Chincathunyan Ogna Igluhapi na I Oyuzunta (Birthing a Sovereign Nation and Transferring of Character): Resurgence of Indigenous Anchors and Futurity Praxis through Cradleboarding

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2024

Reading Committee:

Django Paris, Chair

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Education

University of Washington

Abstract

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

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This dissertation study highlights the transformational process of creating a chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) in community that includes storytelling, Elder wisdom, Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways), paths forward towards community wellness, and the importance of Indigenist Community Based Participatory Research (ICBPR) in action alongside community. This study also highlights the Water Is Life movement and shares a glimpse into the beautiful ripple effect it had on the Standing Rock Nation and beyond. It theorizes the Chuwic'inpa as a resurgence site for lifeways and kinship to be uplifted. There are direct quotes, teachings, and examples from the eight beautiful families that were a part of this larger project of reclaiming and revitalizing the practice of chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding). My hope is also that other Native and Indigenous communities will find this project useful in their own revitalization efforts and that Native education, maternal and infant health fields, and research fields will gain valuable insights for other ICBPR projects alongside communities.

Acknowledgements

I have a Rez education from “God’s Country”, the Standing Rock Nation, and I would not be who I am without my community standing behind me throughout every part of my path. To my community who has held me throughout all the stages of my life, this dissertation process, and on our journeys together and apart. There are no words to describe that love, gratitude, and appreciation I carry for each and every one of you, but I will do my best to offer that here. My circles overlap with relatives and chosen kin and I will shout them out as many times as I need, now and into the future.

To my mom, Valerie Eagle Shield, and my dad, John Eagle Shield, Sr., thank you for unconditionally loving me through all my transitions in life. You’ve cleared a beautiful and safe path for me to walk, and have walked alongside me. You both have always reminded me of my own power and have guided me to lean into our lifeways for strength and compassion. You’ve gently shared stories and lessons with me over and over again until I was ready to embody them. You’ve both walked your talk and have been bright lights of kinship for others that gave me the insights needed to create kinship of my own and to enact those teachings along the way. You’ve allowed me to dream and always encouraged me to reach those dreams, but always to remember who I am and where I come from. You’re my guiding lights, always. Lila thechihilapi! (I love you very much!).

To my classmates, colleagues, and community members who have been with me through different stages of my life: my Master of Public Health crew (Cheyenne (Novi) Brady, Lindsey Montileaux, Amber Anderson, Dr. Donald Warne, Dr. Donna Grandbois, and Dr. Nicole Redvers), my Standing Rock Language Nest/Institute/Iyapi crew (Leksi Tom Red Bird, Nacole

Walker, Shauna Walker, Sunshine Archambault, and so many more), “Django & Fam” (Jazmen Moore, Jeff Stone, Kriya Velasco, Doua Kha, & Dana Arviso), and my other positions within my Tribe at the Indian Health Service, Tribal Health, Sitting Bull College. You’ve each guided me in immensely beautiful ways as I was learning and growing as a community member and young adult. I am grateful for the study sessions, writing sessions, group texts, inside jokes, laughter, and beyond. You’ve each had a part in carrying me through, even though it wasn’t your responsibility, I literally couldn’t have done it without you.

To my Seattle relatives who’ve I have been able to build beautiful programs and organizations alongside: my Native Family Learning Lodge/Native Newborns crew (Miriam (Stoyan) Zmiewski-Angelova, Kimberly (Julius) Deriana, Leanne Rye Brock, Kaitlin Kamalei (Dorian) Brandon, Maylea Harris, Christian Harris, Stephanie (Marcus) Webb, Jessica Molina, and Nina (Shawn) Harris, Temryss (Orion) Lane, Matika (Lino) Wilbur, Socia Love, & Shawn Peterson), my Ancestral Sisterhood crew (Ixtli (Mark) White Hawk, Lacey (Bradley) Warrior, & Jennifer (George) Vickers), and my many many other relatives who became family such as Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services (Camie Goldhammer and TR Andrew), Matt and Rebecca Remle, Rae and Django, and more. I felt loved, seen, cared for, fed, clothed, and protected by each of you. You’ve each embodied hunkayapi (making of relatives). I have especially felt that my children were surrounded by a solid community the entire time we were in Seattle. I know we will make our way back to each one of you again and again. You each embody Indigenous brilliance and resilience and will always have a special place in my family for lifetimes to come.

To my Intercultural Leadership Institute family: Auntie Lori Pourier (First Peoples Fund), Auntie Vicky Takamine (Pa’i Foundation), Carlton (Brandy) Turner (Sipp Culture), Wendy

Shenefelt (Alternate Roots), and Maria De'leon (NALAC), Lauren Fitzgerald, Ennis Carter, Kanoelani Davis, Joel Garcia, J. Ching, Estrella Esquilin, Edgar Page, Damia Khanboubi, Marquetta Dupree, and Jeeyeun, you each bring so much beauty and unique perspective into uplifting culture, interculturality, and lifeways into spaces that are genuine and lifegiving. I value the love you've poured into me as I have faced all the obstacles and celebrations in my life, especially Lauren. Lauren is a true leader who holds everyone in delicate grace while we are on our own journeys. Thanks for holding me as I navigated motherhood and life.

To the Elders Preservation Council on Standing Rock (my dad, John (Valerie) Eagle Shield Sr., Leksi Virgil (Darlene) Taken Alive, Leksi Tim (Mary) Mentz, Leksi Cedric (Sissy) Good House, Leksi Terry (Gaylene) Yellow Fat), the KLND Radio Station (John (Kelsey) Brave Bull & thunwin Ardyce Taken Alive), the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe (Kimimila Locke, Memorie and Hoksila White Mountain, and many others), the Defenders of the Defenders of the Water School (DDWS) (Sandy (Leslie) Grande, Rae and Django Paris, Tim (Sarah) San Pedro, Valerie Shirley, Jeremy Garcia, & Sweeny Windchief), American Indigenous Mothers (AIM) (Roo (Randy) Ramos, Faith Price, Kristina Lucero, & Micheal (Steve) Munson), Racing Magpie (Mary Bordeaux, Clementine Bordeaux, & Peter Strong), auntie Tomi Kay (John) Phillips, Cinnamon (Clay) Killsfirst, auntie Dawn (Roger) Satterfield, Shani Bordeaux, Jennifer Berna, and Mariposa Strategies (Annie Sanchez). You each have influenced, guided, helped me navigate huge milestones, and have cared for me in ways that are immeasurable. Thanks for being the exact teachers, mentors, babysitters and editors I have needed throughout my life and PhD journey. Thanks for loving my kids and my husband. Thanks for accepting us as we are and for who we are. I could never repay you for the love and generosity you've each given me.

To the Mni Wichoni Health Circle family: Maya (Memphis) Runnels, Valerie (John) Eagle Shield, Deb (Linus) Gray Eagle, Della No Heart, Sunshine Claymore, Regan Dunn, Jayne (Jazz) Young Bear, and Tasha (Chris) Peltier. Our Board of Directors: thunwin Beverly (Pam) Little Thunder, Tonya Hertel, Anna McLaughlin, Baylee LaCompte, & Zane Prentice. Throughout my entire PhD, dissertation, and next steps planning you've each been a pillar in my life. You've uplifted me, my writing, my work, my visions, and my leadership skills, and have loved me and my family unconditionally as we have made the transition back and forth from Seattle to home. You have been solid thought partners, teachers, and mentors throughout my PhD journey, dissertation, and parenthood. I could never repay you all for the genius you have each shared with me as a part of my chosen family. Thanks for changing diapers and chasing my children around. A special thanks to my chosen sister Tasha for always having my back and for being the most amazing co-Executive Director I could have ever asked for. You are brilliant and so full of love for our people and our homelands.

To my Dissertation Community (a beautiful phrase uplifted by Dr. Django Paris as we center kinship in the work we are embarking on)/Committee. Dr. Django Paris, Dr. Karina Walters, Dr. Emma Elliott, Dr. Jean Dennison, Dr. Michelle Johnson Jennings. Django, you and Rae have given me and my family more than I could ever ask for. You believed in me in times when I did not. You loved me and my kids through all the transitions this big rez kid was making. I don't think I could ever repay you for the love, compassion, and grace you've both given me and my family. You've helped me step into my voice and believe that I have something powerful to share with the world. Karina, thanks for validating my vision and my viewpoint as an Indigenous woman, mother, and knowledge holder. You took me under your wing as soon as I came to UW and I appreciate you and your methods of storytelling as valid. You're an amazing

Indigenous leader and advocate. Emma, thank you for the writing sessions, calls, and pep talks. You're a brilliant writer, speaker, author, and activist. Thanks for also sharing your trusted (niece) babysitter while she was here from your homelands. I had no idea how much I needed the support at the time. Jean, thank you so much for the brilliant and thought provoking classes you've offered. I was able to move past my own ignorance and dive into the literature while upholding my own lifeways. I am forever grateful for your belief in me as a young writer and storyteller. Michelle, I met you later, but I know this work is not easy. Thanks for stepping up to support this final push of getting my work and writing into the world.

To the families who made this dissertation possible: Savannah (Mikey), Lefa (Johnny), Kirah (Waylon), Xtal (Ron), Teyah (Dedrick and Lynette), JanaKate (Brandon), and Misty (Adam). Thank you for your time, energy, love, compassion, stories, histories, and essence. You truly brought this project to life.

To my husband Red Rock Eagle Standing Perkins, no words in any language could accurately describe the unconditional love, tenderness, and pure joy you bring to my life. You are a special spirit brought to this world and I am grateful I get to walk beside you and raise our babies together. You are enough. You are a leader. You are a gorgeous person who has so much to offer the world. I will sing your praises for the rest of my life. Thanks for being the brightest light on my path. I love you more than you'll ever know. Thanks for making this project possible.

To my babies. You are the most brilliant, beautiful, and worthy creations. I am forever in awe that you will carry on the legacy of our family. I am grateful you chose me to be your mama.

It is with so much gratitude that I offer up to the UW College of Education's Doctoral research assistantship (RA) program as well as the Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies (CAIIS) Scholars fund for providing funding that helped make this dissertation possible.

Dedication

For my mom, Valerie Eagle Shield, and my dad, John Eagle Shield Sr., who embody Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) in so many ways and who've given me a firm foundation.

For my husband, bestfriend, and forever confidant, Red Rock Eagle Standing Perkins, your radical love can carry me through anything.

For my four babies Earth Side: Tha Oniya Wakhan Win, Waaruxti Nataree'ux Tawisa, Tha Changleska Luta Hoksila, and He Wigmunke Wakhangli Win, you are the reason for my strength, determination, and dedication to our lifeways. You are my future. You are my legacy.

For the eight beautiful families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers: Savannah (Mikey), Lefa (Johnny), Kirah (Waylon), Xtal (Ron), Teyah (Dedrick and Lynette), JanaKate (Brandon), and Misty (Adam), who brought this project to life.

For every baby born and making their way Earth side, we are waiting and preparing for you.

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Prologue: Introduction to all that is: Fallen Star and the Ochethi Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) Star Knowledge

Ochethi Sakowin is a cohesive society which mirrors the Thiwakhan star constellation[1] and is made up of the Dakota[2], Nakota and Lakota linguistic dialects of the seven tribes: Dakota, which includes the bands of the Bdewakantonwan (Spirit Lake Dwellers), Wahpekute (Leaf Shooters), Wahpetonwan (Forest Dwellers), and Sisitonwan (Fish Scale Dwellers); Nakota, which includes the bands of the Ihanktonwan (Dwellers at the End of the Village) and Ihanktonwanna (Little Dwellers at the End Village); and the Lakota which includes the band of the Tintantonwan (Plains Dwellers) (Ochethi Sakowin Essential Understandings, 2022). Each has their own sub-bands of people. I come from the Tintantonwan band, or Teton People, which were forcibly moved to the plains area and away from the other Council Fires. The Titantonwan (Teton People) formed their own Seven Council Fires, or sub-bands of the Lakota people (Hunkpapa, Itazipcola, Mnikowoju, Oglala, Oohenunpa, Sicangu, and Sihasapa), and camped in the shape of a horn. I specifically come from the Hunkpapa (Tip of the Horn) band of the Lakota People and I come from the stars (Personal Communication, J. Eagle Shield, 2022).

In Ochethi Sakowin cosmology, everything in the stars mirrors everything on Earth, this is known as Kapemni[3] (twisting, spiraling, mirroring). All things co-exist in a unique set of relationships that make up everything we experience in the natural world. When we say Mitakuye Owas'in[4], we are conveying a concept of being intricately linked with all beings,

[1] In Ochethi Sakowin belief, the Thiwakhan star constellation is what Western science knows as Orion's Belt. The three stars make up the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people in the Ochethi Sakowin worldview.
[2] The Dakota language is considered the mother language which branched into the other main dialects: Lakota and Nakota.
[3] Kapemni will be described in further detail in chp. 2.
[4] Lakota/Dakota/Nakota word meaning "we are all related, all my relations".

entities[5], and creation in an ecosystem dependent upon each other. This includes the land, water, air, and more-than-humans (MTH) (Harjo, 2019; Marin & Bang, 2018) and all the entities surrounding us. When we understand on a mental, emotional, physical and spiritual level that the land, water, air, more-than-human (MTH) and human survival depend upon each other, this is what we mean by Mitakuye Owas'in. We solidify these connections through our creation and re-emergence stories.

Wichahpi Hinhpaye (Fallen Star) is a character in our ohunkakan (old stories) that weaves our creation and re-emergence stories back to our land and then back to the stars. This cycle is continuously renewing and is also ancient. I am currently writing my dissertation in the waniyetu (winter) moons. This is the time that we tell our ohunkakan. One short version, because there are many, of Wichahpi Hinhpaye, as told by Ella Deloria and coupled with the new nuances that my family has since passed on, begins long ago in a Dakota village. There were two young girl-cousins, one named Thaphun Sa Win (Red Creed Woman), in their coming of age life cycle where their thoughts were guided towards marriage and their futures[6]. They asked if they could sleep in the new thipi[7] that was created by their mothers and were granted permission to do so. At the top of the thipi, there were smoke flaps for ventilation, which were left open and there was a clear view of the sky above. The stars were bright and clearly visible. They each pointed to a particular star and said they wished those were their husbands. Soon, they fell asleep and when they woke up, they were in the Star World with the Wichahpi Oyate and the stars that they had playfully chosen as their husbands, were now their husbands in the Star World.

[5] This term connotes spiritual presences, natural occurrences (i.e., weather), and all things unseen within the universe.
[6] Unknown of the exact time period of these retellings, but I am sure this story has Christianity influence as the use of "marriage" and "girl-cousins" were used as the grounding of the story in reference to their futures. I will continue to point out these dynamics at play as they come up.
[7] These were structures created out of animal (usually buffalo) hides and wrapped around poles that were strategically placed to create a spiral structure.

The Star World was beautiful and mysterious and had thinpsila (prairie turnips) growing abundantly. Dakota women love thinpsila and it is a beautiful delicacy because it is hard to find and has a short harvesting window on Earth. However, they were advised not to pick a specific thinpsila. As time went on, Thaphun Sa Win, now a woman, became pregnant with a child. She missed her home and as she was preparing to bring her baby into this new Star World, she began thinking of her family back home and wishing for the comforts of home. She began digging in the ground to gather thinpsila, which they were warned not to dig for, and upon pulling a specific thinpsila from the ground, could see to the Earth. The specific thinpsila she dug created a hole in the center of the Wamakhognaka (universe/cosmos/entire creation). She was able to see her family and became overwhelmed with sadness and the desire to return to her people. She dug many more thinpsila and braided a thinpsila rope to climb down but the rope was not long enough and she fell to her death at Wamakha Ognake Ichante (The Heart of Everything that is), also known as Phesla (Bald Spot)[8]. Thaphun Sa Win's Star World husband became overwhelmed with sorrow and froze in his very spot, never to move again. His name is Wichahpi Owanzila (The Star that Does Not Move)[9].

There are many different accounts about how her baby was discovered. One account shares that her baby was discovered by a meadowlark and was raised amongst them. I will share the account about how her baby was discovered alive, nursing from her body, and was taken and raised by an older couple who had witnessed the fall. The baby became known as Wichahpi Hinhpaye (Fallen Star). He grew at an exceeding rate and his destiny became intricately tied to

[8] This bald spot, or Phe Sla, is commonly known as Reynold's Prairie and is in the middle of the Black Hills in South Dakota.
[9] In Ochethi Sakowin belief, the Wichahpi Owanzila star constellation is what Western science knows as the North Star.

the Ochethi Sakowin people to defend, bring light, and give them hope (Deloria, n.d.; Personal Communication J. Eagle Shield, 2022).

The story of Wichahpi Hinhpaye offers us a glimpse into that portal between worlds, where life and death are simultaneously open, where the enigmas of time and space make sense. Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2017) states that "constellations are not just physical doorways to other worlds; they also act as conceptual doorways that return us to our core essence" (p. 212). The cyclical way of telling stories of our deep connections to the stars and to the lands offers seasons of when we were storying together and when we were traveling to these sacred sites told through the stories together. When we learn that Phesla is considered to be the center of all that is and mirrors the center of the Wamakhognaka (universe/cosmos/entire creation), which is located in the Wanagi Thachanku (Milky Way), where our ancestors come and go, transitioning between life and death. This creates a familiarity with all that is. Dakota scholar Kim TallBear (2017) shares how there is a fundamental break in the ways Westerners conceptualize death, where "materiality is severed from spirit" because of their longstanding relationships with Christian belief systems that are intricately different from ours. There is this false hierarchy that continues to be implemented (i.e., life vs death), where the belief is that death is bad because it ends life (TallBear, 2017). Through the Indigenous worldview, we understand that life and death are the same portal, that we are creation, and our ancestral memory ties us to places where our Indigenous identity is continuously renewed across generations.

Lumbee scholar Brayboy (2005) shares how he encountered a doubtful colleague, one who did not understand Indigenous worldviews, and how he was (re)centered by his mother with the simple, yet profound, statement that "our stories are our theories" (p. 426) because our theories are never separated from our stories and practices. Our creation and re-emergence

stories have so many teachings and answers within them when we learn how to listen, observe, and understand through our relationships and life stages. Simpson (2017) also shares how "one of the primary responsibilities and beautiful struggles of physically being Nishnaabeg is that we have to strive and commit to maintaining deep everyday relationships with this world (skyworld) when we are physically on Earth" (p. 212) and this is why carrying our stories forward is essential in how we evolve simultaneously on this Earth and in the skyworld. Simpson (2017) also suggests that creation stories emphasize that our people "embody all the necessary knowledge for resurgence" because "we can access all the knowledge that went into creating the universe" (p. 162).

Chapter 1: Strengthening Otakuye-Wichoh'an (Kinship Law): Uplifting our Relationships Through Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways)

Movement Spaces as Critical Sites of Resurgence

Mni Wichoni! Water Is Life! A rallying cry that reactivated in every person around the world our common truth, that our bodies were cradled and nurtured into existence through water. Water is a necessity that every living organism needs in order to grow and thrive. Water. Is. life.

In 2016, the Water Is Life movement exploded into mainstream media after a culmination of over 500 years of oppression under colonialism and capitalism as people from around the world heard the call to come stand with my community, the Standing Rock Nation, in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) that was proposed to be built just miles north of the Standing Rock reservation boundaries. The Ochethi Sakowin Camp was created by the original Nations of the Ochethi Sakowin people as a space for relatives and accomplices to stand with the people of the Standing Rock Nation in opposition to DAPL. It physically lasted for seven months

but the movement surges and continues beyond those short months with metaphoric fires lit around the world.

In this dissertation study, I invite you to engage with these creation and re-emergence stories I know as truths and the beautiful journey through the process of making cradleboards, or chuwic'inpa, with the beautiful families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers who generously shared their voices and hopes for their futures, and their desires to reawaken to our lifeways and protocols.

I begin by grounding my analysis in movement spaces, because our work stems from resistance, revitalization, and reclamation. The conditioning our communities have gone through and continue to endure because of assimilation and elimination tactics over centuries have caused a ripple effect and our communities are still reawakening to our power. I will share the important work happening in my community, the Standing Rock Nation, including holistic wellness and sovereign education efforts and the ways that the communities I am involved in are coming together and re-learning to be in responsible relationship with each other and the natural world as we have always done since time immemorial. I will share the beautiful movements and projects that have guided me to this dissertation study and will give you a small glimpse into the beautiful impacts of resurgence sites and why we necessarily view so many movements as resurgence sites, which includes creating cradleboards as I will describe later in this dissertation introduction.

