called “epistemic anxiety” or more simply put a concern over the power to control

knowledge. The key difference from Stoler’s “epistemic anxiety” and the Assiniboine concerns over their bodies of cultural knowledge is similar to the vast cultural and political differences between methods of colonial control over Indigenous peoples and the power of Indigenous peoples to shape their own lives and the future of their communities. All of my interviewees expressed this concern to protect, maintain, and perpetuate Assiniboine cultural knowledge through inter-generational storytelling, ceremonial participation, visiting sacred sites, literature, and artwork between youth and elders.

In this dissertation, I have argued that a suite of Indigenous ways of keeping knowledge alive are better understood as archival processes within Assiniboine systems of thought. I have also realized that these Indigenous ways of keeping knowledge alive work in synchronicity with one another and are quite different from Western archival methods. These processes helped Assiniboine to sustain their particular cultural knowledge, counter the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ extraction of cultural objects by outsiders and, in more recent decades, establish reciprocal relationships with national, state, and local archives regarding the appropriate ways to preserve Assiniboine bodies of cultural knowledge. This constellation of archival processes includes the oral tradition that builds on the memories of stories, ceremonial practices that turn the meanings of the stories into embodied experience, territorial knowledge that grounds those experiences to specific places, written histories that document and record the stories, and artwork that engages the visual aspects of human consciousness and imagination. Each of these methods of keeping knowledge alive by itself would be incomplete in maintaining Assiniboine cultural practices for future generations.

Because of the differences between conventional Western and Indigenous concepts about what an “archive” is and what it means “to archive” I have used Dipesh Chakrabarty’s idea of History 1 and History 2 to posit Archiving 1 as the Western sense of storage processing, and Archiving 2 as the Indigenous methods discussed in each

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chapter of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{543} Though Archiving 1 and Archiving 2 are different from one another in terms of the power to control knowledge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and institutions, I discovered that Assiniboine ways of preserving their bodies of knowledge do not always have to be incommensurable with Western methods. A third space may exist between Western and Indigenous ways of archiving where reciprocity could help to alleviate some of the deleterious effects of colonization and national assimilation, such as the expropriation of cultural objects and human remains into Western museums and archives.

As the story of Azana, who traveled in 1832 from Fort Union to Washington D.C. and then returned to his community to report what he had witnessed, demonstrates, stories that have been kept alive through multiple methods appear to be the most enduring. Azana’s story was told in the oral tradition, in the ceremonial practice of giving Assiniboine names, in specific Assiniboine places, written down, and depicted in artwork. If Azana’s story had been kept in only one of these methods, it might have been lost to the dust of time. The Medicine Lodge is another way to keep knowledge alive for Assiniboine people. It combines the oral tradition, embodied rituals, and sacred places, which the Assiniboine have written about and depicted in artwork in a number of instances. Its survival has also withstood government suppression and missionary influence. Starting in 1942, the book \textit{Land of Nakoda} demonstrates that Assiniboine authors such as James Long actively wrote Assiniboine oral histories in English about such sacred things as the Medicine Lodge and sacred sites such as the Sleeping Buffalo. In addition, in the same book, Assiniboine artist William Standing created artwork for \textit{Land of Nakoda} that depicted the Medicine Lodge and the Sleeping Buffalo. Contemporary Assiniboine artists, such as Douglas Runsthrough, Nathan Beaudry, and Mike Lonechild continue to keep knowledge alive for future Assiniboine generations through their artwork.

Stories that Assiniboine knowledge-keepers have kept alive through multiple methods, such as through the oral tradition, performed ceremonies, at sacred sites, in written texts, and through artwork, emphasize their historical agency. These bodies of

cultural knowledge often stand in contrast to settler archives regarding the Assiniboine, which tend to emphasize what American and Canadian nationalist programs historically “did to them.” In fact, archives have been sites of control over Indigenous peoples and their knowledge since colonization began; for Assiniboine people, this was mainly in the early to late-nineteenth century. This is why I explored each way of keeping knowledge alive individually in sequential chapters: to show how each of these ways sheds new light and shadow in relation to conventional Western notions of what it means to “archive” knowledge, as well as how an “archive” functions for a people, in this case for Assiniboine people.

Though I focused on oral tradition, ceremony, sacred sites, written texts, and artwork as Assiniboine ways of keeping knowledge alive, there were other ways that were left out of this dissertation. These include a focused analysis on language, kinship, cooking, plant gathering, and material culture. If I had been a woman, or only interviewed women, my focus on particular ways or roles of people may have been different. Assiniboine societies have specific roles for men and women. If I had been a woman, the gendered Assiniboine role of women in creating star quilts or dance regalia or in cooking for ceremonies may have been more accessible and thus discussed.

Each of the ways of keeping knowledge alive that I explored in this dissertation has its own distinct strengths and limitations. As an ongoing process, the oral tradition brings stories to life when they are told within Indigenous community contexts with living audiences during specific times, such as the summer solstice. It is the living audience that makes the oral tradition a powerful method of sustaining cultural knowledge for a people from one generation to the next, because it requires people to gather together and share stories at particular times. On the other hand, the weakness of the oral tradition is that, in order to be maintained, stories require people in that living audience to remember them and continue the practice of storytelling in their community contexts, because if those stories are not recorded elsewhere, they could be forgotten. In a similar way, performed rituals as embodied practices instil cultural knowledge through the movement of living people who have gathered together for ceremonies. As powerful as these ceremonies are in keeping knowledge alive, some of the knowledge about
ceremonies should not be written down or depicted in artwork or cannot be expressed intellectually in words or visual imagery.

My dissertation has drawn from individual scholarly studies regarding Indigenous cultural contexts of the oral tradition, ceremonial practices, territoriality, literature, and artwork. My dissertation contributes to the discipline of history, especially archival theory, by thinking of each of these five ways of keeping knowledge alive as different from each other and from conventional archives, as well as the relationships between them and to conventional archives. I organized the chapters of this dissertation in such a way as to allow the reader the ability to conceptualize the relationships between these five ways of keeping knowledge alive, similar to a constellation. The stars of a constellation are observable phenomena that can be explained by astrophysics, where as constellations are imagined ideas shared by a community through stories that carry particular meaning for a people. Stories shared within Assiniboine communities connect these various Indigenous methods together, such as about Azana, and in turn these stories help to shape the kinds of cultural practices that Assiniboine communities keep alive. It is my conclusion that these ways of keeping knowledge alive are stronger when they are conceptualized as an interconnected framework of ways that work together. Scholars of Indigenous histories may see this framework in other Indigenous peoples’ efforts to sustain their own bodies of cultural knowledge. My aim in contributing to a nascent Indigenous theory of archiving has been to conceptualize these techniques of sustaining bodies of cultural knowledge for future generations as a constellation of processes that contrast with the Western concept of an archive as a material collection of inanimate things, material objects, and documents. Archival records cannot tell stories on their own terms. In some ways, this contrast is similar to the difference between living beings and inanimate objects. Furthermore, an understanding of particular Indigenous systems of thought, an openness to listening to Indigenous peoples on their own terms, and learning about their own ways of keeping knowledge alive is required by non-Indigenous scholars and audiences in order to avoid further misinformation, appropriation, and cultural dissonance.

In this dissertation, I used the term “archive” as a noun for the traditional, Western, storage-locker model—rows of boxes of filed documents organized by
categories in a secured room. Throughout, I examined “official archives” as storage lockers that come with a power to control knowledge, and I sought to understand what official archives have done both to and for the Assiniboine as one example of this type of cultural housing for an Indigenous community. As Michel Trouillot asserted, archives as institutions are sites of “archival power” over what counts as important knowledge to a particular cultural group or nation state. This knowledge is preserved with the assumption that it may provide historical clues and evidence about events that future historians and others may use to claim that something occurred in a certain way. These kinds of archives have largely functioned and have been used by nation-states to control, manage, and organize the citizens and non-citizens of that nation. In particular, as Ann Stoler demonstrated in the historical context of Dutch colonies in Indonesia, these kinds of archives, no matter whether they were collected and maintained by colonial, imperial, or national governments, contain much knowledge about Indigenous colonized peoples. Nevertheless, the information about Indigenous groups, such as the Assiniboine, is only useful to Indigenous peoples when they are able to access that information and make use of it for their own purposes. Native peoples having access to nation-state archives, or constructing their own archives, may be of service in land claims, sovereignty disputes, or as discussed here, in the maintenance of bodies of cultural knowledge. There seems to be a vast difference between how an Indigenous person views, interprets, or makes use of information from a national or state archive about their own people and a person who is a complete outsider to that Indigenous community looking at these same documents and artefacts. At the same time, though, as this dissertation highlights, there are those rare instances when Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples have worked together toward common goals of learning from each other how to care for Indigenous cultural knowledge in order to protect that knowledge for future generations, such as the transcultural exchanges between artists.

Assiniboine people have sustained many bodies of cultural knowledge through the five methods I have identified in this dissertation. Nevertheless, much cultural knowledge

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has also been lost. The process of researching and writing this dissertation about a community that, to some degree I am very much a part of, has shown me several limitations of doing research with Indigenous peoples. First, it is impossible to represent the views of all Assiniboine people regarding these methods of keeping knowledge alive. Second, it is my current belief that I have barely scratched the surface of Assiniboine bodies of knowledge or the different ways that various Assiniboine people have sustained that knowledge. Third, and most importantly, the research for this dissertation confirms that it is vital for younger Assiniboine to apprentice with older Assiniboine cultural practitioners. By repeatedly spending time together, they will be more likely to learn the oral stories, language, ceremonies, and sacred places, and thus to write down and produce artwork about this acquired knowledge, thus passing these bodies of knowledge and Indigenous practices on to future Assiniboine generations.

My work was partly inspired by a talk given by Paul Tapsell, a Maori scholar, in the fall of 2008 in Vancouver, when he attested to the profound work of Michael Ames. Ames was one of the first scholars who emphasized how important cultural objects and remains housed in museums and archives are to the Indigenous communities from which these objects and remains were taken. Over the course of his career, Ames argued for Indigenous peoples to regain the authority and power to control how their cultural objects were interpreted and represented in museums. He developed his theories and methodology after decades of work as the director of the Museum of Anthropology from 1974 to 1997, and again from 2002 to 2004, and as a professor of anthropology at the University of British Columbia from 1964 to his passing in 2006. In his book Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums (1992), Ames states:

Increasingly concerned about preserving and recovering their dwindling natural resources, indigenous people are also recognizing the importance of their traditional lands and cultural traditions as resources for their future as a people [italics by author]. While calling for the return of their lands, they are reclaiming their own histories from anthropologists and others so that they may exert more control over how their cultures are presented to themselves and to others.546

Ames goes further to discuss the trend in the late 1990s of hearing the “Native point of view” on cultural knowledge, objects, and practices as they pertain to the relations

between Indigenous peoples and Canadian museums. The Assiniboine people discussed in this dissertation, such as Robert Four Star, Wilma Kennedy, the McArthur family, the Lonechild family, all exemplify Ames’s advocacy for Indigenous people’s authority over their cultural knowledge held in Western archives and museums.