I also aim to share Lakota/Dakota/Nakota (Ochethi Sakowin) and Indigenous concepts of storying and relationality, including onto-epistemic understandings and commitments, while answering questions about the current realities unfolding within my community and around the

world. Specifically, thinking of mothers, women, Two-Spirit/Native LGBTQIA+, babies and our birthing ceremonies as I was called to this dissertation project.

By August 2016, the Ochethi Sakowin camp was in full effect; a thriving community all its own and I was starting my second year of a Master of Public Health Program at North Dakota State University. My program was focused on American Indian Health and I was also working full-time as the Language Specialist for the Standing Rock Language and Culture Institute. I had been learning about health and wellness and how they are impacted and influenced by systems and structures of oppression, settler colonialism and capitalism. On August 11th, I was sitting in my office on Standing Rock and witnessing the call of our community members to come to the front lines through Facebook as the bulldozers were coming in and building a new road towards the river. The helpless feeling in the pit of my stomach and the tension in my throat was debilitating. I could not focus on our language programming or anything else. I went to my boss's office and told her that I could not be there at work and that I had to go to the construction site. She looked at me and said "do what you need to do. But be careful." I cried the whole 20-minute drive to the northern part of the Standing Rock reservation boundaries. Everyone who was there was pleading with the construction workers and the police to stop. We sang songs and cried. It was surreal how unfazed the police and construction workers were. They must have disassociated from a lifetime and generations of practice from separating themselves from Indigenous peoples through the colonial hierarchy of superiority. I left that violating space and went home for the evening feeling depleted. That night, my body was aching with anxiety. I forced myself to sleep and woke up before the sun at 4am ready to go back up to the site.

That morning, I sent an email requesting to take the day off of work. At that moment, I knew I needed to do something, I just did not know what. My husband and I headed to the site.

There was one relative there already. He camped there in a tent. I never got his name, but he grew up with my older brothers and told me he wasn't going to let anything happen to me that day. That's the thing about Natives, we always take care of each other. More relatives began to show up and I began to feel the power of our prayers. We sang songs, prayed, smudged, visited, and laughed. Through any turmoil, laughter always gets us through anything. An older man who was taking up the role of camp crier[10], gathered everyone to the center of the construction site and shared stories with us about how this might play out, based on historical accounts. He shared that scouts who were in the hills, noticed a line of cop cars that were just over the hill and they would be descending upon us any moment. He told us to hold our ground. He reminded us of protocol: to not throw things or be aggressive, to be mindful of our anger and our emotions, and to stay in prayer.

All of a sudden, a whole line of cop cars came over the hill and they began parking on both sides of the road. They all got out of their vehicles at the same time and followed each other and formed a line in front of us, while a community member was filling a chanupa (sacred pipe) and praying. The officers used a bullhorn and shouted their warning: "you have five minutes to evacuate. Anyone left standing will be arrested!". The self-appointed camp crier gathered all of us in a circle once the community member was done praying and told us not to fear the police. He shared a protocol with us. He reminded us that we are from the Buffalo Nation, so we must act accordingly. In times of harsh winters, and in times of danger, the male bull buffalos will put the babies/calves in the center, then the female buffalo with the Elder buffalo will surround the babies/calves, and finally the male bull buffalos will create a circle barrier around all of them and

[10] A camp crier is an Indigenous technology and teaching where a person, or group of people, become the ones who relay messages throughout the camp or space. They use their voices and are loud and are supposed to speak on behalf of the people so they must hold themselves in a respectful and honorable way. Their message must be for good and not to cause harm or to illicit panic or fear. They are messengers, in essence.

they will move as one. The camp crier shared that anyone who wishes to remain is doing so at their own risk. I felt so much fear, anger, and so much love for my people and my lands. So I stayed. I held onto the cattle guard gate that was the makeshift entrance. Two other males stayed, one of the males was the guy who told me he grew up with my brothers and he would protect me. I will never forget that day (Figure 1). He said he was ready to walk off and he saw me stay so he said “aww fuck! I better go stand with her.” I laugh-cried when he told me later on when we were bailed out of jail together. “It’s been five minutes. We are moving in and arresting those still on the property.” The line of cops walked towards us, and the three of us were arrested together. When we got back to the construction site that same day, the singers sang an honor song for us. This was protocol for any deeds that were done on behalf of the people.

Figure 1: Photo of me being arrested for standing my ground at the construction site (August 12, 2016).

“Living in two-worlds" is a phrase that I have heard my whole life. It conveys the separation of traditional and western ways of being: traditional meaning living according to Ochethi Sakowin lifeways and values and western being living in Euro-centricity and dominance, Christianity influence, and capitalistic systems and beliefs. Neither are simple, but in

one I am free. I highlight this two-worlds mentality as one I am desperately trying to understand because we don't live with the fears that were so embedded in our parents, Elders, or ancestors. I don't have to be in fear of going to jail for practicing our ceremonies like my parents and ancestors did, but the mentality is still there and the effects of it show up in many of our current teachings. We grew up witnessing the second hand effects of what Shor and Freire (1987) describe as an authoritarian pedagogy and political regime, and for the first time we were able to be completely immersed into our Ochethi Sakowin lifeways and share models of holistic community care through education and inquiry that is dialogic, emergent, and co-developed for our coexistence (Kovach, 2021; Shor and Freire, 1987; San Pedro & Bang, 2021) that was deeper than simply talking about history, because we were a part of the history on a historical site currently unfolding.

We got to co-create and co-construct what health, education, economics, food sovereignty, energy initiatives, and more, could and should be for our community and future generations. It was built on collaborative storying, unforgetting together, rememory, relationality, positionality, culture, language, politics (Shor and Freire, 1987; Krawec, 2022; Paris, 2017) and the political movement we were in.

I have heavily relied upon Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson's (2017) book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* as a guiding light to sharing my own stories. I appreciate the ways she upholds her Nisnaabeeg stories as relevant while also understanding that there are still deep losses that we are all working through and it is not until you are faced with it that you can see. Simpson (2017) shares "standing at the foot of a map of loss is clarity" (p. 15) as she met with her Elders and they observed maps of 150 years of clear cuts to make ways for the building of electric dams, roads, railroads, and parks. She shares the

ways that being in community with Elders shifted how she understood herself as a Nishnaabeg woman while living in this colonial world. She shares how this has propelled her life and helped her to see the "Nishnaabeg brilliance- theory, methodology, story, ethics, values all enmeshed in Nishnaabeg politics and encircled by the profound influence of the world." (Simpson, 2017, p. 15). And how by observing her Elders' world – "a cognitive, spiritual, emotional, land-based space – didn't recognize or endlessly accommodate whiteness, it didn't accept the inevitability of capitalism, and it was a disruption to the hierarchy of heteropatriarchy" (Simpson, 2017, p. 17). This resonated so much with my path and her articulation helped me to lean more heavily into Indigenist Community Based Participatory Research (ICBPR) and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as the Elders, the land, and our maps have all the answers. I specifically call on Indigenist CBPR because as Dr. Karina Walters (2024) shares, "there is emphasis on the responsibility of doing Indigenist CBPR because you can be Indigenous but not necessarily do Indigenous work" (Personal Communication; Walters, 2024).

Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe

I can still see the early painted sky as the sun danced over the distant hills beyond the Mnisose (Missouri River). I can still feel the crunch of frozen ground beneath my feet as I walked towards the cook shack[11], while seeing my breath blow out of my mouth like a cloud of smoke. Soon the children would be coming to the learning space and we would discover the way

[11] A cook shack is a structure that is usually at our ceremonies, powwows, and other celebrations and is a designated area where meals are brought in, served, and available for relatives at the event/ceremony. A cook shack is a pillar within our gatherings because it helps us enact kinship in powerful and meaningful ways. When you take someone as a relative, as kin, you make a commitment to clothe them, shelter them, love and honor them, and feed them. Kinship is a powerful responsibility to each other and a cook shack is one powerful tool used to demonstrate to the community one way to approach kinship in Indigenous communities. We had many cook shacks within the Ochethi Sakowin Camp. No one went hungry.

the day was meant to unfold, because it would be guided by their interests and needs. This is how learning should look.

In real time, we were laying down building blocks for the future of healthcare, education, economics, food sovereignty, energy initiatives, and more. Though it did not feel like it at the time. It felt scary and messy, like the clutches of colonialism would swallow us whole because we were finally in a state of pure Indigenous joy. The aunties and grandmas within the camp expressed the need, and assigned me, to create a learning space for the children within the camp, because through their experiences, they knew that the first thing the government comes after when they want to exert their power and force on Indigenous peoples, is our children.

I created a learning space with the help of the community within the camp. A local Elder and the youth within the camp named the space the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Owayawa (Defenders of the Water School). The learning space was created from the need to support children who were staying with their families in camp that stood in opposition to DAPL and became a beautiful way forward for my community because it was an example of education rooted in the land, the language, and the lifeways of the Ochethi Sakowin people.

We were able to practice what Dr. Bettina L. Love (2019) describes as abolitionist praxis while drawing on the imagination, creativity, resilience, refusal, and resurgence to eradicate the injustices outside of schools, and center the Ochethi Sakowin lifeways (Love, 2019; Paris, 2017, Simpson, 2017). While we were operating the Mní Wičhóni Nakíčižiŋ Owáyawa we had an autonomous space for critical education and freedom without the control of schedules, grades, or testing (Shor and Freire, 1987), even though the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) was threatening me with repercussions for running an illegal school and threatening the families with truancy for not having their children in school. There was an article written in the

online platform of the Bismarck Tribune, a local newspaper company, that has since been removed, which stated that our school within the camp had been illegally operating (Pember, 2018). There was also an article written in The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead InForum (Figure 2), a local newspaper company. The paper was titled "*Criminal activity grows as population of pipeline protesters is estimated between 2,000 and 4,000*". This article cannot be found through a Google search, yet during that time it garnered so much sympathy from white supremacists and fear mongering anti-Indigenous and pro-pipeline people.

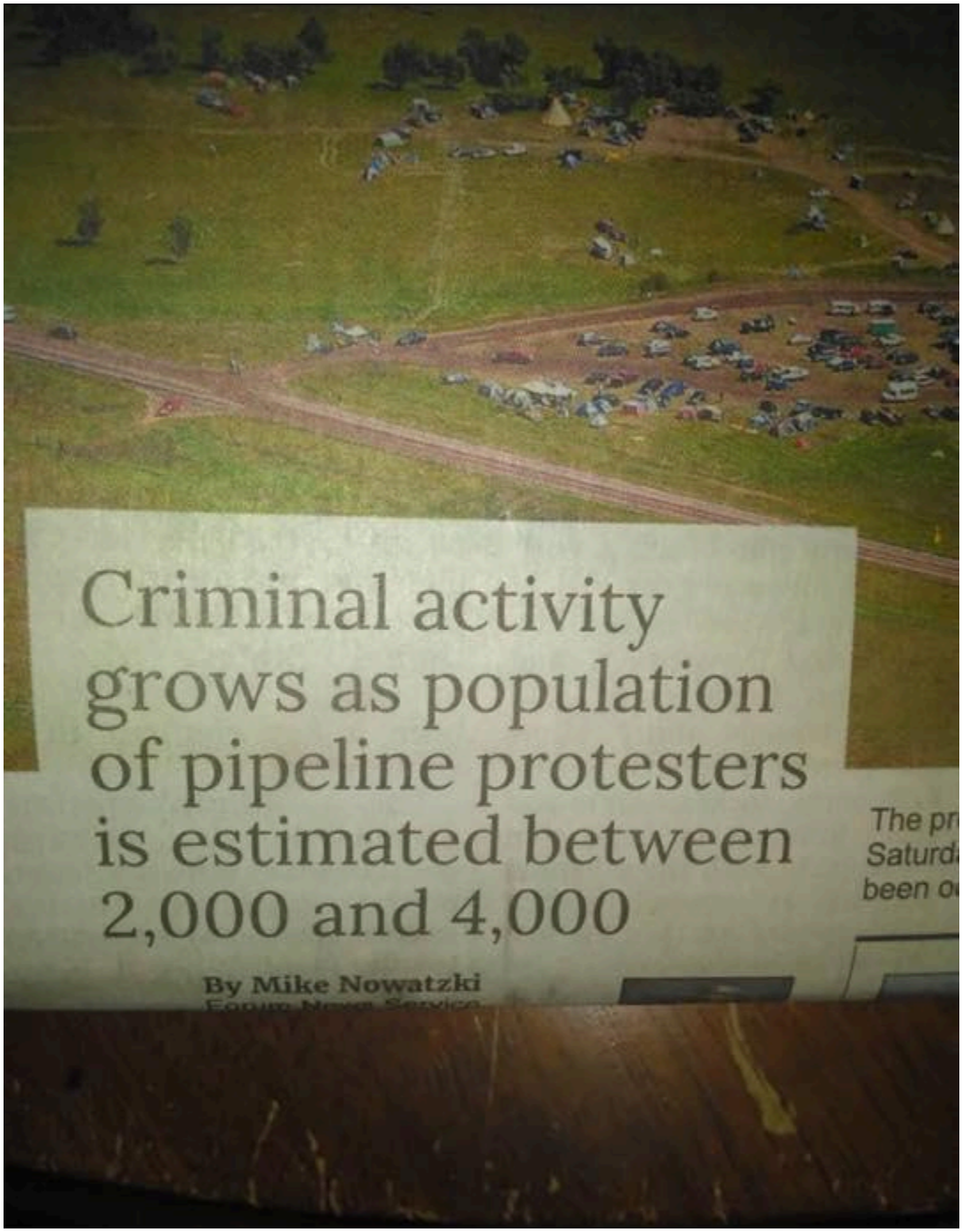

Figure 2: Photo taken by my father John Eagle Shield, Sr. Who is still an avid paper reader. This is an image of The Fargo-Moorhead InForum

During this time, I witnessed the true colors of folks who have been taught bias all their lives, who have been taught to fear anyone who doesn't believe in what they believe. I was able to critically think of how I understand formal education and I knew that any institutional setting

would not want to see us succeed, yet, we were able to co-create a space of learning for the youth that we served. Our collective vision for the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Owayawa was necessarily Ochethi Sakowin and Indigenous centered, but also coalitional and intersectional (Love, 2019). We were able to enact what Kovach (2021) describes as "shared space-liminal space" (p. 190) where worldviews can coexist and we can lean into the strengths of using alternative frameworks to "guide relational encounters that involve working across difference" (p. 191). We did not have the terms of abolitionist praxis, Indigenous cognizance or pedagogy at the time; however, there were many transformations happening far beyond educational initiatives and approaches in our teaching methods around social justice transformational education methods, Indigenous methodologies, transformational power, and felt knowledge that we were unpacking together (Kovach, 2021; Love, 2019; Harjo, 2019; Million, 2008). There was power in the ways we were sharing stories with other Tribal nations, especially the other Ochethi Sakowin tribes, after being separated for many generations. As Archibald (2008) shares "there's energy, there's strength being transmitted from the storyteller to the listener" (p. 84) and that power "feeds and revitalizes (the) mind, heart, body, and spirit in a holistic manner" (p. 85).

Mni Wichoni Health Circle

The Ochethi Sakowin Camp was a birthing place for our people – a (re)birth of ancient and new ideas, together innovating ways forward. I remember when the camp first closed in 2017, I felt a spectrum of emotions: I was sad, angry, hurt, embarrassed, confused, loved, joyous, and was deeply grieving. I felt like it was just over, that was it, an abrupt end to the biggest awakening in my life.

Over the last eight and a half years there has been a processing period, as well as a grieving period. All that has been generated out of the Water Is Life movement, and the dream of what could have been and could still be, has shifted the world in ways that are currently unfolding and also waiting to be shared and are continuously reverberating. We know that our future ancestors will benefit from the ways we stood up in those moments.

There has been energy initiatives called Anpetu Win[12], a Wind Farm, and an Indigenous Energy Initiative[13], a Solar Farm; a community economic initiative called the Standing Rock Community Development Corporation (SRCDC)[14]; an Indigenous-owned real estate company called Wite Realty[15]; and community of care wellness and food sovereignty initiatives called the Medic Healers Tent and Wozu, Inc[16] that were born out of the movement. The Medic Healers Tent changed its name twice. It became the Mni Wiconi Clinic and Farm and is now currently, Mni Wichoni Health Circle (MWHC)[17]. I currently serve as the Co-Executive Director. There have also been other initiatives inspired by those first organizations born out of the movement that are doing great work within the Standing Rock Nation, as well as others far beyond our borders.

One of our activating beliefs within the Mni Wichoni Health Circle (MWHC) is the "Pluralism of medical experiences" as "it serves a lot of the community members much better than the Western Medical perspective" (Rupa Marya, Mni Wichoni Health Circle, 2021). Through conversations between Ladonna Brave Bull Allard, Sarah Jumping Eagle, Noah Morris, Rupa Marya (past MWHC board member), Linda Black Elk (past MWHC board member) and

[12] https://anpetuwi.com/
[13] https://indigenized.energy/
[14] https://standingrockcdc.org/
[15] https://witerealty.com/
[16] https://www.wozu.net/
[17] https://mniwichonihealthcircle.org/

Elders and community members within the Ochethi Sakowin camp in 2016, the consensus choice to create a permanent space for this holistic healthcare/healing model was determined. They also discussed the need to decolonize medicine through decolonizing food by creating a farm and the fundraising and raising of awareness began. I was originally brought on as a board member and later became the Co-Executive Director, alongside Tasha Peltier. Both of us are enrolled citizens of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. We both carry a Master of Public Health with an American Indian focus and have been working within the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal communities for quite some time and more importantly were involved in our Ochethi Sakowin lifeways our whole lives. We were eager to begin co-designing this healing space with our Elders, youth, and community members.

As this work continues beyond the Ochethi Sakowin camp and within the borders of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Nation, it carries the pluralism of medicines and healing spaces forward, and in this sense, it necessarily calls upon Paris and Alim's (2017) work on Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) perpetuation and fostering – "to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism… for positive social transformation" (p. 1). Paris & Alim (2017) state "our languages, literacies, histories, and cultural ways of being as people and communities of color are not pathological" (p. 2). Through the practices that embody CSP, our organization has sought to center our community knowledge and Ochethi Sakowin genius as a path forward that "reframes the object of critique" (p. 3) from our community members to oppressive systems as well as intentionally learning from and with each other in necessary movement spaces (Eagle Shield, et. al., 2020).

Since the closing of camp, other organizations have been launched on the Standing Rock Nation as stated above, and there is currently a collective called the Oyate Oyuwitaya (Bringing

the People Together) Community Coalition that has come together to organize the new non-profit organizations started on Standing Rock. This includes community members, local businesses, our tribal college, and tribal programs so that we can work collectively, communicate, plan, organize, mobilize, and share resources in whatever ways are necessary based on the community's needs. In no way do I believe that nonprofits are the only way forward; however, they have created unique opportunities for grassroots organizers to work within communities and with community members to choose aligned funders on which to carry work forward. Non-profits support those community members who are doing the work on the ground to shift from what Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck (2009) describes as a "damage-centered" (p. 412) approach, towards a "desire-based framework… intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken and conquered" (p. 416)

It has been a difficult task to continue the work of the entities listed above, all of which I am still currently working directly with, and/or alongside. Many of us grew up around our ceremonies and lifeways and were raised by the underground generation. This is a loose term we use on Standing Rock as we engage with our families and histories and our relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) to describe our Elders and knowledge keepers methods of only sharing what they feel is sharable and at a time they feel necessary to share due to our "ways of knowing which were submerged, hidden or driven underground" (Smith, 2012, p. 72) after the killing of lala Thathanka Iyotake (grandpa Sitting Bull[18]).

Leksi (uncle) Tim Mentz, Sr. shares the story of lala Thathanka Iyotake and the vision he had of his own death. He told the ones who still held onto our lifeways that he would be killed at

[18] Sitting Bull is a famous Hunkapapa Lakota chief and spiritual leader from the Standing Rock homelands.

the hands of our own people and that when he was to be killed, in the middle of winter, lightning would strike above his head and the ground would crack and open up. That would be the sign that our people needed to shift and hold our stories, histories, lifeways, and ceremonies underground and that we would know when it was time to shift and bring them back from underground (Personal communication; Mentz, 2021). I truly believe now is that time.