The history of colonization of Indigenous peoples in various parts of the world and the collecting of their objects, such as with the Euro-American colonization and assimilation of Assiniboine peoples, and the ethnography of their cultural practices is fairly well known. Subsequently, one would assume that Western archives and Indigenous ways of archiving are always inimical and adversarial to each other. In many cases, legal and political battles continue between national museums and archives over the materials taken from Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples across the globe have systems of keeping their bodies of knowledge protected for future generations. These different systems have been negatively affected by Western colonization, especially by assimilation programs, and by the collection of cultural objects. In *Performances* (1996), Greg Dening examined an annual contemporary ritual performance in Tahiti that retells the history of the British possession of Tahiti from conflicting perspectives, both Tahitian and newcomer. Here, Dening discussed different Tahitian and British ways of archiving Indigenous and newcomer encounters:

Native and Stranger each possessed the other in their interpretations of the other. They possessed one another in an ethnographic moment that was transcribed into text and symbol. They each archived that text and symbol in their respective cultural institutions. They each made cargo of the things they collected from one another, put their cargo in their respective museums, remade the things they collected into new cultural artefacts.\(^{547}\)

In a similar way, Assiniboine people preserve their own interpretations of their history as a people through oral tradition, ceremony, territoriality, texts, and artwork, each one different from Western conventional archives. Assiniboine people and non-Indigenous peoples may potentially gain much if they work together to protect this Assiniboine body of cultural knowledge. Non-Indigenous scholars, archivists, linguists, historians, anthropologists, and curators who are open, willing, and ethically mindful of respecting

Indigenous peoples on their own terms may be able to help the Assiniboine, and other Native groups, reclaim their cultural objects, recorded histories, and human remains.

There are a few examples of more reciprocal archival and museum models where Indigenous peoples play a significant role in authorizing what and how cultural knowledge is represented, managed, and interpreted. For scholars and cultural practitioners, Western conventional ways of archiving do not necessarily have to be set against Indigenous ways of keeping their cultural knowledge alive through their own practices. Reciprocal projects may include specialists in linguists, anthropologists, ethnographers, curators, archivists, ethno-botanists, and other scientists (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and Indigenous cultural practitioners (elders, youth, and those in between), all working together. In this way, Indigenous communities and national archives and museums might better serve their mutual interests by supporting Indigenously driven oral traditions, ceremonial practices, sacred sites and territoriality, literacy, written history projects, and the production of artwork, thus protecting important bodies of knowledge housed in archives and museums that they care for and support.

A number of reciprocal projects between national museums and archives and Indigenous ways of archiving knowledge (including tribally managed museums, libraries, and archives) have emerged relatively recently. These collaborations show a new way forward that respects the cultural autonomy and sovereignty of Indigenous nations and communities. In 2009, the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM), was formed to assist Indigenous peoples and communities to create projects that support tribally directed archival, library, and museum programs. This non-profit


549 It was my honour and privilege to present “Indigenous Histories: an Assiniboine Transnational Perspective” at the Western Museums Association’s 76th Annual Meeting, titled Pupukahi i Holomua (Working Together to Move Forward), which was produced in collaboration with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM), and co-hosted by the Hawai‘i Museums Association and the Pacific Islands Museums Association in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, September 23-26, 2011. This conference instilled a strong sense of hope that some people working in Western institutions and Indigenous
organization, which originated under the direction of Susan Feller and the Oklahoma State Libraries, and of which I am a founding member, represents Indigenous peoples from different parts of the world, from Polynesia to North America, who together are actively trying to build their own physical archives, museums, and libraries. In this endeavour, Indigenous peoples have been working with national museums and archives to better care for their own cultural objects. Sometimes, this may mean exhibiting objects in a more appropriate manner according to the wishes of the communities from which those objects came. This includes institutions such as the Smithsonian (NMAI) in Washington D.C. and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. At other times, Indigenous communities may wish to have objects concealed from public view, such as photographs of Assiniboine Medicine Lodges. Also, especially for ceremonial objects, many Indigenous groups are advocating for the return of symbolically important objects to their communities of origin.

This dissertation has discussed how Assiniboine peoples have used the five methods—oral tradition, ceremony, places, texts, and artwork—to keep important bodies of cultural knowledge alive from the late-nineteenth century to the present. As I have demonstrated, these methods are stronger when conceptualized and utilized together rather than thought of as separate categories. In addition, though historically these Indigenous methods have contested and contrasted with conventional Western archiving and archives, there are a few rare examples of the potentiality of working reciprocally.

Now that I live in the San Francisco Bay Area and teach part-time at Dominican University, I see potential research opportunities with local Indigenous cultural practitioners, such as with the Pomo, Miwok, and Ohlone, and non-local Indigenous peoples, such as Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), who are engaging with Western archives while creating artwork, conducting ceremonies, producing literature and videos, and telling stories about their own people. In the course of these endeavours it will be most important to listen to Indigenous cultural practitioners, who are the keepers of knowledge for specific Indigenous peoples, on their own terms within their systems of communities wish to work together and learn from one another to find best practices of preserving important bodies of cultural knowledge.

thought. As I move forward, after learning so much from Assiniboine knowledge-keepers who have fundamentally helped me to shape this dissertation, my intention is to continue to investigate these complex processes of keeping knowledge alive. I look forward to opportunities to share this knowledge with other scholars, students, and most importantly, as far as I am concerned, with Indigenous cultural practitioners.
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Appendix A: Interviewee Bios


Born in Poplar, Montana, in 1956, Nathan grew up in Wolf Point in one of the last historic log cabins on the Fort Peck reservation. Nathan’s mother was Chippewa-Cree and Soto-Ojibway; his father was one of the 1st lab technicians that worked in the Indian Health Service hospital in Poplar. According to Nathan, he is related to the Louis Reil. His grandmother new Assiniboine language as well. Nathan was in and out of the U.S. Army, and faced problems with addictions and alcohol, for many years after his service with the military, until he participated as an artist in the Medicine Lodge in the 1980s with invitation from Kenny Ryan. Nathan also lived in Canada, attended Saskatchewan Federated Indian College, frequently crossed the border to visit Native communities and family. Nathan has lived many places as an adult, including Vancouver, BC, Las Vegas, NV, and Billings, MT. Nathan began drawing from an early age, mostly from comic books, and by candlelight since they had no electricity. He is a respected artist on and beyond the Fort Peck Reservation, and an important member of the Medicine Lodge society. Nathan was particularly inspiring for Chapter 6: Assiniboine Artwork.


I was invited to stay with Teddy Bell at his home on the Fort Belknap reservation during the annual Medicine Lodge at Lodge Pole, Montana. Robert Four Star, his adoptive brother (Assiniboine way), introduced me to Teddy. Teddy is a carpenter by trade and the home he built sits in beautiful canyon in what is called the Iron Cradle, a pristine environment of pine forests, and limestone, shale, and sandstone cliffs, that form a kind of cradle at the north side of the Little Rockies. In Assiniboine, the Little Rockies are called Iyagheh Widana (Rock Island). Teddy stated that there are a lot of elk, mountain lions, bear, and deer that live around his home. Like many residents of reservations in Montana, people hunt many of these animals for subsistence, and not for trophies. Even so, Teddy does not allow any hunting, as he sees himself as a caretaker of the land. His name,
Inkmu Yahaza means Mountain Lion Protects Him. Teddy’s interview was most inspirational for “Chapter 4: Wamakashka Istima (Sleeping Buffalo).”

Edward and Bella Broadus: Interview, July 10, 2012, in their home, Wolf Point, Montana.

Ed was born in Porterville, California in 1945. His wife, Bella, was born in Manila, Philippines, in 1953. Ed and Bella have been married for over twenty-five years. Ed first arrived at Fort Peck, working for a VISTA program, in 1969. He met his first wife, an Assiniboine woman named Evan Smoker, and married in 1973. They moved to Frazer, and had their daughter, Mandy Smoker in 1975. Mandy is a good friend of mine and the author of a book of poetry titled Another Attempt at Rescue (2005), and is currently the Director of Native American Education for the Department of Education for the State of Montana. I met Ed in 1996 through Robert Four Star. Ed has been a long time supporter of the Medicine Lodges, the Assiniboine and Sioux at Fort Peck and several other Indigenous groups through out Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Ed and Bella have always supported my work, such as the Bison Camp, and are true friends. Ed’s Assiniboine name is Oyade Snokwaya (Knows His People). I helped him on his first solo fast (Vision Quest or Sitting on the Hill), with Robert Four Star as my adviser. Ed is what I would call an excellent Assiniboine keeper of knowledge or archivist in his own right.

Jeff Cummins: Interview #2 (video), June 12, 2012, in his home, Billings, Montana.

Jeff Cummins is one of my primary interviewees. I have known Jeff since 1993 after I joined the Student Alliance of North American Indians (SANAI). At the time of 1996 he had just completed his Masters in Social Work from San Jose State University, so the trip I joined him on in 1996 was sort of a celebration and homecoming for Jeff – returning to immerse in his Assiniboine culture. He graduated UC Santa Cruz with a B.A. in Psychology in 1993. He currently lives and holds a counselling practice in Billings, Montana, with his wife Susan. When Jeff Cummins had returned to his reservation in 1992 as an undergraduate student
in Psychology at UCSC he examined how the retention or loss of mother language (Assiniboine) affected self-identity. Jeff exemplifies how higher education may be used as a way to sustain Indigenous cultural knowledge, such as language or incorporating Assiniboine values in therapy modalities.

Robert Four Star: Interview #1 (video), June 12, 2009, in his home near Wolf Point, Interview #2 (video), May 30, 2010, in his office at FPCC, Wolf Point, MT. Interview #3, July 9, 2012, in the home of Larry Smith, Wolf Point, MT.