Ohunkakan (Old Stories): Storytelling as Radical Ways Forward

In 2017, I was asked to present on my experience during the Water Is Life movement at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Conference in San Antonio, TX. I was so nervous because the organizer who invited me gently asked me to get familiar with the terminology used at this large education conference such as: pedagogy, ontology, and epistemology, to name a few. I felt sick to my stomach. I felt like an imposter. Who was I to be going to this large conference and sharing knowledge in front of these academics who've been in their chosen fields for decades? How can I possibly share any new knowledge with folks who could sing those terms so matter-of-factly? I consulted mentors of mine and began researching those specific words and their meanings. I have been fortunate to have been grounded in my academic career by some amazing scholars, who have also become chosen family, some of whom lovingly call themselves the Defenders of the Defenders of the Water School (DDWS)[19] because of our relationships starting at the Ochethi Sakowin Camp in 2016 during the opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). They are Dr. Django Paris, Professor Rae Paris, Dr.

[19] Defenders of the Water School is the english translation for Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Owayawa and is now referred to as the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe (Defenders of the Water Learning Space) which was started in 2016 at the Ochethi Sakowin Camp during the Water Is Life movement in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The Defenders of the Defenders of the Water School (DDWS) is a collective of scholars and chosen families who have supported, uplifted, and continue to guide the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe as the learning space serves families on Standing Rock.

Valerie Shirely, Dr. Jeremy Garcia, Dr. Timothy San Pedro, Dr. Sweeny Windchief, and Dr. Sandy Grande. They have been amazing mentors and teachers throughout my journey into my PhD program as well as sharing our message from the Water Is Life movement. More importantly, I have been grounded within my community lifeways through stories that guide me and the responsibility to pass those stories on. I have been sitting with what that responsibility means for me, my children, and future grandchildren.

As Brayboy (2005) shares, “theories, through stories and other media, are roadmaps for our communities and reminders of our individual responsibilities" (p. 427). I want to note that stories are never ending, because they are retold and remembered through new wisdoms across generations and as Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) shares, it is important for Indigenous peoples to “tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes” so that we are able to “give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying.” (p. 30). I believe we can only do that when we share and learn each other's stories and how they fit alongside our own. Because our “stories direct, inspire, and affirm an ancient code of ethics” (Simpson, 2017, p. 152).

Through my experience during the Water Is Life movement, as well as through this dissertation process, I have come to understand that my people have been enacting this academic terminology and code of ethics since time immemorial; we just did not call it by their terms, we call it lifeways. In simple definitions, I have come to understand pedagogy as ways of teaching, ontology as ways of being, and epistemology as ways of knowing, all of which I clearly understood within my community context. Onto-epistemologies, as defined by Elliott-Groves and San Pedro (n.d.), are the “nature of reality coupled with the social and relational nature of knowledge production” (p. 4). Using storywork as methodology has been instrumental in how I

understand research and connect it to the work happening within my community. Storying creates a collaborative storytelling environment rooted in Indigenous research methodologies (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019; Kovach, 2021) that centers the story, storytelling, and listener (Archibald, 2008). From this lens, everyone, whether the Elder, youth or community member, can share their knowledge of stories and begin imagining what healing could look like and where it could take place.

Educational Movements and Refusal

I went to a tribal school for elementary, middle school and high school where, even though we were a tribal school, we were forced to abide by what Eagle Shield et. al. (2021) described as a "curriculum that refuses to center the lives, histories, and contributions of BIPOC" (p. 40). We are a sovereign nation still abiding by the U.S. Nation State educational standards, and there is a lot to unpack. Since becoming a parent, I have wondered how to address my own children's education since I have had a small taste of education spaces that center on the well-being of the child and their families (e.g., Lakota Language Immersion Nest, which I will explain later, and the Defenders of the Water School). My family consists of six individuals, which includes myself, my husband and our four children: 15 years old, ten years old, three years old, and two years old.

Our two oldest children were among the first children to attend the Lakhol'iyapi Wahoh'pi (Lakota Language Immersion Nest) that opened in 2012. My dad, their grandpa, and a well respected Elder within our community of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, John Eagle Shield Sr., was the only fluent speaking immediate family member to any of the children when the school opened. Similar to my upbringing, our children have been raised in our Ochethi Sakowin

lifeways and have been immersed in our languages, cultures, traditions, and ceremonies. They have been told of their histories and have been involved in our people's most current movement, the Water Is Life movement. Figure 3 below, was created by a local community member and artist named Gilbert Kills Pretty Enemy III and it depicts the Lakhol'iyapi Wahohpi (Lakota Language Immersion Nest) children singing a prayer song at the Ochethi Sakowin Camp in 2016 during the Water Is Life movement, and Figure 4, was the inspiration for Figure 3. My daughter is in the middle with the blue jingle dress[20]. The Ochethi Sakowin camp was set up in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) that was proposed to be built just miles north of the Standing Rock reservation boundaries. My childrens' peoples' "oral historical narratives" (TallBear, 2014, p. 3) and ancestors' prayers are intricately linked to their identities. These can be used as a way "to counteract the dominant colonial histories" (Tallbear, 2014, p. 3) that are taught within the dominant public schooling systems.

[20] The jingle dress, also known as a healing dress, comes from the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Nations. It is an Indigenous women/girl/two-spirit powwow regalia dress made with many round metal sheets shaped into cones and hung in rows that make a loud noise when the cones hit together as the wearer dances.

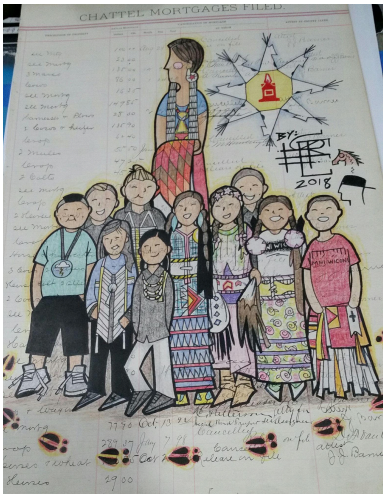

Figure 3: Ledger art[21] by Gilbert Kills Pretty Enemy III of the Lakhol'iyapi Wahohpi (Lakota Language Immersion Nest)

Figure 4: The Lakhol'iyapi Wahohpi (Lakota Language Immersion Nest) singing a prayer song at the Ochethi Sakowin Camp in 2016 (Original inspiration for the ledger art of Figure 1)

During the Water Is Life movement, relatives joined us from around the globe to stand in opposition to DAPL. It was the first time we could be completely immersed in our Ochethi Sakowin lifeways all day long and share models of holistic community care that were deeper than simply learning about ourselves and others through a textbook. This is the education that I desire for my children and the children of our communities. Elders always say education starts in

[21] Form of art started in the late 19th century by Plains Indians, who were forced onto reservations, and is a way of documenting history through art that is usually done on old ledger pages or account books.

the home and there is so much within (re)vitalization and resurgence work to decolonize and reconceptualize the term education to be rooted within the home (San Pedro & Bang, 2021).

To illustrate my thought process, I will share a story of my oldest daughter and how our praxis for learning and healing together continues to deeply interrogate our traumas (intergenerational trauma and cellular memory), internalized racism, anti-darkness and racism (Love, 2019) and we are continuously finding ways to grieve so we can find our collective and individual (Black and) Brown joy (Love, 2019).

My dissertation data collection started in May 2023 and will continue through lifetimes as I am still gathering data, getting clarity on the families' voices and making sure I am representing their thought processes and brilliance in the necessary ways. As families and individuals, their teachings will reverberate throughout their lifetimes and they will share their teachings with their families, children, and communities for generations to come. Throughout this process of writing my dissertation, I was reflecting on my experience of co-writing *Protecting the Promise* (2021). I remember those stories I shared about how our home and community had been sustaining and revitalizing our culture, languages, and identities (San Pedro & Bang, 2021). My oldest child and oldest daughter Kyyalyn, who until starting a mostly white high school in the fall of 2022, had been homeschooled for most of their life, expressed their exhaustion by saying: "Mom, I'm tired! Being Native isn't my whole identity." (Personal Communication; K. Eagle Shield, 2022). It was a part of a longer discussion that ultimately created this inner turmoil within me and I felt heartbroken trying to decipher their message of exhaustion. I was consoled by my parents, chosen family, and my husband as we discussed how to have this conversation with her (Kyya). I called on aunties, grandmas, and chosen relatives to

love Kyyalyn; not lecture her, not tell her how lucky she is, not invalidate her exhaustion, just to love her.

I reflected on Rae Paris' (2017) work as I prepared to have the discussion with Kyyalyn about her exhaustion and I reread the passage about *Brown v. Board of Education*[22] and the views of Civil Rights figure Clyde Kennard, a Black Korean War Veteran, on segregation as natural; however, experience taught him that attaining the "goal of first class citizenship" (Paris, 2017, p. 14), means associating more closely with the dominant, white culture. I was wondering about the pressures Kyya was feeling to attain this goal. I was again reminded of this tool of schooling that has always been used to assimilate and erase Indigenous and Black folks and how it exhausted my child to the point of her naming that navigating being Native in a mainly non-Native society, and having to balance the two, is exhausting, before she even reached their high school midterms. I was heartbroken, because she has been a part of so many movements in her young age, one in particular was when she was among the very first babies in Ochethi Sakowin territory, to speak and revitalize our language in many generations. Another is when she attended school at the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Owayawa for a few weeks or when she traveled hundreds of miles to Washington D.C. in 2021, when our youth were again protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. To me those are huge milestones in her life's journey, but according to this education-industrial complex, she did not have a record of grades or an attendance sheet to prove she was accumulating hours to legitimize her studies.

Sabzalian (2019), states that "by ignoring political identities, roles, and rights of Indigenous citizens and nations in favor of framing Indigenous identity as an exclusively cultural topic, this literature reflects and reproduces a core practice of settler colonialism- the erasure of

[22] The ending of segregational schooling due to the inherent unequal quality of education Black students were receiving in comparison to their white counterparts.

Indigenous Peoples'" (p. 2). Reading this reminded me of the immense work that needs to continue to happen. My daughter has been involved in huge "civic engagement and action" (p. 2) throughout their life and those are a part of their cultural and political identity (Sabzalian, 2019). Yet, because of the "white gaze (and the kindred patriarchal, cisheteronormative, English-monolingual, ableist, classist, xenophobic, Judeo-Christian gazes)" (Paris and Alim, 2017, p. 2) and the "One Nation discourse" (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 3) that pushes the colonial logics of multicultural education within schooling systems, while ignoring their actual lived experiences, continues to push Indigenous erasure and is "evidence of the ongoing colonization and the practice of cultural imperialism (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 14) of Indigenous students. Which of course carries on into adulthood and makes all of us, as Indigenous peoples, question our worthiness when compared to these institutions that don't see us or our existence. This is why my dissertation project around creating cradleboards and learning together about Indigenous birthing practices was so important. There's a resilience within each of us that is yearning to be. We are yearning to heal and to be connected to our communities in important and necessary ways for our spirits to be called back to ourselves.

As I think about the path forward for my oldest child, as well as my three younger children coming up behind our oldest, I necessarily call on the Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander relatives to imagine an otherwise for not only my children, but all our children and the young children within each of us who were ever ashamed to be who they are. Our ways of storying together and being in relationship together have been through enacting practices of education that is theory in action, yet, the pull for our children to be in these state sanctioned schooling systems because of the pressure for them to get good grades, so they can get into a good college, and get a good job (i.e., conform to the colonial systems of what is

valued as education and become another worker in the 9am-5pm industrial work complex of what's considered a good job with good pay). These are painful pathways that seem to be the status quo for everyone. We don't have time or space to reimagine or reawaken ourselves to our lifeways.

It hasn't been easy by any means, especially during the pandemic when we all needed our "systems of relationships" (Elliot-Groves, et. al., 2020, p. 162). The ways my oldest was healing through their traumas, as well as their ancestral traumas, was difficult. As Elliott-Groves et. al. (2020) shares "a disruption in connectedness seriously challenges our continuing survival in the world" (p. 160). This is what led us to allow school to be a viable option for our older kids: connections and community. However, learning from scholars on the importance of "micro-practices (questioning, directing, narrating)" (Marin & Bang, 2018, p. 112) and "collective capacities" (Elliott-Groves, et. al., 2020, p. 160) as being legitimate ways to ensure individual and collective livelihoods while being able story on the land with others should be valued as education. There were pressures (i.e., from family, education systems, and well meaning friends and relatives/chosen family) we were receiving as a family, with an older child of high school, and soon to be college, age to be slammed into the schooling system, as if our ways of enacting storywork and Indigenous education weren't valued enough.

As I will share throughout my dissertation, our stance on wanting to uplift Indigenous technologies such as the cradleboard and to revitalize traditional birthing practices, are many times met with fear and viewed as dangerous because colonization tactics are strong and swift. However; as you'll see, our lifeways are stronger. As Kickapoo scholar, Elder, and birth keeper Patrisia Gonzales (2012) shares, "I choose to experience life from the coherence created by Red Medicine rather than the coherence of colonization. I'd like to believe that when the power of the

human spirit combines with IK [Indigenous Knowledge] and a living universe, Indigenous peoples or original peoples can prevail to dispel the disconnection to ancestral relationships with the life energies… De-Indigenization is reversible. Reclaiming the power to tell and retell our stories of relationship is a function of the principle of regeneration" (p. 226).

Chuwic'inpa (Cradleboard) Teachings as a Design Conjecture

This study uses chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) teachings as a design conjecture: "embodied elements of the design (that) generate(s) mediating processes" (Sandoval, 2014; p. 22) which shares that there can be an embodiment of four elements of learning environments (i.e., tools and materials, task structures, participant structures, and discursive practices) (Sandovol, 2014; p. 22). I am imagining the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) as potentially being a site where all four design conjectures can be embodied, which then mediate the regeneration process through relationships that Gonzales (2012) shares in her book *Red Medicine*. As you will see in later chapters, the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers were enacting sovereignty in many ways by leading with prayer and ceremony, and not waiting for permission to be given to them by outside voices. They were leaning into their collective power through our lifeways, which became a part of the deep ripple in the consciousness for our communities.

I spent the last three and a half years truly learning and understanding what Gonzales (2012) means when she says "the body is not separate from the cosmos or land" (p. 232). I believe I deeply engaged with this while creating a chuwic'inpa for our third baby while I prepared for our home birth process during a collective, world pandemic. I learned to embody the birthing ceremony and couple it with one of the most beautiful of Indigenous technologies, the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard). My desire since then, has been to share these teachings, which is the central goal of this study, to dive into the ways that reclaiming and reawakening these

ancestral teachings and Indigenous technologies can become a resurgence site within individuals and families. Beginning in May 2023, I began working intentionally on sharing the teachings of the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) and engaging with families on how they were making meaning through the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) making process. Below are the research questions that I engaged with during this dissertation study:

1) *How do we build off the strengths and times of resistance to breathe life back into our current birth teachings, practices, and ceremonies?*
2) *How can cradleboarding and birthing ceremonies offer a remapping framework forward?*
3) *How does Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) create paths towards understanding the remapping currently unfolding in Ochethi Sakowin communities?*

Oomani Unkagapi kte (Let's Take a Journey): Storying Through my Dissertation

In Chapter Two, "Conceptualizing and Theorizing our Collective Responsibility to the Embodiment of Resurgence and Enactment", I share a brief introduction into the ways that settler colonialism has impacted our lifeways, especially around birthing and childrearing. I also share very important frameworks and structures of sovereignty that have come to the forefront of my work, that have always been guiding lights in my life and my upbringing. In Chapter Three, "Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): Reawakening Models of Indigenous Birthing, Healing, and Education Resurgence by Enacting Indigenous Methodologies", I share the methodological framework for my study that necessarily calls upon Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways). I also introduce chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) as a necessary framework for understanding the processes I experienced with the families through this dissertation study. Chapter Four, "Makhoceowapiya (Mapping): Mapping Paths Towards Collective Abundance" is where I dive deep into my own upbringing as my first experiences with mapping, and examine ways that I

experienced mapping and futurity practices throughout the study with the families. I will discuss the ways the stories of the families bridged together to create powerful intentions for the future of our people, as well as the beautiful ceremonial practices that the families engaged in. We also discussed the cradleboard and its evolution. Chapter Five, "Chuwic'inpa (Cradleboard): [Chuwic (upper back) + k'in (to carry smth) + ounpA (to wrap/lay into)]: Wrapping our Future Generations in Radical Love", focuses on the cradleboard making process. I also share the themes that emerged during our time with the families. We get to hear from the families first hand accounts of their hopes and dreams for their futures. I will share how the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) became a resurgence site for restoring kinship systems. Chapter Six offers ways forward for others to enact their Indigenous sovereignties in ways that are necessary for them and their families. I offer implications for future studies and research, as well as highlighting the ways we are already embodying and enacting our Indigenous brilliance and genius for the future generations to come.

Conclusion:

I have learned a great deal from the ways that scholars have shared their research through storying. I made connections through their work and was able to validate the work that we are doing within my community as valid and worthy of being considered research through storying as methodology, even if we don't use those terms within my community.

The idea of radical relationality offered by Yazzie & Baldy (2018), centers our connected relationality to water that "brings together the multiple strands of materiality, kinship, corporeality, affect, land/body connection and multidimensional connectivity" (p. 2). Building on these ideas, that we are all connected by the need of water, through our creation rooted in land and the stars, and that we all need relationships to survive, then we can understand the

importance of what Marin & Bang (2018) argue that "relationships with the land and walking are important to knowledge-making processes, especially when it comes to ecosystems" (p. 91) because our relationships to the land are as important as our relationships to each other in our knowledge making and sense making. We do this through storying together, while being on the land and reawakening to our lifeways and practices.

One of the ten tenets that Brayboy (2005) outlines in his critical work around TribalCrit is that "tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups" (p. 429). Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo (2019) shares, building off of the amazing Creek poet Joy Harjo's *Map to the Next World* (J. Harjo, as cited in L. Harjo, 2019), that in order to reach the lush promise of radical sovereignty and make it to the next world, we as a community and individuals need to imagine and create "new and decolonized" (p. 62) maps of our lifeways, protocols, and original teachings. Indigenous Storywork (ISW) can be a living map to what Creek scholar and poet Joy Harjo and Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo describe in conversation: the lush promise to the next world (Archibald, 2008; Harjo, 2019) because having the knowledge of your people, your lands, and your histories, coupled with the ways a "group defines themselves, their place in the world, and their cultures is a form of power" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 436). As you will see in the following chapters, this study exemplifies that form of power.

We have seen this powerful reclamation through storying come to fruition with the Water Is Life movement and beyond in the ways our stories have been told and retold through our experiences during that monumental time within our collective history. I am grateful my family

and my children were a part of that movement and moment in time, and I will continue to work on unpacking those lessons.

I'd prefer my children to prioritize our ceremonies and lifeways, civic engagement within movement spaces, connections to the land, nation-building, and Indigenous systems of relational accountability (Elliott-Groves, et. al., 2020; Yazzie & Baldy, 2018; Dennison, 2020; Wilson, 2008) that "focuses on making change possible through increasing communication, fostering respect, and ensuring actions are motivated by community interests" (Dennison, 2020, p. 297). We know that relationality has always been, and will always be, central to our well-being and is now being studied as an "intervention strategy" (Elliott-Groves, 2018, p. 337). Our lifeways and "ceremonies teach us that our well-being is tied to our environment and our community" (Yazzie & Baldy, 2018, p. 8).

This is the education we were offering and instilling in our children, and throughout this dissertation study. This is the education I hope to carry forward to my future grandchildren. It can only happen through sharing our experiences through storying on the land, about the land and the cosmos, with our relatives.