Robert Four Star, born in 1940, grew up in Frazer, on the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Reservation, and also spent many years with relatives at Fort Belknap as well as the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. He is a descendent of the Little Rockie Band and the Red Bottom Band of Assiniboine people. He graduated with a B.A. from Montana State University, Helena, Montana, and served in the U.S. Navy for several years. He has worked for many years as a Cultural Liaison for Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and an Instructor of Assiniboine Language, Native American Studies, and Religious Studies at Fort Peck Community College. Most importantly, Robert is one of the last Hunga “Traditional Chiefs,” of the Hudeshana (Red Bottom Band) of Nakonabi (Assiniboine people), and a song keeper. One of his Assiniboine names is Wamakashka Doba Inazhi (Buffalo Stops Four Times). He is often asked to sing or conduct ceremonies throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. Robert is also the step-father of Dale White, his wife’s, Judy Four Star’s first son. I first met Robert in 1996, when his late brother, Rudolph Oliver Archdale, introduced me to him. After living in Wolf Point, participating in cultural practices, and teaching at Poplar Schools in Poplar, on the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation, Robert adopted me as one of his sons.

Cleo Hamilton: Interview, June 2, 2012, in her home, Poplar, Montana.
Cleo Hamilton, born in 1944, grew up in Wolf Point, attended BYU, and spent the majority of her adult life working for tribal governments and the Bureau of Indian
Affairs in Navajo Nation and at Fort Belknap, before moving back to Fort Peck in recent years. Cleo is a descendant of Azana, and related to William Standing, as well as Errol Standing.

Gil and Sis Horn: Interview, July 5, 2012, in his home, Fort Belknap, Montana.
Gil Horn, a decorated veteran of World War II in his 90s, lives on the Fort Belknap reservation. With the help of Robert Four Star, I had arranged an interview with Gil Horn, and Robert introduced me to Gil, because he was Gils’s adopted son. Gil, a member of the famous Merrill’s Marauders, was also a prisoner of War in the Japanese army after being captured in the Philippines. Gil was hard of hearing, so his daughter, Sis Horn, helped to translate while she sewed a star-quilt. Unfortunately, most of the recorded interview was lost (I think Gil accidently pressed pause?), but I took very good notes. This interview was the highlight of my interviews and I feel very honoured to be able to interview Gil.

Mike Lonechild: Interview, June 28, 2012, in the home of Yvonne and Francis Lonechild, White Bear Reserve, Saskatchewan.
Mike Lonechild is an artist, Assiniboine-Cree, who lives on the White Bear Reserve in Saskatchewan. He is the brother of Francis Lonechild, who is the husband of Yvonne Lonechild. Mike has been attending the Medicine Lodge at Oswego, Montana since the 1980s. He received his higher education degree, and training in painting, while a student at a university in Canada.

Yvonne’s maiden last name is McArthur. She is Assiniboine and married to Francis Lonechild, who is Cree and also an important singer at Assiniboine Medicine Lodges. Her father, Alfred McArthur, was an important Medicine Lodge leader, and also a Christian leader. Francis adopted me as his son outside of the Medicine Lodge at Oswego, Montana, in the summer of 2010. Francis lost one his sons, a Medicine Man, after a tragic accident in 2008. Francis is also
Robert Four Star’s brother, Assiniboine way. I have known Francis and Yvonne since my first Medicine Lodge experience in 1996.

Wilma Kennedy: Phone Interview, July 3, 2012, from her home, Carry the Kettle, Saskatchewan.

Wilma lives on the Carry the Kettle reserve. She was born there in 1923. She has several daughters and sons and grandchildren (I lost count). She spent her early years at forced residential schools. In more recent years, she has been an educator in First Nations schools. Her fraternal grandmother was the sister to the band chief named Carry the Kettle, and her maternal grandparents were both from Fort Belknap. Her maternal grandfather was Sak’n’Fox, a man named Henry Hotomani. In 1998, Wilma adopted Robert Four Star, Oliver Archdale, Harry Beauchamp, Jr., and myself as her sons. Wilma was a consultant to the book about the Cypress Hills massacre titled, *The Cypress Hills: An Island by Itself* by Walter Hildebrandt, Brian Hubner, and Walter Hildebrandt. Wilma is a very important elder to several Assiniboine communities both in Carry the Kettle and beyond. I am honoured that she consented to an interview.


Armand was born in 1948 in Carlyle, White Bear, Saskatchewan. He has lived at Pheasant Rump for over twenty years. His father served in the Canadian military during World War II. His grandfather, John McArthur, was a Wotijaka Gackga (Medicine Lodge Maker). His family were farmers growing up, and he remembers that they procured all their own food, though, they were poor. He went to Boarding School from grade one to eight. Later in life, he worked in the oil fields trying to fit into the wasiju (white) world, and got caught up in alcohol problems and never felt like he belonged. Eventually, Armand returned to the Medicine Lodges, and now is a Wotijaka Gackga at Carry the Kettle. Armand is married, with four children, fourteen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. One of his sons is a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Armand was a
strong advocate for the preservation of Assiniboine cultural knowledge through youth learning the language, participating in ceremonies, protecting sacred sites, and literacy and artwork. I was truly honoured that Armand requested to be interviewed for the sake of keeping Assiniboine knowledge alive.


Sarah and Joan McArthur are the daughters of Elsie McArthur. I interviewed the three of them together with Robert Four Star, who introduced me to them. Elsie was born in 1922, and remembers procuring their own food, such as growing gardens, gathering berries, hunting game for wild meat, and fishing. Joan was born in 1952, and Sarah was born in 1954. They were all forced into Boarding Schools, which traumatized them and cut them off from their families, their language, their ceremonies, and their homeland. Their interview was very emotional. Sarah and Joan said that they started drinking abusively at the age of thirteen to try to wash away the pain. Finally, when they were older, they started attending ceremonies in the late 1990s, and their father, Alfred McArthur helped them learn to participate in the Medicine Lodge at Oswego. They remember seeing Robert’s mother, Evelyn Archdale and Alfred talking Assiniboine and laughing around the Lodge. For them, this was their rebirth through the Medicine Lodge to reclaim their lost Assiniboine identity. Now, Sarah and Joan are very active in designing First Nations curriculum in local schools on White Bear Reserve.

Lucy Reddekopp: Interview, June 27, 2012, in her home, Wolf Point, Montana.

Lucy works as a dental assistant for the Indian Health Services in Wolf Point. She is an enrolled Assiniboine who has lived at Fort Peck for most of her life. She is a descendent of some prominent Assiniboine leaders and American soldiers that first established the reservation. Lucy gave a lot of her time to the Bison Camp from 2002 to 2004. I have known Lucy since 1996.

Anita has worked as a librarian at Fort Peck Community College in Poplar since I arrived there in 1996. She is of German descent and has a home in Miles City, Montana. I also interviewed Anita at an ITALM conference in Honolulu, HI, in September 2011, when she presented her poster project about literacy and reading at Fort Peck.


James Shanley, Ed.D, recently retired from President of the Fort Peck Community College in 2012. James helped develop the college for over twenty years. He is enrolled Assiniboine and lives in Poplar on the east end of the Fort Peck reservation. He has also been a Medicine Lodge leader at the Aswego location since the 1990s. His Assiniboine name is Stands in the Eagle Lodge (Wamnee Wazi Tibi). I have known James since 1996.

Larry Smith: Interviews, June 3 and 10, at his home, Wolf Point, Montana.

Larry Smith is Assiniboine through his father and Swedish through his mother. He is a rancher, farmer, cowboy, and cultural practitioner. Larry is one of the first friends I made in Wolf Point in 1996. He invited me to live and work on his ranch after my first visit with Jeff. I did move to Wolf Point in the summer of 1996, and worked as a ranch-hand. Those are some of my best memories, working as a cowboy, driving tractor, bailing hay, and mending fence. I lived in an “old-brow-house” and later with Larry’s mother, Edna Smith across the Wolf Creek, in her basement. Edna passed away in January 2003. I learned so much about early twentieth century reservation life and so much more just by sitting around the table with Edna, especially when she would make a breakfast of pancakes and bacon on a cold winter night. Almost every time I have visited Fort Peck for ceremonies and for the research of this dissertation, I stayed in the home of Larry Smith. Larry is mitakona (my friend) for life.

Dale was born in 1977 to Roger White and Judy Four Star. Dale White is an active younger Assiniboine cultural practitioner and educator at Fort Peck Community College, Frazer Schools, and at Fort Belknap. Currently, he lives with his wife and three children on Fort Belknap, Montana. Dale is also considered the son of Robert Four Star and is Judy Four Star’s eldest son. Assiniboine way, he is my brother. Dale carries a lot of Assiniboine cultural knowledge, from songs to archival history, for Assiniboine people and is very dedicated in passing this knowledge on to youth and sharing with others. Dale gives us all hope that there are a few younger Assiniboine people willing and able to carry on the vast knowledge that Assiniboine elders wish to share with apprentices.
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Preliminary Questions:

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. What do you remember about your parents and ancestors and relatives that you want to pass onto future generations, your children, grandchildren, or other youth?
3. What do you want for future Nakona generations in terms of knowledge about the past?
4. Was there ever a time in your life where you felt lost or were wandering or distant from your culture or people?

Questions Relevant to Specific Chapters:

Chapter 1: Azanzana

5. Are you a descendent of Azanzana (or any other well known Assiniboine leader in history)?
6. Do you know any stories about Azanzana, and if so would share them now?
7. (If so) How did you first learn about the history of Azanzana? (or any other Assiniboine history)
8. Why do you think this story (about Azanzana or other Assiniboine history) is important for present and future generations to learn?
9. What do you think is the difference between reading about Assiniboine history from an outside perspective and hearing it from an Assiniboine directly (or reading it from an Assiniboine author)?

Chapter 2: Wiotijaka (Medicine Lodge)

10. Describe your participation with the Medicine Lodge? (In other words, do have you participated and what does it mean for you to participate. You should not share personal information: only what you would like other Assiniboines and the general public to know). Which ones have you attended and who do you tend to connect with there?
11. Why or how has Nakona cultural knowledge or ceremonies affected you? (language, people, events)
12. If you participate in ceremonies, or gathering plants or medicine, or making ceremonial objects, please share why this is important for you? How does ceremonial participation help you to remember the cultural and historical knowledge special to the Assiniboine and to pass it on to present and future generations?
13. What are some of the obstacles to participating in ceremonial activities?
Chapter 3: Tatanga Iya (Sleeping Buffalo Rock) – reservation to New Deal

14. Are you familiar with the Sleeping Buffalo on Highway 2?

15. If so, describe your experiences when you pass the Sleeping Buffalo heading West and East?

16. Are there other sites or places that hold special power to you? If so, could you describe your relationship to those sites?

17. What has been your experience with place on and off the reservation? In other words, what does the reservation boundary mean to you, both within and without?

18. Please describe your relationship to specific Assiniboine places and sites, and to land and nature in general. Why is this relationship important to you and how do you maintain and perpetuate that knowledge?