Chapter 2: Hena Oyate-Thawichoh'an Hecha (The People's Responsibility): Conceptualizing and Theorizing our Collective Responsibility to the Embodiment of Resurgence

"One does not future hoard… I cannot have faith in scarcity."- Kim TallBear (2017)

"We find our way forward by going back."- *Becoming Kin* by Anishanaabe Scholar Patty Krawec

Introduction:

Mitákuye Owás'iŋ ***We are all related***

Lakȟól'iya imáčhaǧe šni,	*I did not grow up speaking Lakota*
k'éyaš mičhíŋča kiŋ topa lakȟótiya wóglakapi okíhipi	*but so that my four babies could speak Lakota*
kta čha lakȟól'iya uŋspémič'ičhiye.	*I taught myself Lakota.*
Eháŋk'ehaŋ uŋtȟúŋpi šni itȟókab,	*Long ago before we were born,*
wičháhuŋkake kiŋ otákuye kiŋ owás'iŋ	*the ancestors and every single one of their relations*
thekíčhiȟilapi.	*loved each other.*
Uŋčí Makȟá na Tȟuŋkášila kiŋ slolkíyapi.	*They knew their Grandmother Earth and their Grandfathers.*
Wičháhuŋkake k'uŋ iyápi waŋ	*Those ancestors spoke a language*
wakȟáŋ čha iyápi,	*that is sacred,*
na eháŋni wičhóȟ'aŋ kiŋ gluhápi	*(and) they held their ancient traditions,*
na Wamákȟaškaŋ oyáte kiŋ iyuha ób wičháni.	*and they lived with all the nations that live upon the Earth.*
Uŋčí Makȟá wičháhuŋkake k'uŋ	*Grandmother Earth provided thoroughly*
owás'iŋ taŋyéȟči wówičhakič'u.	*for all of those ancestors.*
Aŋpétu kiŋ lé blihénič'iyapi	*Today you must take care and believe*
na Iyápi nitȟáwapi kiŋ na eháŋni wičhóȟ'aŋ kiŋ wičáyalapi kte héčha.	*in your languages and lifeways.*
Iyápi nitȟáwapi kiŋ na eháŋni wičhóȟ'aŋ kiŋ	*Your language and lifeways,*
nič'íksuyapi háŋtaŋš	*If you remember them*
uŋkítȟakožakpakupi kiŋ owás'iŋ	*all of your grandchildren*
iyápi nitȟáwapi kiŋ wóglakapi	*will talk your language*
na eháŋni wičhóȟ'aŋ kiŋ úŋpi kte.	*and exist through the lifeways.*
Oyáte kiŋ nípi kta čha léčhamuŋ.	*I do this so the people will live.*
Mitákuye Owás'iŋ	*We are all related.*

- *Alayna Eagle Shield, Hocoka Khutepi Win (Shoots at Her in the Midst/Middle)*

The above poem was my attempt to share who I am and who I am responsible to, despite the colonial and capitalistic agenda: my language, my lifeways, my ancestors, my homelands (which includes the land, water and more-than-humans (MTH)), my people, my babies, and my

future grandchildren. I drafted the poem above, during my first class as Ph.D. student at the University of Washington in the summer of 2019. I have since altered the poem with each new experience and now share the poem here in my dissertation. The class was titled *Black and Indigenous Theories of Educational Liberation and Resurgence* and the class was masterfully co-curated and co-facilitated by Quechua scholar Sandy Grande and Black scholar Leslie Williams as a part of the Distinguished Summer Scholars Program at the Banks Center for Educational Justice within the University of Washington College of Education.

Black and Indigenous Theories of Educational Liberation and Resurgence was foundational for how I envisioned my work moving forward, whether in academics, land-based educational settings, the nonprofit sector, or healthcare. The course demonstrated how necessary it is to be in solidarity, and after learning with Dr. Grande and Dr. Williams, I now understand that "SHIT IS COMPLICATED" (Personal Communication, Sandy Grande, 2019). That first class taught me how schooling has been a tool used, simultaneously, for forced Indigenous assimilation and erasure as well as the withholding of schooling for Black folks to continue to build on anti-Blackness and to push for Black labor. I used the term schooling in place of education, because schooling has historically been centered upon settler colonial logics and white hegemonic norms (Eagle Shield, et al., 2021).

It was my first-time gaining awareness of our intersecting and interlocking oppressions (Combahee River Collective, 1986) of Black and Indigenous communities. Our main goal for the class was to develop a deeper understanding of the ways that racial and colonial structures have continued to be manifested in detrimental ways and ultimately learn, in community (which was the summer class and beyond), how we can envision new possible futures and find solutions to how we collectively get free. However, many of us who attended the class did not even realize

we weren't free yet. We had to, and continue to, do this through storying together. Through colonial design, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander folks weren't meant to hear each other's stories or learn about each other's histories; however, they are pieces of our own histories that have been incomplete (Krawec, 2022), by design, to keep us from seeing each other's humanness and from seeing each other as relatives.

Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander communities continue to educate their own in various ways through new and ancient cultural lifeways. We continue to fight for liberation, sovereignty, water, land, and our very lives- through profound affirmations of our existence: Black Lives Matter, FREE PALESTINE, and Water Is Life. Yet, even though our communities have continued to share stories and uplift our cultural lifeways, we are co-implicated under capitalism and have been moving towards what Deloria (2006) describes as "increasing and meaningless secularity" (p. xvii). This is why solidarity is so vital in being able to acknowledge that we are all living under capitalism with very complicated and entangled histories.

As I shared in the Martinez et al. (2021) *In Dialogue: Solidarity* article, "When I think about solidarity, I really do think about what it means to look at each other as relatives" (p. 445). This is so important to my work because there is so much we don't know about each other, which can create ignorance about how we do our work. Krawec (2022) shares a quote from Angela Davis: "Our histories never unfold in isolation" (p. 15), yet because of the ways white supremacy continues to share, and silence, history, in an effort to push their own agenda, we have been remembering and (re)telling stories that are incomplete. I begin this chapter reflecting on my first course here and what it taught me about solidarity because it was the first time that I

deeply engaged in research and theory toward liberation in that way, and it helped set my path for engaging it forward.

When I engage in the theories and methodologies of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP), Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Indigenist Community Participatory Research, Rememory and Unforgetting, Decolonizing Methodologies, Indigenous Intelligence, Indigenous Futurity, and Indigenous Storywork (Paris & Alim, 2017; Wallerstein, 2018; Walters et al, 2020; Paris, 2017; Krawec, 2021; Simpson, 2014; Harjo 2019; Smith, 2012; Archibald, 2008; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Brayboy, 2005;), I am able to see the brilliance and genius within our own communities and imagine what it could be like to be fully led by our lifeways and spiritual practices towards khilakhota, becoming human again. In this chapter, using these guiding theories and methodological practices, I aim to share in this chapter, and the following chapters, the ways scholars have engaged storywork in their research and have used the past, present and future to identify disruptions in knowledge transmission.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways settler colonialism has influenced and impacted our original teachings, specifically around birthing practices, and aim to identify where disruptions in those practices might have happened that steered us away from our original teachings. I will also share how our ancient frameworks and structures of sovereignty could be a resurgence site for us to embody our birthing and healing practices again.

Ehanni Woyakapi (History): Unforgetting and Reclaiming our Indigenous Frameworks

Our people deserve more than simply to survive; they deserve to thrive and be happy, surrounded by radical love, and to be healthy in mind, body and spirit. Settler colonialism has impacted our communities in immeasurable ways and as Tuck (2009) shares, we are “expected to have gotten over the past, which is reduced to the unfortunate birth pangs of a new nation” (p.

415). We need to have a base understanding of the context within which racism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism has impacted our communities; otherwise as Tuck (2009) states, building off of Kelley (1997), that "all we're left with is the damage, and this makes our stories vulnerable to pathologizing analyses" (p. 415).

Our communities are reflecting back to those lifeways that have always sustained us, while walking towards lifeways that will continue to evolve and embrace the growing dynamics of what will sustain our future generations. First, we need to acknowledge the harms of past, and current, policies and learn ways to shift our minds from the damage to the desires of our communities (Tuck, 2009). My ways of learning about birth and Indigenous medicine are similar to Patrisia Gonzales when she states: "my anatomy of learning is 'data gathering' in Native science, where direct experience is valued over abstract understanding" (Gonzales, 2012, p. 15) because our stories are in context, they are in the land, they are in the doing and the unfolding. It is important to remember this as we unpack the ways settler colonialism has impacted Indigenous natural laws, which were cyclical and grounded in "generosity, mutuality, and interdependence" (Gonzales, 2012, p. 16), because in some communities, it is stigmatized for our people to turn to those ways because we have been indoctrinated for so long.

I refer to our/my/Indigenous people/homelands/children interchangeably as I describe the history outlined in the preceding timeline because, as Wolfe (2006) states, "invasion (of settler colonialism) is a structure not an event" (p. 388) that continues its eliminatory processes because were continuously reliving these moments in time and rehealing from these structures. Our Indigenous people have been at the mercy of federal policies that were intended to break them from the very ties to their identities: their connections to land, languages and lifeways for the sole purpose of gaining access to territory. Our homelands were stolen, we were forced to

migrate into other territories, our children were stolen and placed into boarding schools and our creator given ceremonies and languages were outlawed and forced to be forgotten. Before settler colonial contact, Indigenous communities co-existed in a unique accord with other tribes and the lands with "sophisticated agricultural, navigational, medicinal and technological advances that we continue to use and learn from to this day" (Walters, n.d., Tribal Independence Era Overview, para 1). On the *Native Americans in Philanthropy* website, there is a detailed chronological timeline written by Dr. Karina Walters, which is broken into 10 different eras: 1) Tribal Independence Era; 2) Epidemics, Slavery, Massacres, and Indigenous Resistance; 3) Invasion from All Directions – Stolen Lands, Stolen People; 4) Strategic Alliances and Trail of Broken Treaties; 5) Sovereign Nation Era Ends; 6) Indian Removal Era Begins; 7) Reservation Era Begins; 8) Boarding School and Land Allotment Eras; 9) Indian New Deal, Tribal Termination, and Urban Relocation; and 10) Indian Self-Determination and Self-Governance Era (Walters, n.d.). This site highlights the timeline of genocide, ethnocide and epistemicide that occurred on Turtle Island[23]. There is a disclaimer that these traumatic events should not be confused with other events that are traumatic, such as natural disasters because these were strategic and occurred over generations, and continue through intergenerational transmission in the preceding generations (Walters, n.d., timeline overview, para 2).

From about 1492-1878, after our first experience with colonization to the end of the Reservation Era, Indian nations[24] had undergone brutal hardships. The Doctrine of Discovery propelled the stealing of land on behalf of Christianity and disease ran rampant within Indigenous communities. Invasions and massacres were unending from all directions because

[23] Indigenous folks have used the term *Turtle Island* to Identify North America because many Indigenous creation stories share a story of the lands being created upon a turtle's back, as well as its shape is similar to an outline of a turtle.
[24] Indian nations is a term that was designated by the U.S. Government/U.S. Nation State and will be used interchangeably with Indigenous communities.

Indigenous resistance was undying. We have gone through forced removal and were placed onto reservations where blood-quantum[25] laws were implemented and fraudulent treaties, that were meant to protect us and our lands, were signed, but not honored. Our history is riddled with broken promises and broken treaties. During this time, the U.S. Nation State engaged in a "civilization campaign to eradicate Native identities, presence, and connection to their lands in order to fully dispossess them of their territories" (Walters, n.d., Sovereign Nation Era Ends Overview, para 1). I believe it was during this period, in the early 1800's, when Congress pushed money towards the civilization campaign and when we were forced onto reservations that we were forced to stop birthing our babies according to our own lifeways. We were no longer able to birth on the land, with our Indigenous birthkeepers (who would be considered midwives by today's definitions but were far more connected to land, cosmos, and the surrounding entities), and welcome our sacred beings Earth side from the stars in a powerful ceremony. We were forced to abide by their Christian protocols. This is also when the Ochethi Sakowin resistance and uprising were taking place following the continued invasion of our lands over our natural resources.

From about 1879-1933, during the boarding school and land allotment eras, Indian nations were being forced onto reservations where lower blood-quantums were incentivized and Tribal leadership roles were devalued and destroyed. Indian nations were also excluded from economic and political systems. Children were being stolen from their homes and forced into missionary-run and operated boarding schools. Many of the health issues Indigenous people face today are a direct result of the federal government targeting land, language, and lifeways to try to

[25] Agents would look at a person and decide their ratio of "blood" based solely on their looks. They would be labeled ⅛, ½, ¾, or full-blood (among other countless ratio formulas). This method of measuring our Indianness was used to eventually be able to dilute our blood to dispossess us of our land.

eliminate the important ties to Indigenous peoples' identities and to essentially follow through with Captain Richard H. Pratt's motto: "kill the Indian, and save the man" (Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, n.d.). With forced assimilation and federal laws targeting Indigenous communities, health issues and environmental problems ensued.

From about 1934-present day, the termination, relocation, and self-determination eras were a time when Indian nation living conditions were finally sparking outrage amongst non-Indigenous folks and Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). The U.S. Government began templating their governmental structures and practices and passing those templates to Tribes, believing they were creating "opportunities to build tribal economies, create medical services, and construct roads, water systems, and schools" (Walters, n.d., Indian New Deal, Tribal Termination, and Urban Relocation Overview, para 1); however, it is handed down through a settler colonial and white supremacy lens. As soon as more natural resources (i.e., coal and uranium) are found, the termination and relocation policies are swiftly implemented. The development of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) creates a process of placing Indian children who are being adopted out with Indian families (Indian Affairs, n.d.). Ironically (or not so ironically), because the fight for land, our natural resources, and our bodies is never ending, in 2022, ICWA was again under attack (Baxter, et. al., 2022). The American Indian Movement (AIM), a monumental movement learned from the Black Panther movement, was founded in Minneapolis to fight against police violence. Many movements continued across Indian Country, including the First Indian International Indian Treaty Council gathering of 1974 on the Standing Rock Nation[26] which fought for the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 to be passed. This allowed Indigenous people the freedom to "believe, express, and exercise their

[26] https://declarationproject.org/?p=70

traditional rights and spiritual and cultural practices" (Walters, n.d., Indian Self-Determination and Self-Governance Era American Indian Religious Freedom Act, para 1).

However, as we know, we never stopped fighting for our lifeways. According to Akwesasne scholar, Elder, and birth keeper Katsi Cook (2011), throughout the 1960s and 1970s "the voice of Native sovereignty was being raised throughout the hemisphere" (p. 81). Five key areas being uplifted within the Six Nations territories, which included: "control of our land base, control of jurisdiction within the land base, control of education, control of psycho-religious life, and control of production and reproduction… not just biological reproduction… but also reproduction of our society and culture, of clanship, kinship, and language" (Cook, 2011, p. 81). This movement of the Akwesasne nation through the accounts of Cook and the people of Mexico through the accounts of Gonzales, including the accounts of my own people and our movements within the Ochethi Sakowin Nations, have influenced my way of thinking in monumental ways, specifically the ways that pregnancy and birth are viewed as ceremony and re-enactments of creation (Cook, 2011; Gonzales, 2012). Reconnecting the story of Fallen Star at the beginning of this dissertation, in the prologue, our creation stories bring amazing light to the power of birth and how every single "birth is re-weaving and re-creating of the world, encoding patterns and knowledge that inform the growth and development of the individual as well as the culture" (Cook, 2011, p. 81). Through these patterns and knowledge systems, we are able to see glimpses into the ways our ancestors viewed the world and viewed structures of sovereignty.

Thiwakhan (Thipi): Our Persistent Structure of Sovereignty

"Sovereignty is a spiritual commitment of a people."- (Tim Mentz Sr., 2021, as cited in Eagle Shield, 2021)

At the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the world in its tracks, and Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander communities were among the most devastatingly impacted. In a moment of crisis, Indigenous communities, who are still working to unravel conditioning and indoctrination on all levels (e.g., education systems, healthcare systems, tribal governmental systems, history of policing), while working through "historical unresolved grief and historical trauma" (Heart & Debruyn, 1998; p. 60) from over 500 years of settler colonialism, were offered money from the United States Government.

The American Rescue Plan Act (2021), also known as ARPA, was a designated amount of money that was line itemized and titled "Title XI- Committee on Indian Affairs" (p. 240). Indigenous communities were offered a percentage of the total ARPA and told to use those relief funds in specific ways. For many tribes, those funds sat stagnant. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006), offer a pendulum metaphor, built off the work of Felix S. Cohen (1953), which signified the rises and falls of legal strategies used with American Indians. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) coined the term *safety zone theory* as "swings of Indian policy" (p. 6) based on the proximity to safety and their counter swings towards dangerous practices and beliefs of Indian people as it relates to a shared American (settler) identity. There have been real psychological consequences coupled with the conditioning Indigenous communities have undergone, and this theory illustrates the tangible fears that Indigenous communities hold (i.e., policy changes in relation to perceived threats to the nation-state). Therefore, when this ARPA money was distributed to tribal communities, there was a reckoning of the mistrust of the government and what were the best paths forward with the funds that would not cause tribes to be reprimanded.

In the meantime, our Elders and knowledge keepers were dying by the hundreds. Moms and their babies were both contracting COVID-19 in the hospitals while the mothers birthed

alone. It was a scary and uncertain time, but families began networking and using social media to reconnect with relatives near and far and leaned into their true sovereignty. In the New Lakota Dictionary, which was created and developed by the Lakota Language Consortium (operated by non-Indigenous people), the word "igluha" is in place for sovereignty that connotes ways to conduct oneself, to be autonomous, to live honestly, and to be responsible for oneself. It is very western and individualistic in discourse because the organization founders translated through their understanding and not through our ancestral ways of knowing.

I share all of this to illustrate the devastation that can arise from the dynamics that have always been at play when our Elders and knowledge keepers discuss sovereignty and this idea of living in two-worlds. I shared the concept of living in two-worlds early in Chapter 1, as being this binary of Indigenous (traditional) and Euro-centric (Christian). To Indigenous folks, it is not an easy path to walk, but we have to reckon with it daily. We are forced to abide by the rules of the United States government, while supposedly being a sovereign Nation. When we think of sovereignty, we must return to our original thoughts and philosophies, and original instructions (OI) (Nelson, 2008, as cited in Walters et. al., 2020).

Leksi (uncle) Tim Mentz Sr. and I have had many conversations and this one in particular I recorded through a podcasting website called Anchor. The conversation Leksi Tim and I had was timely, as I have been writing about how birth can be used as an anchor to call our spirits back, to call the spirits of our babies here, to rebirth and renew our lifeways for our current realities. This podcast was created as a homework option for one of my classes called *Indigenous Sovereignties* that I took with Dr. Jean Dennison in 2021.

It has been one of my favorite assignments to date because I got to solidify the learnings with my community of choosing, not just within my classroom setting. I titled the podcast

Owothanla Igluha (to live honestly). I recorded an episode with leksi Tim and I titled it *Governance and Sovereignty with Tim Mentz Sr*. In the podcast, leksi Tim says that "sovereignty is a spiritual commitment of a people" (Eagle Shield, 2021). He shared the structure of Thiwakhan, which as mentioned in the story of Fallen Star, mirrors Orion's Belt, and it represents the tripod in a thipi that signifies our three language dialects of the Ochethi Sakowin people: Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, and is the heart of our whole creation and structure as a people, and Nation. The foundation is our language. In the thipi, these three poles are tied together by a rope, which signifies the umbilical cord, connecting our worlds. You can hear leksi Tim fumbling to get his reading glasses on as he begins pointing to what I offer as Figure 5 below, as he is sharing and discussing the connections to the stars and how it relates to the roles of our traditional leaders. Leksi Tim created this Figure from memory based on the stories his Elders told him. He recreated it using a laptop and an app (i.e., Microsoft Word). This is what I mean when I say we can create new paths and new ways forward using the combination of our Indigenous technologies and Western technologies.