19. What has been your experience with travel to other places and with other cultures (including trips to other states/provinces, cities, or countries)?

Chapter 4: Land of the Nakoda (1942) – Nakona Texts

20. Are you familiar with the book Land of the Nakoda? Other Assiniboine texts written by Assiniboines?

21. If so, how did this text (or other texts) affect your concern for Assiniboine cultural practices and history?

22. Are you a descendant (or related to) of James Long, the author, or William Standing, the illustrator, or any of the interviewees from LON (or other texts)?

23. Why is this book (or other Assiniboine produced texts) important to Assiniboine cultural knowledge and history?

24. Describe your experience with education and literacy (Please include anything you know about your parents and ancestors in terms of their experiences with education).

25. What was your experience with education that changed your perspective on cultural practice and knowledge, and recording Assiniboine history?

26. What kinds of educational tools and practices would you like to see more of in local schools in terms of teaching and learning of Assiniboine cultural knowledge and history?

Chapter 5: Fort Peck Dam (labor) 1930s

27. Are you familiar with the construction of the Fort Peck Dam, and did you have any relatives or ancestors that worked there?

28. Please describe your relationship between work (labor/employment) and cultural practice and knowledge and history? (In other words, did your work experiences help
you or hinder you in engaging in cultural practices, ceremonies, with specific places; or did work on and or off the reservation both help and hinder in different ways).

29. What was your experience with employment that changed your perspective on cultural practice, knowledge, and recording Assiniboine history?

30. How did your experience with work (labor, employment, income) affect your relationships with family members, friends, and your community?

Chapter 6: Ogichidabi – Warrior’s Medals and Flags (Military Service)

31. Why did you join the military?

32. What are some of the moments you remember the most from your military service that you want to share with present and future Assiniboines and the general public?

33. What was your experience returning home (to the reservation or off)?

34. What was your experience with military service that changed your perspective on cultural practice, knowledge, and recording Assiniboine history?

35. How was your service to the United States or Canada affected by your concern for Assiniboine cultural practices and history?

Chapter 7: Star Quilts (art)

36. What kinds of artwork have you produced?

37. How did you learn to become an artist?

38. Why is this practice important to you?

39. What kinds of artwork do you like? (Assiniboine and non-Assiniboine or in general)

40. Are there any Assiniboine or Native artists that have inspired you?

41. Are you familiar with William Standing’s work or any other Assiniboine artists? If so, what do you think of this body of work?

42. Are there any non-Native artists that have inspired you?

43. How is your artwork a way of recording, telling, and educating others about Assiniboine cultural knowledge and practices and history?

44. What kinds of artwork do you sell or put into galleries or museums for public display and what kinds of artwork do you only use for ceremony or for giveaways (ceremony) or for specific local purposes? (I will explain “local purposes,” such as education programs for youth)

Chapter 8: Storage Locker (archives)
45. Did you know that the tribal archives are currently in this condition? (describe storage lockers)

46. How do you think tribal records, photographs, and documents relevant to Assiniboine tribal members should be maintained, protected, and or accessible? Why?

47. What do you think are the limitations to the “storage” model of archives?

NOTE: These are the original questions I asked interviewees, however, I re-organized the chapters of this dissertation so that some of these chapters were not written.
Appendix C: Intro Letter and Consent Form

[Originally on UBC Letterhead]

To Whom It May Concern:

I am engaged in preliminary research for my dissertation project, “Nakona Knowledge Keepers: an Indigenous Emergence in the 20th century,” for a PhD requirement in History at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. As part of my research I am conducting oral interviews: this has been requested and approved by Assinibione leaders, such as Robert Four Star and James Shanley, for the sake of recording knowledge for Assiniboine future generations, archives, and histories. I am writing you this letter to ask for your consent to video or audio record an oral interview of you as part of my research for this project. If you prefer not to be video recorded there is also the option of audio only.

For these video or audio recorded interviews I will ask you questions about your experiences with cultural practices, education, work, community participation, and living on or off reservation. I will ask you general questions about your life stories, such as about serving in the military, or relocating for work or education or travel. For example, I will ask you: “What were some of the turning points in your life that pulled you away or back into your Assiniboine cultural practices or knowledge? Why did you make those choices?” These interviews are open and conversational. The interviews are designed to ask questions about cultural knowledge, practices, and life experiences. If there is a sensitive topic that could involve emotional conflict, you (the interviewee) will always have the option to decline. As the interviewer, I am not a counselor.

If you do give your consent to these interviews either in video or audio recording, you have the option to review this material and have anything deleted before anything is made public. This information and any materials, such as photographs, letters, or documents may be published by me in articles, or books, or documentaries, or in presentations, or in web-pages and made public. Therefore, you, the interviewee should not share or discuss anything that could be emotionally provocative in a harmful way to yourself or any other member of the community.

My questions seek knowledge about your life stories and experiences with cultural knowledge and practices, and do not seek private or secret knowledge. The kinds of stories that you share are only the stories that you wish to record and share with your community, future generations, and the general public. After the interviews are conducted and recorded, I will put them onto CD's. I will send you the CD of your individual interview, and you will be given the chance to have any portion of the interview removed. I will be the one to send this to you and will edit any portion of the interviews upon your request. Anything you do not wish to share will be deleted by me from the video recording and not used for any publication or made public in any way. Once these recordings have been reviewed I will use them for my research, public presentations, a documentary, and potentially publishing a book about Assiniboine Cultural History in the 20th Century.
The Fort Peck Community College and the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes are also constructing an archive, so that copies of the edited final videos and audio recordings will be stored in Assiniboine Archives administered by the Fort Peck Community College. I will give you the Consent Form for Nakona Knowledge Keepers at least twenty-four hours for your careful review before you decide to participate. I hope that you will give your consent only after careful consideration that this will become public knowledge about Assiniboine cultural history for future generations. Thank you for your consideration and your time.

Respectfully,

Josh Horowitz,

PhD Student

History (Cultural Indigenous World)

University of British Columbia
CONSENT FORM FOR NAKONA KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Principal Investigator: Professor Coll Thrush, Ph.D., Department of History, UBC, [personal information deleted].

Primary Contact/Co-Investigator/Interviewer: Josh Horowitz, Ph.D. Student, Department of History, UBC, [personal information deleted].

Purpose:
Josh Horowitz is engaged in preliminary research for his dissertation project, “Nakona Knowledge Keepers: an Indigenous Emergence in the 20th century,” for a PhD requirement in History at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. As part of his research he is conducting oral interviews: this has been requested and approved by Assinibione leaders, such as Robert Four Star and James Shanley, for the sake of recording knowledge for Assiniboine future generations, archives, and histories. The video or audio-recorded interviews will be used for research for this project, for Assiniboine Archives, and for public presentation. The Fort Peck Community College and the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes are also constructing an archive, so that copies of the edited final videos and audio recordings will be stored in Assiniboine Archives administered by the Fort Peck Community College.

Procedures:
For these video or audio recorded interviews, Josh Horowitz will ask you questions about your experiences with cultural practices, education, work, community participation, and living on or off reservation. Josh will ask you general questions about your life stories, such as about serving in the military, or relocating for work or education or travel. For example, Josh will ask you: “What were some of the turning points in your life that pulled you away or back into your Assiniboine cultural practices or knowledge? Why did you make those choices?” These interviews are open and conversational. The interviews are designed to ask questions about cultural knowledge, practices, and life experiences. The interviews will take one to two hours, and if possible there will be a follow up interview several months to a year later, however, this is optional. Also, if you prefer, and each interviewee has given their consent, the interviews may be of a small group, for example, a gathering of elders. If you prefer not to be video recorded there is also the option of audio only. The interviews may be conducted in your home, outside your home, in tribal offices, or where you prefer. After the interviews are conducted and recorded, Josh will put them onto CD’s. Josh will send you the CD of your individual interview, and you will be given the chance to have any portion of the interview removed. Josh will be the one to send this to you and will edit any portion of the interviews upon your request. Anything you do not wish to share will be deleted by Josh from the video recording and not used for any publication or made public in any way. Once these recordings have been reviewed Josh will use them for research, public presentations, a documentary, and potentially publishing a book about Assiniboine Cultural History in the 20th Century. Josh will give you this Consent Form for Nakona Knowledge Keepers at least twenty-four hours for your careful review before you decide
to participate. It is hoped that you will give your consent only after careful consideration that this will become public knowledge about Assiniboine cultural history for future generations.

**Potential Risks:**
If there is a sensitive topic that could involve emotional conflict, you (the interviewee) will always have the option to decline. As the interviewer, Josh Horowitz is not a counselor. If you do give your consent to these interviews either in video or audio recording, you have the option to review this material and have anything deleted before anything is made public. This information and any materials, such as photographs, letters, or documents may be published by Josh Horowitz in articles, or books, or documentaries, or in presentations, or in web-pages and made public. Therefore, you, the interviewee should not share or discuss anything that could be emotionally provocative in a harmful way to yourself or any other member of the community. The questions to be asked seek knowledge about your life stories and experiences with cultural knowledge and practices, and do not seek private or secret knowledge.

**Potential Benefits:**
The kinds of stories that you share are only the stories that you wish to record and share with your community, Assiniboine Archives, future generations, and the general public. Any documents such as articles, books, or documentaries will be mailed to you upon completion for your family if you prefer.

Your name is (Print):

______________________________

Phone: _________________________

Email: __________________________

Address (Street, City, State/Province, Zip/Postal Code. Country):

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Coll Thrush [personal information deleted] or Josh Horowitz [personal information deleted].

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent:
By signing this consent form you are giving Josh Horowitz permission to use the stories, audio or video recordings, images, and information that you share for his dissertation, public presentations, the publication of articles and books about it, and for the interviews
to be stored in Assiniboine Archives, and for future research granted by the Fort Peck Community College. You give Josh Horowitz full consent to use your name and title on any publication, photograph, video documentary, audio-file or webpage. Anything you share with Josh Horowitz in these interviews, including photographs or documents, may become part of his dissertation, an article, a public presentation, a book, a documentary, and or a webpage in collaboration with the Fort Peck Community College, and therefore may become public. You have the option to review material, have any parts deleted, before any part is made public or you can give full consent below. Also, you may select Audio Recording Only below.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Please provide your signature to all that apply:
You prefer Audio Recording Only (Initials): ______
You prefer Video Recording (Initials): _______
You do NOT need to review the interview or any materials before publication: (Initials): ___
You will need to review the interview before any publication in any form: (Initials): ___

__________________________________________________________________________

Interviewee Subject Signature Date

__________________________________________________________________________

Printed Name of the Interviewee Subject