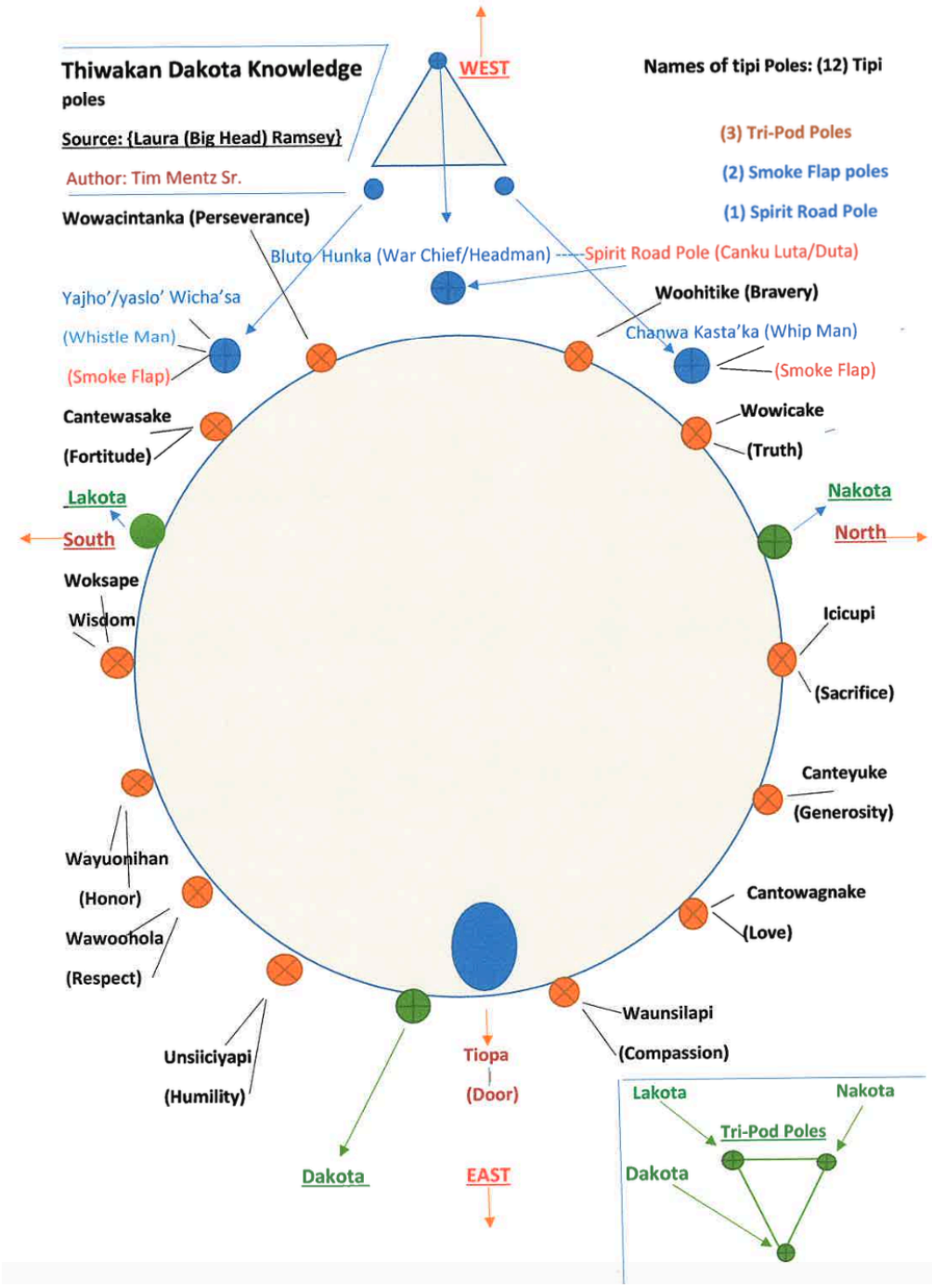

Figure 5: Thiwakan Dakota Knowledge- Structure of Sovereignty- Tipi Pole Names by Tim Mentz Sr.

He describes a flow between star knowledge and the leadership within Ochethi Sakowin lifeways and the responsibility of those leaders to know these connections to the stars and our

stories. He also describes how sovereignty necessitates the woman and there are five values that women already possess[27]: Chantowagnake (love), Chanteyuke (generosity), Icicupi (sacrifice), Waunsilapi (compassion), and Wowichake (truth). He shares how men have to fast and sacrifice in order to receive these values. Leksi Tim said "a man has the hardest time to walk into a thipi of a woman, because the fourth pole is named Waunsila (compassion)... That's the first pole that a man had to have if he wanted to be a part of a structure of leadership, a structure of bringing the oyate together" (Eagle Shield, 2021).

Oyate (people) was a sovereign Nation. However, women are already born with all 12 virtues and values of the Ochethi Sakowin people and most people only know of the Woophe Sakowin (seven values/virtues) which are: (seven values/virtues) of the Ochethi Sakowin people: wowahwala (humility), wowaounihan (respect), wowacitanka (patience), wowaunsila (compassion), woksape (wisdom), wacante ognake (generosity), and woohitike (bravery). This is why you call this structure of a thipi, a woman's lodge. It is a symbol of sovereignty. The sovereignty of the Ochethi Sakowin Oyate (people) is directly tied to the sovereignty of the women, because they are the backbone of the Nation, and when they return to birthing our nations through this structure is when we will begin to open up those portals between worlds again, where life and death are seen as the same portals. Cook (2011) states "promoting women's epistemologies and ceremonies is at the center of such health development. Women's bodies, minds and spirits are indeed the doorway through which one must pass to enter into this world"

[27] As a quick note, leksi Tim shares beautiful knowledge and information that his grandmother and other Elders shared with him during his upbringing; however, when Elders or knowledge keepers share stories or teachings in this current day and age, it many times references a binary viewpoint (i.e., male vs. female). There usually is no mention of the roles and responsibilities of our two-spirit relatives. Due to the influence of Christianity, many of our teachings around other genders have been destroyed and forced to be forgotten.

(p. 90). It is my goal to continue to lean into this power and to support others in enacting this structure of sovereignty.

Kapemni (Mirroring, twisting, spiraling- meaning as above, so below): Relationships that Ground and Center Research Paradigms

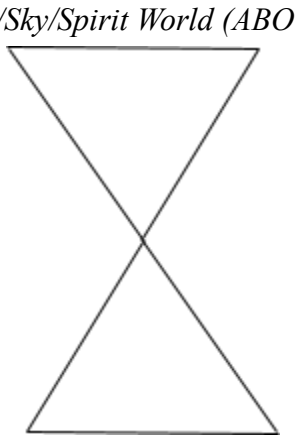

Figure 6: Kapemni Diagram (Mirroring, twisting, spiraling- meaning as above, so below)

This is where Kapemni (Figure 6) comes into play. Kapemni is a symbol, or framework, in Ochethi Sakowin lifeways that can mean swinging around, twisting, spiraling, or mirroring in and is illustrated by two thipis (triangle structures), mirroring each other and connected at their apexes, one representing the skyworld and one representing here on Earth. The thipi is a mirror of that life in the skyworld.

This world is a mirror of the cosmological world. When our world is not in balance, we see the normal seasons being shown to us through the cosmos and yet due to climate change and other reasons, the seasons have not been aligning and our relationships (with the land and with each other) suffer. We need to remember that all things are connected: our health, the natural

world, the cosmos, surrounding entities, everything; and we learn these things through Indigenous storywork (ISW) (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

In the podcast from a class assignment for my *Indigenous Sovereignties* class that I shared above, Leksi Tim left us with a phrase that described sovereign leadership: "you build off their experience, in relationship to leadership and the common values" (Eagle Shield, 2021). He encourages us to lean into our Elders and leaders who are beyond reproach, because they have lived their lives according to these sovereign structures and teachings and they are the ones who we need to be guided by. Leksi Tim shared that we can not get stuck thinking we know it all or know more than those Elders. As a part of the assignment, I had to refer back to our current readings in class and instead of later citing sources that I was witnessing and making those connections myself in a discussion section, I was throwing out quotes from the authors to Leksi Tim as if they were the focal points of our conversations. No doubt, Leksi Tim was giving me very gentle teachings as he was referring to me throwing quotes at him during our podcast discussion and reminding me who I am and where I come from. I appreciate those gentle and loving teachings and those protocol reminders. I have since learned that many scholars theorize how community works, but many don't get the full understanding until decades into their careers. Simpson (2017) shares her experience working with Elders in her community. She shares "I could only *practice*. I couldn't see their *theory* until decades later. I couldn't see intelligence until I learned *how* to see it by engaging in Nishnaabeg practices for the next two decades." (Simpson, 2017; p. 18). This highlights the importance of having those community groundings, protocols, and frameworks from Elders, community members, the land, the surrounding entities. We can not learn our theories unless we live them daily and learn from

those mentioned above daily. Other scholars can give us insights, but it is our connections and experiences in practice that inform our own theorizing.

In the Ochethi Sakowin language, there is a phrase: Mitakuye Owas'in (we are all related) and it is central to how we believe the world works. When we honor the multitude of beings and spirits in the world, we are honoring our relationship to ourselves as well. When we treat all things as a relative then we take care of them as relatives. Nothing is greater or less valuable in this sense. This is a part of that greater movement towards understanding Kapemni and the mirroring of our words with the cosmos that needs to be continuously in balance. These teachings come from those most ancient relatives and entities that understand those deep connections and protocols.

Oun (Way of Life): Relationality through Elder Pedagogy

I grew up around my Elders on the lands of the Standing Rock Nation. My nation borders both North and South Dakota and spans 2.3 million acres of land. Standing Rock was established in 1873. It consists of eight districts: Cannonball, Porcupine, Long Soldier (Fort Yates or Agency Town), Bear Soldier (McLaughlin), Kenel, Wakpala, Running Antelope (Little Eagle), and Rock Creek (Bull Head). The names McLaughlin, Little Eagle, and Bull Head are names that our oppressors, the United States government decided when we were forced onto reservations in the late 1800's. McLaughlin was the officer who ordered two Indian police: Little Eagle and Bull Head, to arrest, but ultimately ended up killing Lala Thathanka Iyotake (Grandpa Sitting Bull). Our communities were named after them to honor their deed on behalf of the United States Government. Our communities are currently working to change the names officially.

I grew up spending countless hours sitting, listening, observing, and waiting… and waiting. I was waiting to go home to play with my dolls or watch TV. I did not realize the immense body of knowledge that was being shared through stories by "Elders describing their experiences" (Deloria, 2006, p. xxxi) of the land, how they read the clouds and elements, how they experienced animals talking to them, how they had dreams and visions, and how they hoped to share their knowledge for future generations. I honestly assumed that I had time. I assumed that if I needed to carry a story or sentiment forward, they would explicitly tell me. I just wanted to be a kid back then. Now looking back, I wished I would have listened to more than their words. I wished I would have observed more intently on how their bodies spoke. I can explicitly remember how they perked up when a bird flew by or when the wind danced over their shoulder. Because their ears heard things that mine weren't tuned into.

Jo-Ann Archibald describes Indigenous Storywork (ISW) as consisting of seven principles that include: respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, holism, inter-relatedness, and synergy (Archibald & Parent, 2019; Archibald, 2008) which lovingly imagines Elders and knowledge keepers grabbing our hands and holding them when we seek their guidance and help. Imagining this purpose and reality of what it means to seek and gain knowledge through stories co-creates an ongoing relational system of knowledge transmission that demonstrates accountability to the knowledge and theories while also holding the Elders and knowledge keepers and communities (Archibald & Parent, 2019).

I reflected on an Elder gathering we organized on behalf of the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe on February 20, 2020. It was our last time gathering intergenerationally with relatives on Standing Rock before the COVID-19 pandemic forced us into hiding. Many of the Elders that were present at that gathering are no longer here in this physical world with us. An Elder,

thunwin (auntie) Renee Iron Hawk, shared stories of her Elders teachings and the ways she was taught. It took me back to the Elder encounters I had as a child, but also made me critically think about the ways we have been influenced by settler colonialism, particularly the ways our women and two-spirit folks have been targeted and attacked. During the Elders gathering, Thunwin Renee Iron Hawk (Iron Cloud, 2020) said:

> In our journey as winyan (women), at one time we were so very strong… In my theory, that is why to this day we are attacked so much. That's why we have this epidemic (MMIW), because a precedent was set way back when they started massacres: killing us, murdering us, raping us. And somehow our men learned that too and it continues… there was a term for men who did that… We had a lot of pride and honor in ourselves and that's why we were able to live without prisons or jails. We had a strong social code… the strongest way we kept ourselves in line was with shame, you didn't wanna be shamed… the way we live now, we misuse our shame… It's keeping us down and oppressed.
>
> We have been totally attacked in every aspect of our culture. The main way they attacked us was through the women, because they knew our women were strong. They knew our women were the backbone of the family, the thiwahe (family), the thiyospaye (extended family)... Us women have to come back to ourselves. Call our spirits back. Because so much was taken from us… They knew what they were doing when they attacked us… They came at us... The women and the children. They knew how to get to you (men). So you guys lost yourselves, but

> you're coming back and it's good to see… We (winyan) hung onto our spiritualness and the fact that we bring a spirit through us. We still continue to do that because we want to live (Iron Cloud, 2020).

In order to acknowledge the harm that has been rippling since first contact, we have to acknowledge the hurt and pain caused and continues to be caused by colonization. We have to support families who are birthing and creating their families. Those who are still choosing to bring a spirit through themselves, to continue to grow our nations. They need love and support. We can no longer treat our people like collective burdens and attack our women and two-spirit. All roles within our society are necessary and needed for our Nations to survive.

The ways that we can breathe life back into our birthing practices lie in our language, in our stories, and in our dreams for the future. Not everyone is ready for a home birth or a natural birth, and that is understandable. Still, every mother and parent deserves to be supported through their births, family planning, and motherhood/parenthood. Every father deserves to be supported in their role of fatherhood because as thunwin Renee said, they used the men to keep the women down after they attacked us. Every baby deserves to be welcomed from the stars in the most radically loving way, surrounded by family and their lifeways, whatever ways the communities decide to move forward. Because we are sovereign nations and we get to create our paths forward using ancient and new Indigenous technologies of our designing. This will be a pathway for other ways to be reborn as well.

Culturally sustaining strategies when working alongside Indigenous communities

Paris (2021) describes the "inward gaze" as an area needing engagement "that can pedagogically engage the damaging internalizations and problematic beliefs and practices present in our own communities" (p. 366) and move towards our own liberation. Yakama scholar Anthony Craig (2023) has extended this to conceptualize the *ancestral gaze*, or how the ancestors can guide us in sustaining our lifeways. I will share my research questions again in the following methods chapter, which will center my own birth experiences, while incorporating the teachings of the Indigenous mother's groups and their families. This project aimed to uplift and raise the level of health for my people and chosen family/kin. Through the harmful relocation and termination policies that displaced Indigenous communities (Walters, n.d.), there are many ways we are still coming back to our own families and choosing families to help us uplift and sustain our lifeways. Many of our chosen families in the border towns of the Standing Rock Nation, as well as the Seattle area, have expressed interest in learning the teachings of the cradleboard and being involved and this was a huge reminder that we have many relatives who witnessed our work (ex., through social media) and are seeking connections. We have to continue to work on inviting folks in who these teachings rightfully belong to. In this section, I aim to look at some culturally sustaining strategies as revealed through several research studies and traditions.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012), describes that forms of imperialism, colonial designing, and exploitation of Indigenous conceptions of the world, had been underway long before the period of Enlightenment. The project of this period is known as modernity, which created the current schooling systems and disrupted how we educated our communities. Patrick Wolfe (2006) argues that "settler colonialism was foundational to modernity" (p. 394), and because Indigenous folks were nomadic, they were considered removable, but not just from land, removable from each

other towards individualism. Smith (2012) describes how imperialism designed this current system where knowledge is viewed as something to be "discovered, extracted, appropriated, and distributed" (p. 61). Colonialism enabled schooling, first religious schooling and later public or secular schooling, to organize and systematize the process to fully impose Western "positional superiority over (Indigenous) knowledges, languages and cultures" (Smith, 2012, p. 67). By using Christianity as a mechanism to compartmentalize our views of ourselves from whole to fragmented, denying the vast beauty of Indigenous cultures, languages, and lifeways, this created "hierarchies of knowledge and theories" (p. 68).

Athabaskan scholar Mary Kate Dennis's (2014) research into the social determinants of Lakota Elders revealed that "culturally tailored models for working through grief are important" (p. 45) and suggested interventions that focus on healing rather than treatment that included education on trauma, counseling, community outreach, cultural activities, group exercises, and traditional ceremonies. Walters and Simoni's research with Native women's health also revealed an Indigenist model of coping through stress and trauma and the correlation to health outcomes for American Indian women. They discussed cultural buffers (i.e., identify attitudes, enculturation, spiritual coping, and traditional health practices), which helped people within Indigenous communities to abstain from drug and alcohol use, lower depression, lower rates of morbidity and mortality, and to improve overall well-being (Walters and Simoni, 2002). One study suggested that participants who were involved in traditional activities, identified with American Indian culture, involved with and knew the importance of traditional spirituality, and enculturation were strong protective factors in fostering resilience and academic success (Henson, 2016; page 20). "A central finding of numerous studies has been the importance of

traditional cultural healing practices and cultural teachings for promoting the mental health, recovery, and healing of Native American youth" (Goodkind et al, 2011).

Non-Native Empirically Based Interventions (EBIs), which are designed for non-Native populations, typically ignore the epistemological frameworks of Indigenous communities (Walters, et. al., 2020). Indigenous worldviews, cosmological understandings, and cultural practices are unique and different for each community. Dr. Walters et. al (2020) describes the importance of projects being designed and developed by specific communities (i.e., Yappalli Choctaw Study) that includes Native allies and non-Native support, and that can create a system of support towards Indigenous thrivance. Acknowledging these community differences and the implicit bias towards western frameworks is essential in creating an Indigenist Community-Based Participatory Research (ICBPR) model for Indigenous people, which "focuses on nurturing mutual respect for cultural protocols and practices in building healthful research partnerships" (Walters, et. al., 2020, p. 12) that incorporates all Indigenous community knowledge keepers and stakeholders. This is essential in ensuring the survival of Indigenous community protocols, knowledge systems, and important tools for living with the natural world and illustrates the Indigenist research approach.

Conclusion

Indigenous nations have a painful and complicated history with the continued structures of settler colonialism. Western systems of knowledge have had a hard time understanding spirituality, though Christianity attempted to destroy and ultimately "appropriate, and then (to) claim" (p. 78). Kovach (2021) states that labeling Indigenous ways of knowing and being as "culturally exotic fringe belief system(s) (p. 189) created a dismissal and "paternalistic diminishment (p. 189) of Indigenous peoples and further pushed the agenda of gendered colonial

oppression (Kovach, 2021; Million, 2008) which continued to oppress and harm our women, children, and two-spirit folks.

Concepts of spirituality have been critical sites of resurgence for Indigenous peoples and storying together has been a powerful tool to reclaim our values, protocols, original teachings, languages, and lifeways. In this chapter, I did not aim to try to convince anyone to believe in the truth that stories hold, nor did I presume that there was one path towards learning and understanding about Indigenous frameworks. I only desired to share and allow others to lean into their own Indigenous intelligence and generate and regenerate their own meanings based on their relational responsibilities after they have lived each stage of life through the story and are ready to communicate their own wisdom (Simpson, 2017), while leaning into their own histories for their “central truths" (Krawec, 2022, p. 15).

In order for us to understand and uplift our Ochethi Sakwoin structures of sovereignty (i.e., thiwakhan and kapemni), we have to uplift and support our Elders again, because they have been through a lot more than we can imagine. We understand the need to uplift the ancestral knowledge, lifeways, systems of medicines, foods, and the importance of integrating other knowledge for overall health and well-being. This was vital to this dissertation study, because we knew the deep brilliance and intelligence our ancestors carried, which provided the insight needed to see the genius of our Indigenous technologies such as the cradleboard. Therefore, you will see in the coming chapters why the framework around creating cradleboards with families became such a significant focus of this study. It is a structure of sovereignty that has been used in child rearing and child development specifically designed by our next generations to be connected to the land, the surrounding entities, and to each other.

Our Indigenous construct of holistic community care is founded on the ontology of the Ochethi Sakowin people and necessarily framed by our lifeways. I am ready for the responsibility and understand the work needed to uplift our Indigenous lifeways, especially around birthwork and birth justice, to heal our communities. It is important work and I aim to continue to gather the necessary resources to back it up (i.e., research, needs assessments, and education), especially birthing supports so that families can heal and welcome the coming generations with radical love. This dissertation project, used hands on learning and reflections as I heeded the teachings of Leksi Tim that "sovereignty is a spiritual commitment of a people" (Eagle Shield, 2021), and I leaned into learning the theories and practices the families were learning with and internalizing through this study. In this way, many of the theories that I drew on have been with my people forever. As I hope you see across this dissertation, I worked to bring other important theories and research into view to help me fulfill the spiritual commitment of my people.

Chapter 3. Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): Reawakening Models of Indigenous Birthing, Health, and Education Resurgence by Enacting Indigenous Methodologies

"Returning to original instructions or teachings is part of an antidote to historical trauma." (Duran and Duran, 1995, as cited in Gonzales, 2012; p. xxiv)

"To be sovereign or self-sufficient, Native peoples must have control of the life cycle from birth through death." (Wise Women Gathering Place, as cited in Gonzales, 2012; p. 66)

Introduction

Throughout my own experience, Indigenous sovereignty and community wellness looks like: uplifting our original teachings and protocols, while also remapping our lifeways, co-creating and co-constructing new pathways forward. It is impossible to go back to the lifeways we used to live, because our worlds are continuously evolving. We have created new words in the language, developed new practices, and adopted new beliefs that fit our collective communities as they are now. It is more important to live in better relationships with each other and each other's communities in the present moment, while simultaneously upholding the teachings that are freely given to us from our Elders, our more-than-human (MTH) relatives, the surrounding entities, and the natural world.

I have spent my career, though I am still very early in that career, focusing on communicating and translating health promotion information and efforts within my community in holistic, engaging, and culturally sustaining ways through our original teachings and protocols. Since the Water Is Life movement we have been leaning into shared community definitions of sovereignty and re-learning and remapping how to fully enact those teachings through ancient, new and (re)emerging protocols. More importantly we are re-introducing ourselves to each other and into the community as we are now, not as a romanticized version of who our people once were. We are alive and thriving despite all the eliminatory, termination, and assimilation policies. We are very much still connected to our lands, our languages, our lifeways,

and the surrounding entities; however, we need to look towards each other and the dreams our people are having now and the paths we realistically see our communities moving towards.

A joke commonly heard among folks in the community who are setting up camp for an event or ceremony, whether they were cutting wood, tying up thipis or organizing camp (i.e., putting up tents, stabilizing campers, and building fires) is: if Sitting Bull had access to a chainsaw, he would have used it. This is a joke used because of the ways we have "humble battles"[28] amongst our own, teasing about who is more humble and follows the old ways more closely. We are a people living in the present time where our Indigenous technologies co-exist alongside Western technologies. This is where I choose to focus my energy now. I no longer yearn for an older time because that doesn't do me any good to wish for a time that I have never experienced. I can only put my energy towards living in a way that feels good for my spirit that is rooted in ancestral teachings on how to be an Ochethi Sakowin person, responsible relative, and person of the Buffalo Nation.

The Water Is Life (#WaterisLife) movement was born in 2016 out of opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). This movement for liberation and resurgence efforts has been rippling within our collective subconscious since 2016, as we re-imagine how our worlds exist now. The work I am involved in with the Mni Wichoni Health Circle and the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe, as well as the Oyate Oyuwitaya Community Coalition, has been listening to our Elders, youth, and community members on their present needs and doing research to back up their needs and requests. Creating spaces for our language and ceremonies to be (re)claimed, (re)vitalized, (re)activated, and (re)imagined is a great start to uplifting the original teachings,

[28] Harmless teasing sessions about who is more humble or who can do things in a more humble way according to the old ways.

brilliance, and genius within our Indigenous communities while enacting our sovereignty to create our new maps for the future (Brayboy, 2005; Deloria, 2006; Harjo, 2019).

As I shared in previous chapters, when our languages and lifeways were outlawed, many Native American communities took their ceremonies underground and because of that many ceremonies were forced to be forgotten and lost. As we work to create a space for our healing practices, languages and lifeways to flourish in the present day, we remember the words of Darryl Kipp (2000), "Do not ask for permission to use your language, to work with it, to revitalize it. You do not ask permission… You save your strength" (p. 6). In that same sense of stepping into sovereignty, we do not ask the Nation-State for permission to uplift and revitalize our birthing practices, we save that strength to ride the surges of bringing our birthing practices back into our communities. Our babies deserve healthy portal entries into this world and to be guided with all the love of their ancestors, as well as beautiful welcomes from their relatives here on Earth.

I begin this chapter by reflecting on Indigenous lifeways as a remapping and evolving praxis. I start by sharing my journey to understanding and choosing my methodology practices based on my upbringing and community lifeways. The design and outcomes of this dissertation study aim to uplift and reawaken Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) and community ceremonial practices that prepared families, intergenerationally, for life, death, and everything in between.

Throughout this chapter, I share the practice of chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) as a qualitative methodological anchor that became a resurgence site that guided this study. By creating cradleboards with the families, we were able to witness frameworks and remapping processes emerge and they have been used to revitalize and reclaim our original teachings.

However, more importantly, I will share the ways I diverged from traditional qualitative methods and data analysis and approached them in a collective and consensus way. Chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) is a methodological practice of restoring kinship systems by inviting families to reclaim and reawaken the history, stories, and teachings together as reciprocal learners and co-researchers whose essence and energy brought this study to life. As a methodological approach, chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) draws from ethnographic methods and autoethnographic methods (Bhattacharya, 2017), Indigenist Community Based Participatory Research (ICBPR) (Walters, et. al., 2020), Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Wallerstein, 2018), and Indigenous storywork and methodologies (Archibald, 2008; Smith, 2012; Simpson, 2017; Harjo, 2019; Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022).

I will also share the ways we are analyzing our current communities and systems in place and (re)imaging powerful ways forward such as the efforts towards language reclamation, food sovereignty, and birthwork ceremonies by engaging the following three research questions, which I also shared in the introduction chapter:

1) *How do we build off the strengths and times of resistance to breathe life back into our current birth teachings, practices, and ceremonies?*
2) *How can cradleboarding and birthing ceremonies offer a remapping framework forward?*
3) *How does Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) create paths towards understanding the remapping currently unfolding in Ochethi Sakowin communities?*

My research questions were revised based on all the learning and processing that I was experiencing during the project from being in community with these amazing families. I will

share how they fit into the larger movement towards reconnecting to the land, and each other, and uplifting our Ochethi Sakowin lifeways. I will also share how this impacts the work I find myself doing moving forward. As the Co-Executive Director for the Mni Wichoni Health Circle, a 501c3 non-profit organization that is uplifting the pluralities of our Ochethi Sakowin healing practices, we are working diligently to relearn our original teachings, while reimagining powerful ways forward. Our sacred practices are where we are aiming to focus our efforts through the food sovereignty movement, land reclamation and reconnection, Indigenous midwifery, and community Birth and End-of-Life Support work. We have committed to engaging in a Seven Generations Planning (Strategic Planning) Session every two years to ensure we are always intentionally including the community and continuously building consensus as we reawaken to our powers and strengths as a community. Our first session was in November 2021 and the second session was February 2024. Our hope is that these practices will continue to guide our work and build upon earlier work of Indigenist Community Based Participatory Research (ICBPR), as well as Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Wallerstein, 2018; Walters et. al., 2020), so that the community necessarily leads these projects. In this way, the purpose, design, and methodology of my dissertation project, the cradleboard project, was a vital part of our larger, collective work.

Wotakuye Kaga (Enacting Kinship): The Process of Choosing Kin

The research from this study is based on data generated from May 2023 through February 2024. I met with the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers throughout this time while my husband and I taught them to create a cradleboard. We also invited the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers to attend different ceremonies and sacred spaces together, which included: Hoksichantkiyapi (publically welcoming a baby), Isnathi Awichalowanpi (Coming of

Age ceremony), thathanka phatapi (buffalo butchering), and other intimate and needed ceremonies and spaces. The data generated included: 35 transcribed audio and video recordings from shared spaces together with various families that were present through a reflowing dialogic conversation, 10 personal communications with individual families through one-on-one gatherings (i.e., Zoom, in-person, and personal recordings shared with me via text message and Facebook message). I also used nine recordings that I gathered from being in space with community members sharing various teachings around the cradleboard, child rearing, plant medicines, and birthing ceremonies.

My own field notes were generated throughout these various sessions as well. Each of the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers also created cradleboards for their babies who were in their wombs and/or were already here. Additional data generated were session preparation and debrief recordings with my husband, Red Rock Perkins, which included 21 audio recordings before and after any sessions with families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers. We would also debrief with my mom, Valerie Eagle Shield, a master seamstress within our community and was there every step of the way to help with sewing machine supports, sewing lessons, and whatever was needed to help families finish their cradleboards. Although I did not record all of those debriefing sessions with my mom, a hugely missed opportunity in my opinion, I did take extensive notes. It was a space for us to debrief and move through any obstacles, express our gratitude and excitement, and to literally relive those beautiful moments with the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers together. My mom and husband are my daily go to people for support and to help get big ideas off the ground, so it made sense that they were both there to help guide this process, because I don't do any of this alone. My mom is a valued matriarch within my community, a great teacher, and is a beautiful navigator of life and death.

She has supported births, end of life/death transitions, and has been with me through my whole journey into adulthood and parenthood. It was essential for me to have my mom by my side.

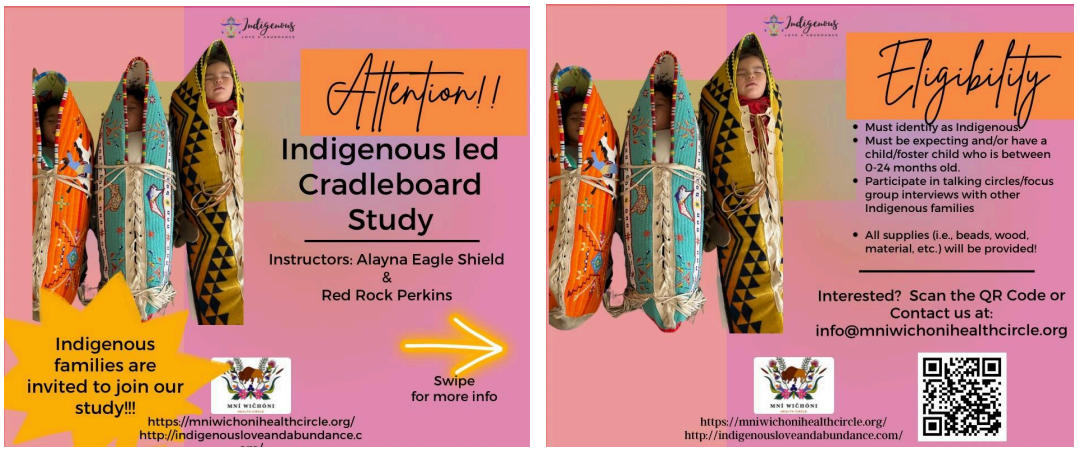

Figure 7: Photo of flyer taken from Mni Wichoni Health Circle Facebook page.

As a way to invite the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers to the project, we shared a flier (Figure 7) online and with the community for a few weeks leading up to the cradleboard project. Obviously, this was not a foolproof way to reach all community members consistently and fairly; however, we did what we could in the short timeframe we had, while actively working to dismantle the hierarchical structuring of class in the choosing process. I created an Excel planning document that included the following tabs: budget, participant list, to do timeline, needs, teachings, and schedule. There were 12 families who requested to join, two with multiple grandkids who lived in our area. There were also five other inquiries from families who were out of our area and network and could not attend in-person. They requested an online group tutorial, but I could not commit to an online group gathering during this time, hopefully in the future. They were from Alaska, Canada, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas. Eight was the final count for the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers who ultimately participated in this study and five of the mothers were carrying their babies in their wombs at the beginning of

the study. The three families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers whose babies were Earthside varied in age from three weeks old to 10 months old being the oldest.

At the orientation with the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers on May 25, 2023, my husband and I shared about the project. I gave an overview of the IRB proposal and how I hoped to use this project for my dissertation. Then, we asked the families why they were drawn to this project and what they hoped to accomplish. After that, we all chose a date for our first session together and the families chose May 29, 2023 because it was the Memorial Day holiday, and they were all eager to start their cradleboards. I then created a Facebook group message called "cradleboard project," where we communicated throughout the duration of the project.

Our first session was my first-time teaching to a large group, even though by this time my husband and I had created over 30 cradleboards for various families, as well as our own, in our time learning how to do them. Before that, I had taught individuals how to make cradleboards but not whole groups. I recorded this session and listened to myself fumble through how to teach the various ways I measure, cut, and styles I use to decide the length and width of the cradleboard based on the designs on the Pendleton blanket. There really are no exact measurements or ways to create a cradleboard, it all depends on the person creating the cradleboard, the wood frames as guides, and everyone's individual preference. Of course, there was always food included into the sessions, either made by community members, catered, or cooked by the families. After each session we would decide the next time(s) we would meet and in between we also invited the families to the other ceremonial spaces.

The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers chose us and we chose them. Being in space and learning alongside each other was a reciprocal choice. We had experience crafting cradleboards in this particular style. Still, the families each had the desire, their individual unique

skills, and their family's stories and lineage to add to the project. They began to choose each other too. Throughout these spaces and times together, the families would begin to add each other on social media, share messages in the group about their progress and questions, and invite each other to birthday parties and gatherings. Each of the families chose to be in space together and participate in this project to continue to learn and be in the community together. The families each expressed the need for these types of spaces and the desire to create other spaces for new moms and new families to join and possibly how to create their own.

Our conversations were dialogic and emergent (San Pedro, 2021) and would happen around a table, set of folding tables, in a thipi, or sitting in a circular setup on the land or in a building. We did not have a series of questions we particularly followed. We would be in organic conversation around our most recent collective experience such as: the orientation, the first cradleboard making session, birthing teachings, parenting, family and community, ceremonies. Everyone would free-flow about what they knew, what they wanted to learn, what they got out of a certain experience, what they wished they had with previous children, what they were hoping and wishing for the future or with future children, what they wanted to do with this new knowledge within their communities, and so much more. Through these conversations, I could thematically pull important points that came up in our conversations. A huge guidepost for my thematic coding processes was leaning into the Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota lifeways).

Each time a story showed up, I would reflect on my original core teachings, and it would make sense to see why these families were connecting to these teachings, songs, and ceremonies the way they were. It is part of our birth right to have these teachings. A relative, who is a member of our coming of age society, once commented on a song I sang, which was the Pte San Win olowan (White Buffalo Calf Woman song), and said, "why do I feel so sad and yet so strong

when I hear this song? I feel like I know it" (Personal Communication; S. LaFromboise, 2024), and yet it was the first time they heard this song. I shared teachings that I had growing up. I shared that our Elders tell us that we are so intricately tied to these lands and our lifeways that even if we have never heard a song before or even if we have never experienced a certain ceremony, it will feel like we have been there before or we have heard it before, because it is in our spirit and it is our birthright. And the reason you feel sad when you hear that song is because our ancestors passed our stories and songs down to us just as they heard them. Pte San Win (White Buffalo Calf Woman) is a strong and fierce spiritual entity that brought our sacred pipe and many of our teachings to us in a time of great need. She loved us so much that she put her whole essence and energy into praying for our people to live. So, when you hear the Pte San Win olowan (White Buffalo Calf Woman song) you can hear the love and compassion she had for our people through those songs. I believe it is important to know these stories and know how you connect to our stories and our songs through our Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways).

Pte Oyate Hemacha (I am the buffalo nation): Uplifting Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) as Methodology

Patty Krawec (2022) invites us to unforget together, as a way of reclaiming our Indigenous knowledge (p. 18). However, it is not without a price. Rae Paris (2017) shares that "remembering is an act of resistance that takes work" (p. 8) and as we move through spaces that have complicated and painful histories, it takes work to remember and we get tired. I have been thinking of my relationship to my ancestors and those I am responsible to and the Buffalo Nation grounds my thought process. Every time I think about the importance of framing our way of being, it is through the Buffalo Nation. Here, I will share a brief version of our people's creation and re-emergence stories.

In the Ochethi Sakowin epistemology, our creation stories start with an entity called Inyan (Rock), which is a massive power that exists on its own, who created the world we know today. Inyan used pieces of itself to create Makha (Earth), Hanhepi Wi (moon), Anpe Wi (sun), and the Wichahpi Oyate (star nation), galaxies and universe to be in correlation with each other (WoLakota, 2016). The two-legged nation (humans) were arrogant and destructive and Inyan began a sequence of cleansings over eons of time in the form of hurricanes, Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornados, and the ice age. The people who were living according to the original teachings were instructed to go within Makha (Earth) at a site called Wasun-Thanka (Wind Cave) and they would be protected.

In our re-emergence story, the people were drawn out of Wasun-Thanka by an entity called Iktomi[29] (spider) and could not return through the portal of Wasun-Thanka once they emerged back into the world. Our re-emergence story is not our creation story, but a story about how our nation, the two-legged nation, re-emerged and came to the surface of the Earth and began a complicated journey of acknowledging and reckoning with our own arrogance and learning to live in relationship with the four-legged animals, winged animals, plants, and all the surrounding entities (i.e., spirits, water, air, wind, and others). Yet, those more-than-human relatives and entities were worried and mistrusting of the two-legged, so the Pte Oyate (Buffalo Nation) stepped forward and took responsibility for the two-legged and gave of themselves to the humans so they could survive. The buffalo nation took responsibility for the two-legged and gave of themselves to the two-legged. They became everything the two-legged would ever need: food, shelter, medicine, and tools (WoLakota, 2016). This is who I am and where I come from. Pte Oyate hemacha (I am the Buffalo Nation). And it is my responsibility to teach my children

[29] Iktomi is an entity in Ochethi Sakowin epistemology who used to be a very wise spirit known as Ksa, but throughout creation stories became a trickster spirit and is known to give a variety of lessons.

who we are, as the buffalo nation, and how to live according to these guiding teachings from our creation stories.

As a qualitative research study, these teachings would come to my mind and my heart as I was hearing families share their experiences and reflections and yearning for these connections to our Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) or Dakhod' Wichoh'an (Dakota Lifeways), or making meaning through their own lifeways (i.e., Mandan, Hidatsa, Ojibwe, and other Nations they are a part of). I would share my own stories and experiences of growing up and knowing these teachings, but not being sure how to enact them in spaces with my peers. I remember being in elementary school and inviting friends to our ceremonies growing up, but they would always get scared and want to go home. I would cry and be embarrassed that none of my peers did the things I did and I felt like it was a way of the past. What I learned through this project was that chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) was becoming a safe space for families to accept or refuse the invitation to ceremonial spaces, depending on where they were in their spiritual journeys, and they were making meaning through their own lifeway lens.

As I will share in later chapters, all of the families were putting intentions into the universe to incorporate more culture into their lives and to introduce their children to more culture. One of the families shared that they had no idea what kinds of questions to even ask and so having a space where Elders freely shared stories and teachings was beautiful for them because the Elders were sharing so many beautiful teachings around child rearing. I took those teachings for granted and assumed everyone knew them in some way or another, but that was not true. I was able to use Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) as a critical methodological lens to analyze and thematically organize the ways our conversations were unfolding in all of the spaces we were finding ourselves within during the study. I was able to see the ways it was clear to me

the needs and desires families had to connect but not knowing where to start, and the drive I had to share the teachings I have been given but not knowing how or when since I was offered many teachings throughout my childhood and into adulthood. I believed it needed to be in some kind of order, but it did not. It just needed a container, and I believe chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) was that container.

Throughout this research project, kinship enactments were developed. The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers were being invited to spaces where we were able to co-design kinship models together, through chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding), storying together, and uplifting Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways), as well as other Indigenous lifeways. It created paths together. By consenting and choosing spaces together, the families were able to get comfortable within their knowledge base and hold space for each other to share their powerful stories of reconnecting, uplifting history, and sharing their desires for community to support in their child rearing, even if it was for incorporating specific Indigenous technologies (i.e., cradleboards) and ceremonies (i.e., Hoksichantkiyapi) into their parenting.

Wogligleya (Co-Designing) Kinship Models: Reciprocal Learners/Co-researchers

Simpson (2017) shares that "breaking Indigenous peoples' spiritual connection to each other and to the land is a critical part in dispossession" (p. 143). This colonial violence has torn us from our processing mechanisms and has created generations of disconnection. We have always been intricately tied to the land because we knew that the land and surrounding entities would take care of us, if we took care of them. However, because colonization is a structure (Wolfe, 2006), Brayboy (2005) states "colonization has been so complete that even many American Indians fail to recognize that we are taking up colonialist ideas" (p. 431). This is why storying together and using Indigenous Storywork (ISW), as a model of kinship in action, can

create opportunities where our identities and ways of knowing are “situated in the stories of others” (San Pedro & Bang, 2021, p. 5). Walters et al. (2020) describes relationality as meaning “one experiences the self as a part of others, and that others are part of the self – all are inextricably linked” (p. 8). This notion of relationality helps us to imagine Indigenous health as a reciprocal and spatial system that connects all things.

Throughout this study, we were honoring our theoretical anchors for our Indigenous intelligence (Simpson, 2017) by learning from Elders, other mothers, fathers and families, community members, and from each other about the importance of uplifting our lifeways and sharing space together with other families who want to invite culture back into their lives and homes. Simpson (2017) shares that “Indigenous intelligence systems set up, maintain, and regenerate the neuropathways for Indigenous living both inside our bodies and the web of connections that structure our nationhood outside our bodies" (p. 19). Our present lives and future lives depend on “*how* we live, *how* we organize, *how* we engage in the world – the process – not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation. *How* molds and then gives birth to the present” (Simpson, 2017, p. 19).

Below is a brief description of the eight families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers who blessed this project that I am so passionate about. I share their name, the name of supporter(s) throughout the project, the tribal affiliation of both participants, the number of children, and if they were pregnant at the time of the project. I chose to share this information because I wanted to give context to the great importance of their legacy (children) and the lifeways they each brought to the spaces. Each of them was Indigenous and the table below is not at all fully encompassing of their brilliance and genius they each brought to the spaces which made them come to life, but I hope it can humanize each family and offer insight into the deep work they are

each doing to uplift their lifeways within their families and help you to connect with them throughout this dissertation. I learned as much from them as they learned from me. I will continue to call on them and their brilliance for years to come as I have so much love, respect, and admiration for each one of them.

Table 1.

Families/Reciprocal Learners/Co-Researchers

Name of Participant	**Tribal Affiliation of Participant**	**Name of Supporter (relationship to participant)**	**Tribal Affiliation of Supporter**	**Number of Children (including in the womb if it applies)**	**Pregnant at Time of Study**
JanaKate	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	Brandon (Partner)	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	3	Yes
Kirah	Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara (USA)	Waylon (Partner)	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	2	Yes
Lefa	Chanunpa Wakpa Dakota Nation (Canada)	John (Partner)	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	2	No
Maya	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	Memphis (Partner)	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	1	No
Misty	Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (USA)	Adam (Partner)	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	2	Yes
Savannah	Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara (USA)	Michael (Mikey) (Partner)	Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara (USA)	3	Yes
Teyah	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	Dedrick (Partner) & Lynette (Mother)	Spirit Lake Reservation (USA); Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	1	Yes

			(USA)		
Xtal	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (USA)	Ron (Partner)	N/A	2	No

Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding) as Methodology

As shared above, this study was methodologically grounded using the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) collaborative approach of working within my community and I consciously worked to change the power relationship (Wallerstein, 2018). As Simpson (2017) points out this methodology has "some degree of privileged Western theories, epistemologies, or knowledge systems" (p. 13); therefore, I also used Indigenist Community Based Participatory Research (ICBPR), which "incorporates principles of co-learning, co-commitment to the well-being of the community, and integration of community theories, protocols, and stakeholders" (Walters, et. al., 2020, p. 12) while centering the values, epistemologies, and sovereignty of the families I worked with. Through this process, I also acknowledged the insider/outsider dynamics to find "clear research goals and lines of relating" (Smith, 2012, p. 139) to the families as a mother, community member, and relative. I worked hard to not center myself as the "expert, observing and examining a research object" (Harjo, 2019; p. 83), because in this scenario, the researcher, which I was positioned, is usually considered to not be in relationship to the research object. This type of research "adheres to ideas such as research objectivity and neutrality" (Harjo, 2019; p. 83), and I was intentionally grounding this work as kinship work. We were in a dynamic reciprocal knowledge sharing as chosen kin.

This project was grounded in qualitative research methodology that aimed to build understanding through focus groups, critical ethnographic and autoethnographic accounts, and

observational field notes (Bhattacharya, 2017). The project participants were considered families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers who were accountable to each other. We used intergenerational learning, sharing circles (Tachine, et. al., 2016), and co-teaching experiences as well as incorporating the principles of beadworking as an Indigenous research paradigm (Prete, 2019). We built off previous processes and created a process and future research paradigm around the cradleboard. An Elder who has been vital to supporting and uplifting our Isnathi Awichalowanpi (coming of age) ceremony on Standing Rock is leksi Steve Vance. He's an Elder and knowledge keeper from the Cheyenne River Nation, just south of Standing Rock. While we were on the last day of our Isnathi Awichalowanpi on the land on Standing Rock in June 2023, Leksi Steve shared:

> That's a classroom, that cradleboard is a whole classroom. The baby will see someone get hurt. They saw it, no one told them 'not to touch that' or 'not to do that', but they saw it. They learn by observation. They learn to be calm… They learn from the insects, from people around them, by observing life… That's the thing that you look at. The cradleboard is just sitting there. People don't understand all that goes into it. The decorations that go around the opening and the chekpa ognake that hangs in the front… The other thing people don't understand is that it's for protection too. There's a hood that goes around so the baby's face is protected… You can tie them up or prop them up in the corner and they're just watching everything (Personal Communication; Steve Vance, 2023).

Leksi Steve shared so much more insight into the cradleboard as a classroom. He shared songs, protocols, and beautiful lessons that I hope to continue to pass on. I shared Figure 8. below for reference as a framework for how we moved through this learning together with the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers based on my current understanding of the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard). The runners (poles) represent the Wanagi Thachanku (Milky Way), which I mentioned in the prologue is the portal between life and death. The runners also represent the backbone of our Nation, the board represents the Earth, the beads represent the Earth, the leather represents our connection to the animals, and the symbols on the beadwork represent the stories our people carry. There are also stories of a red line that goes around the middle of the chuwic'inpa which symbolizes a strong bloodline and the strength of a people.

There were also decorations around the opening of the chuwic'inpa which were adorned with beads, shells, and other items. A chekpa ognake (belly button carrier or amulet) also hung from there and was for protection of the baby. The chekpa ognake were either in the shape of a turtle or a salamander/lizard to represent long life, perseverance, agility and strength. Some Tribes believe a turtle was specifically for females and salamanders were specifically for males, but it varies from Tribe to Tribe. There are stories of making two identical chekpa ognake when babies were born. One would carry the baby's umbilical cord remnants, or belly button, and be kept in a safe place, and the other would be empty, used as a decoy and filled with protection medicines, and would hang from the top of the chuwic'inpa where the baby could see it and later play with it. We are told that certain spirits wanted to use the baby's essence and innocence and would steal the chekpa ognake. The baby would search their whole lives for it. When a baby is always digging and is wandering around looking for something when they are older, a joke is "oh, they are looking for their belly button". The parents/families of the baby would make a

decoy chekpa ognake so the baby was still protected but keep the baby's actual belly button in a safe place. The chuwic'inpa has many symbols and meanings depending on the Nation a family comes from. The chuwic'inpa truly is a classroom and beautiful method for knowledge transmission.

Each of the families made a blanket cradleboard. Still, many of the current Pendleton blankets we used were created by Indigenous artists who used Indigenous symbolisms and teachings intentionally in their designs. Throughout the process of creating, assembling, and crafting the chuwic'inpa, the families were determined to learn and participate and leaned on each other for support.

Figure 8: He Wigmunke Wakhangli Win in a cradleboard made by Alayna Eagle Shield, Red Rock Perkins, our family, and our community

Our approach of intergenerational learning stemmed from the fact that our Elders know the history and stories of our Indigenous technologies. Still, our younger generations have the skills and expertise to craft these things with tools that are accessible to us today. We can each learn from each other in intergenerational spaces. This requires the framing that Hermes, et. al.

(2012) generously share: requiring a project within a community implies reciprocity within relationships that embody practices of inclusion rather than hierarchy and exclusion.

My ultimate desire and hope were to continue to develop and create an okholakichiye (society) through the cradleboarding process, which is still unfolding. In Ochethi Sakowin ontology, our societies were of utmost importance. Everyone belonged to a society based on their gifts, their dreams, their knowledge, their abilities, their ideas, and their willingness to meet the needs of the community and to take action. They always consulted their society members and built great trust amongst their society. In this way, every single person had a role and every single person was important and taken care of. I believe through the process of chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding), we are a part of that history of continuously rebuilding our ever-evolving societies that we need within our communities. Through this chuwic'inpa kagapi okholakichiye (cradleboarding society) we focused on uplifting the creation stories and birthwork on Standing Rock and beyond.

The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers aided in the development of this project that will continue to inform our knowledge systems around how to uplift our Ochethi Sakowin storywork and teachings around birthwork and ceremonies, doula/midwifery services needed, available, and/or desired. This project necessarily created opportunities for these teachings to be shared within the community by the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers and lives on within the community.

Throughout this research project we were (re)learning and (re)membering together what it means to uplift our Ochethi Sakowin birth, as well as death, practices. I held a dual role as a birther who is upholding many of these practices within my life already and a researcher. I shared the process of making a cradleboard and took field notes through observation, qualitative

interviews, talking/sharing circles, and played an active role in supporting the families. I did this through teaching but also bearing witness to the beautiful process that was unfolding with the families and they engaged with Elders and community members to remember together and co-design the necessary ways forward to provide the community with ceremonial practices that have been stolen and forced to be forgotten.

Wopakhinte (Healing): The Responsibility of Healing with Community

Since I first began using the creation story in my work, I have been diving into what that actually means for me as a Lakota woman. In this section, I share this learning as a way for readers to understand what using Lakota lifeways as an analytic guide methodologically means in practice. In order to utilize lifeways as an analytic guide, one must be grounded from creation all the way to futurity. I am first and foremost Iná (mother) of four beautiful children who are Earth side: Tha Oniya Wakhan Win (Her Sacred Breath Woman), Waaruxti Nataree'ux Tawisa (Blue Thunder Returns), Tha Changleska Luta Hoksila (His Red Hoop Boy) and He Wigmunke Wakhangli Win (Rainbow Mountain Lightning (Comes Back Holy) Woman). I do not always do things in the correct way or according to the original teachings, but everyday I am working to uncover and work through my traumas and help guide my children in the best ways I know how day to day. It is customary to share our relatives and tribal connections as a way of introducing who we are as Ochethi Sakowin people. And just as in the book *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson writes a letter to his children. I aim to be accountable to my children, my oyate (people) and the buffalo nation (Wilson, 2008).

Using the buffalo as a framework for healing has been very helpful on my own journey. I have been reimagining my relationship with the buffalo and what it means to be of the buffalo people. I have organized community buffalo butcherings, both on my homelands of Standing

Rock and also in the urban area of Seattle, and have developed my relationship with the buffalo by drinking the blood when we butcher, getting my hands dirty, making sure nothing is wasted, creating tools, cooking with the meat, and creating things with the hide. Our Elders have been at every gathering, either sharing, or on their own journey of relearning as well. They make us drink the blood after we butcher it. It is a way of making a relationship with the buffalo and committing to being responsible for the buffalo. Our Elders tell us that you are supposed to use every part of the buffalo, except the sweet breads (spleen), because it's an extension of who we are and where we directly come from off the buffalo. We bury that part and treat it like a relative.

From studying the buffalo, when they were once roaming free on the land, our Elders shared how the buffalo were attuned to the universe. The buffalo nation would follow the stars and seasons and would lead us to sacred sites throughout the Makhoche Waste[30] (Good Lands). As shared in the introduction, the buffalo also protects their more vulnerable buffalo by putting them in the middle and creating a circle barricade around them if they are threatened or in frigid cold temperatures. Since we have been doing buffalo butcherings in the communities, we have also gotten to see how the buffalo behave when their relatives are killed. They do not take off running like you see in deer or other animals that are hunted, they have a knowing and walk toward their injured relative and surround them. I think of what this would mean for us to surround each other in love and comfort, even when we are healing and seemingly messy.

From the buffalo nation's guidance and presence, the Ochethi Sakowin people have continued to hold fast to our teachings. These stories are our guiding maps that continuously regenerate the theory of Indigenous intelligence and survival and help ground us in our

[30] This is the term Lala Thathanka Iyotake (grandpa Sitting Bull) used when he described our homelands, the Ochethi Sakowin territory.

responsibilities through its living resonance within individuals and collectives (Brayboy, 2005; Harjo, 2019; Simpson, 2017).

There have been many Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander scholars and theorists who have influenced how I have come to know the epistemology and ontology of my people, the Ochethi Sakowin people. It has been through a process of knowledge transmission that is built upon prayer, relationality, lifeways, and many political movements (i.e., American Indian Movement, Black Panther movement, Water Is Life movement, and Black Lives Matter movement), because everything is political. The guiding thought within my work has been khilakhota (to become human again). This is essential in my work because when we think about decolonization and what it means to be in relationship with each other, other nations, the land, the stars, plants, animals, and the entities that surround us, we reflect on our re-emergence story and how we as humans were embraced by the Pte Oyate (Buffalo Nation). Therefore, becoming human again is reminding us of our responsibility to the Pte Oyate and our responsibility to live in better harmony with other nations, the land, plants, animals, and the surrounding entities and take care of each other as relatives.

When we are off balance and not in harmony, then we are not respecting and honoring the Earth like we should and all life suffers, such as we see with the current climate crisis, as well as the healthcare crisis, in particular, the care around birthing folks. Cook (2011) states “there is a pressing need for Native American women to commit to restoring this vitally important piece to our community and life and family realities so that we might once again be whole” (p. 89). Still, the burden should not only be on the women because Indigenous families continue to suffer from settler colonialism. We all need what Cook (2011) describes as “mountains of love” (p.89) if we are going to recover and start, or continue, on our healing paths. We do that through enacting

kinship praxis. In these and other ways, I aim to be accountable to my children, my oyate (people) and the buffalo nation and know these foundations guide me in making meaning in my life, including in my research in this dissertation.

Conclusion

Indigenous nations have a complicated history with the continued structures of settler colonialism and the research it has forwarded. Western systems of knowledge have had a hard time understanding spirituality, though Christianity attempted to destroy and ultimately "appropriate, and then (to) claim" (p. 78). Kovach (2021) states that labeling Indigenous ways of knowing and being as "culturally exotic fringe belief system(s) (p. 189) created a dismissal and "paternalistic diminishment (p. 189) of Indigenous peoples and further pushed the agenda of gendered colonial oppression (Kovach, 2021; Million, 2008) which continued to oppress and harm our women, children, and two-spirit folks.

Concepts of spirituality have been critical sites of resurgence for Indigenous peoples, and storying together has been a powerful tool for reclaiming our values, protocols, original teachings, languages, and lifeways. In this chapter, I did not aim to try to convince anyone to believe in the truth that stories hold, nor did I presume that there was one path towards learning and understanding about Indigenous frameworks. I only desired to share and allow others to lean into their own Indigenous intelligence and generate and regenerate their own meanings based on their relational responsibilities after they have lived each stage of life through the story and are ready to communicate their own wisdom (Simpson, 2017), while leaning into their own histories for their "central truths" (Krawec, 2022, p. 15). Through chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) we see an avenue towards the resurgence of knowledge sharing, reproduction, and reawakening while experiencing the critical kinship praxis that is taking place.

In order for us to understand and uplift chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) and society building as a valid practice amongst our people, we have to uplift and support our Elders again and extend radical love and radical compassion to each other, because we can not even imagine the struggles our ancestors went through to get us here to this place, where we are still practicing our Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways). We understand the need to uplift the ancestral knowledge, lifeways, systems of medicines, foods, and the importance of integrating other knowledge for overall health and well-being.

Our construct of holistic community care is founded on the ontology of the Ochethi Sakowin people and necessarily framed by our theories and frameworks. I understand the work of uplifting our Indigenous lifeways, especially around birthwork and birth justice, to heal our communities is important work and I aim to continue to gather the necessary resources to back it up (i.e., research, needs assessments, education), especially birthing supports so that families can heal and welcome the coming generations with radical love. Also, as my classmates/radical writing partners/chosen kin throughout my entire PhD and dissertation process, Dana Arviso and Jazmen Moore mutually discussed during our time together is that consent is a "practice of relationality and responsibility" (Arviso & Eagle Shield, 2023, as cited in Moore, 2023; p. 49). In the following chapters, I invite you to journey with me and the families as we used Indigenous methodologies to reawaken models of Indigenous birthing and health throughout the chuwic'inpa project.

Chapter 4: Chuwic'inpa (cradleboard): [Chuwi (upper back) + k'in (to carry smth) + ounpA (to wrap/lay into)]: Wrapping our Future Generations In Radical Love

"Our cradleboards are living beings"- Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings (Atanacio and Binh Ho, 2023)

Introduction

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, February 2020, we found out we were having our third child and then the world paused, but our baby chose us and did not stop traveling across the Wanagi Thachanku (Trail of Spirits)[31], or the Milky Way. We could not retreat into despair or pause with the world. We had to prepare. We were living in Seattle, WA at the time while I was in my first year of my Ph.D. program at the University of Washington. We made the decision to move home to North Dakota because everything was so uncertain and I just kept hearing my parents' voices to "come home". Once we got home, it was chaos. COVID-19 was spreading and nowhere felt safe. Our Elders and knowledge keepers began dying. Moms and their babies were both contracting COVID-19 in the hospitals while the mothers birthed alone, without family or community support. With all the uncertainties in the world, we leaned into storying with Elders and community members about the path forward and we were encouraged to lean into the land for the answers.

Our reliance on our relationships with the natural world and each other has always guided how and when we think about and tell our stories and histories; as well as when and how we feel them (Million, 2008). As Phillip J. Deloria shares, in conversation with his father, Vine Deloria Jr.'s, work shares how stories can be a road map for the future and by placing stories in a

[31] In Ochethi Sakowin belief, the Wanagi Thachanku star constellation is what Western science knows as the Milky Way.

"philosophical framework" (p. xv), they can offer glimpses into the ways our ancestors lived their lives. They can also inspire our people to seek the great powers available to them when they believe that the teachings that come from the stories are from Wakhan Thanka (the spirits/Creator), or something greater than themselves. As we prepared for our third baby, my mind needed to focus. My thoughts were on fear, death, and uncertainty. In our lifeways, when you are pregnant, we believe that the baby also feels everything you feel. I did not want my baby to be born into fear and chaos. So, we made a plan. I contacted a midwife who was my husband's relative's partner and they were located on the Three Affiliated Tribes, and we began having prenatal sessions with her that were treated as a ceremony. We prepared for our homebirth. We also began researching designs and structures of how our first cradleboard would be. This process was essential in getting my mind ready for our homebirth. I did not know the first thing about making a cradleboard so we began asking local artists, researching designs, talking with my dad and Red Rock's relatives about designs and stories of homebirth and beadwork designs within our families. We listened to audiobooks, did Facebook and Instagram Lives, and shared our journey online via social media. It felt like social media was the only way to be in community during that time, and trying to follow protocol and stay distant was a new challenge.

In Ochethi Sakowin lifeways, we are taught that when you want to know something, when you want to find something, or when you generally need guidance, you make an offering in many different forms (i.e., prayer ties, prayer flags, sprinkle tobacco on the land, and you can also offer a cigarette and/or a pack of cigarettes, which is more contemporary) to the person you want to gain knowledge and/or advice from. You can offer those same offerings or feed the ancestors by placing a spirit dish[32] out for them. We offer our prayers, our energy, and our

[32] A spirit plate is a form of offering that is made when food is placed in a container (usually something made of the earth like a smooth rock or a wooden bowl) and is prayed over and sprinkled with tobacco and/or sage to offer the ancestors.

essence into the tobacco and into the food we put out for the ancestors. These are a few examples of things you can do to seek guidance. Sometimes, you are just given guidance. Either way, we remain connected to our relatives and ancestors in intimate ways that enable us to continue learning and growing in the ways that are necessary for us. We also believe in change. "For a culture, a way of life, to remain vital it must change and be added to as social, environmental, and technological changes take place around it and some practices are left behind." (St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995; p. 59).

Through these processes and protocols, at a distance, we began creating the cradleboard for our third baby. We relied on relatives to share birthing advice and support, as well as relatives sharing support, guidance, teachings, and actually beading with us. In the old days, they say cradleboards were made by "the father's sisters, or a female relative… shortly after the birth of the newborn, the maker presented the cradle to the baby's family. Cradleboard making was a symbol of sisterly respect and an opportunity for women to publicly show their abilities and handiwork" (Broughton, 2019; p. 182). As noted before, this was also traditionally the role of a two-spirit relative, or other gender relative, that had these gifts of crafting and creating such items. We virtually asked three of my chosen sisters, and their families, if they could help us finish the cradleboard. Figure 12. is a picture of the package we mailed out. The package contained: the unfinished cradleboard, the beads, thread, needles, and a card with a gift for each of my sisters. Figures 9-11 are of my chosen sisters in various stages of beading the cradleboard. It first went to Cinnamon (Portland, OR), and when she was done she mailed it to Kayla (South Hampton, NY), and when she was done she mailed it to Cheyenne (Newtown, ND). When we got it back from Cheyenne it just needed to be assembled to the board and the wood runners needed to be added. It was the most beautiful process I could have ever imagined. I felt all the

love, prayers, and energy put into honoring our baby. I felt so connected and held during such a scary and simultaneously beautiful time. I knew this would be our responsibility, to share and continue to learn about this beautiful Indigenous technology, the cradleboard.

Figure 9: Photo taken by Cinnamon Kills First with son and partner

Figure 10: Photo taken by Kayla Looking Horse

Figure 11: Photo taken by Cheyenne Brady

Figure 12: Photo taken by Cheyenne Brady Of the package each sister received.

In this chapter, I will discuss the process of creating a chuwic'inpa as an Indigenous resurgence and Indigenous refusal project and also an act of knowledge transmission and an act of resiliency, which Tiffany Prete (2019) describes as two of the "three principles that form the conceptual basis of beadworking" (p. 30). I will also map out my experience as a mother, navigating creating a cradleboard and all of the lessons I learned along the way about abundance, love, resurgent, and refusal practices. I also will share our process in inviting eight families to

create chuwic'inpa during the spring and summer of 2023. I will discuss the different ways that resurgence and refusal boldly showed up through kinship, ceremony, artistic practice, and discourse, despite the settler colonial state working to actively keep these families in the struggle of destruction and loss through the generations. I will share how five of the families leaned into their Indigenous Brilliance (Simpson, 2017) while carrying life within their wombs and continued to create and include others in making a cradleboard and sharing the cradleboard teachings.

I aim to share the many ways that, alongside the families, we artistically co-created and re-designed the practice of making cradleboards together and how I am beginning to theorize cradleboarding as an act of resurgence and refusal by restoring kinship systems. By uplifting the teachings of Elders and the history of cradleboards available that continue to sustain us (Paris & Alim, 2017), I hope to offer insight into the time we spent together "embodying radical resurgence" (Simpson, 2019; p. 192) and making new traditions and new realities where we were able to center and sustain our lifeways and Indigenous futures (Harjo, 2019).

Hanbleble (As in a Dream): Receiving Guidance

Dreams have always guided me throughout my life. Either through stories about dreams of my ancestors, my parents sharing their dreams through fasting or other means, or my own dreams. I have had to learn to tune into what the dreams are sharing with me. When we began to create our fourth child's cradleboard, the pandemic was still very serious, but our minds had shifted. We knew what was possible. We knew my mind and body were strong enough for another homebirth, as well as our skills and knowledge around creating cradleboards were deepening. By this time, we had created multiple cradleboards out of blankets for other families. I did not feel like we were experts, but we were learning so much about cradleboards and many

people were calling upon us to support them and/or create their new relatives' cradleboards for their arrival. It was beginning to feel like a beautiful calling of ours. It filled me with so much joy and so much excitement. As we began to create our fourth baby's cradleboard, we honored our ancestors and put two woman warrior designs on each side of the cradleboard, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of the orange beadwork cradleboard with ancestor designs created by Alayna Eagle Shield, Red Rock Perkins, Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services Doulas, and other relatives.

One woman warrior was from my tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and the other was from my husband Red Rock's tribe, the Three Affiliated Tribes, also known as the MHA (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara) Nation. We each had an ancestor in mind. The ancestor I chose to bead was Thasina Mani Win (Moving Robe Woman), one of my strong woman ancestors who fought in the Battle of Little Big Horn[33]. The ancestor Red Rock chose to bead was Floating Ledge Woman, who was the farthest ancestor his auntie Marilyn Howling Wolf (2021), a well-respected and knowledgeable Elder from the Three Affiliated Tribes, could recall in their

[33] The Battle of Little Big Horn, also known as the Battle of Greasy Grass, took place on June 25, 1876 after gold was found within the Black Hills and General George Armstrong Custer and his Cavalry tried to raid the encampment of Ochethi Sakowin and were defeated.

family lineage. Throughout the 3.5 months that we were beading our fourth baby's cradleboard, I started to have beautiful and vivid dreams. Here is one of the dreams I had:

> *I walked into a single room with panoramic window views at the top of a small mountain. The brightness from the large, glaring snow-covered mountains blurred my vision. I squinted my eyes and looked around. The scent of sweetgrass permeated throughout the room. There were many tables in a giant U-shape where family and friends sat. The room was filled with the beautiful sounds of Indigenous joy, laughter, and the best, whole-body storytelling. At the front of the room stood an unci (grandma) with a shawl draped over her shoulders. She had long gray hair that went down past the waistband of her long black skirt. She commanded the attention of everyone in the room as she began speaking in a soft but firm voice: "Everyone, look around for signs of this young thakoza's (grandchild's) name." The room fell silent as our eyes began scanning around the room and through the windows. All of a sudden, through my squinted vision, off into the distant mountains and I saw a giant lightning bolt outlined in the mountains with the colors of the rainbow shining through it. Someone excitedly gasped: "Look!" and pointed at the same lightning bolt I was looking at and everyone got up and walked towards the window. As we walked closer to the window, the view of the mountains shifted and a space formed between two of the mountains where we could visibly see the rainbow between the mountains.*

Gonzales (2012) shares that "dreams are the outcome of, as well as a vehicle for, cocreative knowledge. Just as Cook calls the childbearing womb the doorway to life (2000,

2004), Cajete calls dreams a doorway to Native science (2001). Thus, dreams and the "fertilized womb are related to the unity of different worlds and the sacred system of the spirit, human, plant, and animal worlds in a cosmos that is alive and communicating back and forth across realms and dimensions among various life-forms." (p. 174). This passage gives great insight into the ways our ancestors invite us to engage with our dreams in a way that is honoring our sacred connections to the cosmos and our lineages before and after us. I share in the Prologue, and again in Chapter Two, the term Mitakuye Owas'in (We are All Related, All My Relations), which signifies our sacred relationship and connection to each other and all entities. This is what Gonzales (2012) is highlighting by uplifting other scholars and their perspectives on dreams. We are all intricately tied to each other and through dreams we get glimpses into those connections.

Gonzales (2012) shares, "dreams establish relationships with the sacred… dreams are a form of data gathering and method for asking for knowledge, just as are ceremonies." (p. 172). Our fourth baby was born in March 2022, and a week later a relative from home traveled to Seattle, WA, where we were located, and named her through a naming ceremony. Her name is He Wigmunke Wakhangli Win (Rainbow Mountain Lightning [that Comes Back Holy] Woman). This name tells the story of my dream. It is a powerful name and as I am leaning into my own essence as a mother, I am learning to trust these dreams more. They are not always magical and mystical. Sometimes they show up as hanbleble[34] (as in a dream), or Deja Vu. Sometimes it is good and sometimes I have a weird feeling in the pit of my stomach, but I am learning to lean into what these messages are telling me.

Through these types of dreams, we learned that creating cradleboards for our babies was awakening something, not only within us as a family, but within our lineages as we reclaim and

[34] In the Ochethi Sakowin language Hanbleble is the closest term to the English version of Deja Vu. It happened as in a dream (not specifically a fasting dream where a person(s) is seeking specific answers or guidance from the spiritual realm).

uplift the teachings of the cradleboard and our own family histories. We also gained the responsibility of passing on the knowledge and sharing the knowledge with others. In many ways, this was the foundation of this cradleboard project with other families. My husband Red Rock and I have shared our dreams with each other and how they are many times symbolic of our current paths in life. A well-known and respected Elder in my community of Standing Rock who has since started his journey onto the Wanagi Thachanku (Trail of Spirits), or Milky Way, Leksi (uncle) George Iron Shield (2012), used to share with us that when you have Deja Vu, it means you are on the right path. You are exactly where you are supposed to be.

In Ochethi Sakowin epistemology, we all come from the stars. It is known as the Wichahpi Oyate (star nation) and is where all of our ancestors and future ancestors exist. We talk about the journey across Wanagi Thachanku (Trail of Spirits), or Milky Way, when we are born or when we die, while simultaneously being right beside our loved ones and chosen family. Time and space are enigmas and are only as complicated as we make them. We also believe that when a hoksicala (baby) begins their journey from the wichahpi oyate (star nation) to be here with us Earthside, their nagi (spirit) chooses the family that is going to give them specific lessons and teachings in this world. They preview their whole lives and they choose it. Their nagi are guided and led to the Earth realm by their ancestors. We also believe that these affirmations show up in the form of hanbleble (as in a dream), or Deja Vu. When a person experiences hanbleble, it is said that they are on the right path. As stated in the book, *Walking in the Sacred Manner (St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995)*, "Dreams of calling were very bothersome to the dreamer… The most important aspect of these dreams is how they always transform the dreamer's life." (p. 55) My husband Red Rock's and my own dreams and visions kept calling us back to our early

experiences with our own cradleboards as babies, and we knew we had to continue creating cradleboards, but we knew we needed to start teaching what we have been learning as well.

Creating Cradleboards as an Act of Resiliency: A Brief History in Dialogue

This moment that we are co-implicated within is like Deja Vu. It reminds us of our continued collective resistances that our people around the world have always faced, fighting for our lifeways, land back, sovereignty, liberation, the "rallying calls: Black Lives Matter and Water Is Life" (Eagle Shield, et al., 2020), and FREE PALESTINE. This Deja Vu and continued brutality within our collective experiences remind us of the call that "radical imaginings and world-building must be international in orientation… not as an afterthought at the height of mobilizations, but as a foundational practice" (Maynard & Simpson., 2022; p. 261). Walters et al. (2020) describes relationality as meaning "one experiences the self as part of others, and that others are part of the self- all inextricably linked" (p. 8). Creating spaces where our lifeways can be reclaimed, revitalized, and reactivated is vital to uplifting our Indigenous brilliance and genius within our communities. Stories are a vital pathway to inform our understanding of our original teachings, protocols, languages and ceremonies and demands to be "dialogic, emergent, and co-developed" (San Pedro & Bang, 2021, p. 3) through new understandings of our current realities of responsible relationality.

Reflecting back, the Water Is Life movement has been a pivotal moment in my journey. It was a moment in time for me when I first began thinking of a way forward, a map forward, and imagining Harjo's (2019) beautiful work, building off of the amazing Indigenous poet Joy Harjo's *Map to the Next World*, that in order to reach the "fulfillment of the lush promise" (p. 59) of radical sovereignty and make it to the next world, we as a community and individuals need to imagine and create "new and decolonized" (p. 62) maps of our lifeways, protocols, and original

teachings. In any work I do with community, I centered it within the Woophe Sakowin (seven values/virtues), as mentioned in Chapter 1, of the Ochethi Sakowin people: wowahwala (humility), wowaounihan (respect), wowacitanka (patience), wowaunsila (compassion), woksape (wisdom), wacante ognake (generosity), and woohitike (bravery). The Woope Sakowin is situated within the decolonization of politics that strategically centers self-determination with a goal of social justice that transforms, decolonizes, heals, and mobilizes folks (Smith, 2012). This essential centering of the Woope Sakowin creates space to see each other as relatives (Eagle Shield, et. al., 2020). In the following section, I share a brief storying, or dialogue, between me and my husband, Red Rock, about creating our first cradleboard, for our third child, Changleska. We share this story so you might understand the elements that came together, elements we attempted to share with the five families in this project.

Alayna: Babe, why did you feel it was important for us to actually create a cradleboard for Changleska[35], even though we had NO IDEA where to start and did not know how to make one? [laughs] I mean, I know we are creative and artistic, but it was still intimidating to think of making one.

Red Rock: Remember when Waaruxit[36] was born and we were able to use the cradleboard my dad made?

Alayna: Yes! Man, it was a beautiful cradleboard. I was inspired by the one your dad made too. Because the one he made was most similar to a plains cradleboard that I have seen[37] (Figure

[35] Changleska (Chan-gleh-sh-kah) is a shortened version of our third child's name. His full name, which is in the Lakota language, is Tha-Changleksa Luta Hoksila which translates to: His Red Hoop Boy. Changleska was born during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
[36] Waaruxti (Wah-doo-x [gutteral x sound]- dee) is a shortened version of our second child's name. His full name, which is in the Arikara language, is Waaruxti Nataree'ux Tawisa which translates to: Blue Thunder Returns. Waaruxti was born in 2013 when we were in our early 20's.
[37] This would be considered a *lattice cradleboard*, one of the two cradleboards typically made by the Lakotas, which usually includes "a buckskin bag, decorated with beadwork, and attached to a wooden frame" (Broughton, 2019; p. 181).

14). My cradleboard as a baby was really simple. It was made with cloth and ribbon[38] (Figure 15).

Figure 14: Photo of cradleboard made by Glen Perkins (Red Rock's father) in 1970's

Figure 15: Photo of my cradleboard when I was born in 1989

Red Rock: Well being able to see him [Waaruxti] in that cradleboard, knowing my dad made that for us [Red Rock and all his siblings] when we were born, I wanted to do that same tradition for our babies. It also felt like his essence was still a part of the cradleboard and even though he passed away when I was 11 years old, it felt like he was there with us holding our baby. And also, not knowing enough of the teachings about cradleboards when Waaruxti was born, being able to use the one my dad made was real helpful. So I already had the mindset to make a

[38] This would be considered a *soft cradle*, the other type of cradle made by Lakotas, which included "a buckskin or cloth cover, tied in the front and decorated with quillwork or beadwork, with a tab at the top of the bag." (Broughton, 2019; p. 181) Although mine had embroidered feathers on each side and no tab at the top, it was a more contemporary one created for me in the late 1980's.

cradleboard when Changleska was born. I like that we were able to learn more and visit with Elders about the cradleboard and learn about the traditions and how we honored our babies. Plus, I was able to look at pictures of the one my dad made and do research on other cradleboards on the internet. Just seeing pictures of our people and their babies in cradleboards while they were working, cooking, harvesting or doing anything and just wearing their babies or setting them up against a tree. Our people always took our babies with us everywhere. Our societies have always revolved around babies, our children, and the Elders. The Elders are the knowledge keepers and the children are our future. Being able to create that [cradleboard] for our babies and continue our traditional lifeways and teachings of the cradleboard are what I wanted to keep going. Even when our babies have babies, I want to help and teach them to make one.

Alayna: This is exactly how I feel. It has literally been life changing for us as a family to not only have this tradition continuing, but to create cradleboards for other families and to help other families learn how to make them also. This Indigenous technology [cradleboards] have stood the test of time and continues to evolve. I think it is so cool that we both had cradleboards that we had when we were babies. Our parents were able to share stories of us as babies in them. Your dad made your cradleboard that you and your siblings all used as babies, as well as the grandchildren used, that's over 42 years old. And my cradleboard that was made by a relative for my parents when I was born is over 34 years old. Just think of the family histories that are impacted by having their own cradleboards in their lineages now. I remember my dad talking about how when I was sad as a tiny baby, I'd go find my cradleboard and try to wrap up into it.

Red Rock: [Laughs] Yeah! Our babies do that too. The other day, Wigmunke[39] saw her cradleboard and she crawled into it. Even though she's too long for it now. She scrunched herself

[39] Wigmunke (Wee-gah-moon-gay) is the shortened version of our fourth child's name. Her full name, which is in the Lakota language, is He Wigmunke Wakhangli Win: Rainbow Mountain Lightning [Comes Back Holy] Woman. Wigmunke was born in 2022.

into it and you could tell, or imagine, that she was remembering the safeness and the love of her cradleboard. She just laid in her cradleboard all crunched up but she was so smiley and happy.

Alayna: [Laughs] My tiny baby! Man! That literally makes me have mommy butterflies. It has been a journey, for sure. We knew what was possible and we knew the love that went into a cradleboard because we were both wrapped in one as babies. It is in our cellular memory and it is our responsibility to make sure we are sharing these teachings and traditions, even if we are still learning as we go. All our babies deserve to be wrapped in love.

This dialogue set in motion a beautiful desire and intention to teach these teachings and to continue to learn about the cradleboard with others and in community. Every teaching is intentional. Every aspect of a cradleboard, the process of preparing quills to do quillwork, a set of beadwork, and the designs all have meaning and intentions. Those meanings are different amongst tribes, which should be that way. We are guided by certain practices that teach us how to live our lives. I have heard a phrase over and over, not sure of the origin, but it goes: *how you do anything, is how you do everything*. Though this is not an Ochethi Sakowin phrase, nor do I believe it is an Indigenous proverb. It is significant and reminds me of how we are taught to conduct ourselves during ceremonial times. Indeed, we should conduct ourselves this way all the time. Our thoughts and intentions are powerful all the time. They say you are not supposed to think bad thoughts about anyone during ceremonial times. Anytime you are creating something and you get frustrated, you need to smudge and maybe put it down and come back to it later, because your essence and energy go into that piece. “Whatever you do if you are sewing and you make a mistake, you should not rip it out (teaching me self-confidence and persistence). If you

do, you will be that way the rest of your life. If you do rip it out, it will be your habit in all things during your lifetime." (St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995; p. 69).

Wichoh'an Unglukinipi: Our Resurgent Lifeways

The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers that were a part of the cradleboard study have become our thiyospaye (extended family) in many ways. We spent the summer of 2023 together with gatherings spread out throughout the summer at the Mni Wichoni Health Circle rental space in Fort Yates[40], as well as gatherings within my home, and being in intimate settings together as we celebrated five of the eight families in welcoming their hoksicala (babies) Earth side through a ceremony, which took place on the land, called a Hoksichantkiyapi (publicly welcoming a beloved baby[41]). Each time we gathered we shared meals, gift giving, full belly laughter, stories in all genres, from sacred to rugged[42], and there were always an abundance of children running around. Mine included. Without being prompted or directly told, each of the families would bring their partners, parents, supportive relatives, children, and other family members. A given in Indigenous communities is that we always show up with our families and extended families. it is also a given that you treat all your people as a relative; therefore, you take care of them as a relative. You feed them, make sure they are comfortable and feel welcomed, and share any knowledge that is respectfully asked of you.

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[40] Fort Yates is also known as the Akichita Hanska (Long Soldier) District on the Standing Rock Reservation. It is located on the North Dakota side and is one of eight (8) districts that make up the Standing Rock Nation and is also the district that I grew up within. I graduated from high school and attended Sitting Bull College, a tribal college in Fort Yates.

[41] The publicly welcoming of a baby can be interpreted in many ways; either way, you publicly celebrate their arrival on Earth side and welcome them into the World, into the community, into a family, and into their name.

[42] The term "rugged" is a slang word used within my reservation community, as well as other reservation communities, as an enduring term to describe crazy, but true, experiences and to remind us of our new paths and that those paths are always evolving from "rugged". This is a humorous take at reminding ourselves we are still here after all we have gone through due to colonization.

We gathered in various spaces: in a building, in my home, on the land, and in community with the families, and this is where I began imagining the cradleboard study as a project of resurgence and refusal. While gathering with the families bringing the cradleboard study to life, we discussed the importance of uplifting traditions and returning to ceremonies in every and all ways possible, both as a calling, or resurgent practice, and as a responsibility, especially as many of the families had not been connected to traditions and ceremonies for various reasons. Jeff Corntassel (2012), a Cherokee scholar, shares how actively uplifting traditions and returning to ceremonies is "Indigenous resurgence" (p. 89). We must take courage and imagine our lives beyond the settler colonial state because whether we are aware of it or not, as he writes, we are in a "daily struggle for resurgence" (p. 89). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) shares the work of Graham Smith in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, discussing a Maori context of the politics of struggle. She shares that Graham Smith's research shows that "people often participated in struggles more as a solidarity with friends and family… than as a personal commitment to or knowledge about historical oppression, colonialism and the survival of Maori people." (Smith, 2012; p. 200).

I was able to witness the power of refusal show up within this space, such as when Mikey, one of the family members creating cradleboards shared, *"Mashiis [white people] always think we just do things to do them, but there is always form and function.",* or when discussing the *"right"* to be able to create a cradleboard and carry those teachings. I argue this is literally our birthright as Indigenous folks. I also witnessed this refusal as a resurgence when cradleboard study family members Maya and Memphis shared that they were intimidated to make a cradleboard, but are more excited to be able to teach others how to make them and to be someone people turn to. This is Indigenous resurgence.

Corntassel (2012) shares about the politics of distraction, where the settler colonial state attempts to move Indigenous folks away from reclaiming and regenerating our relational place-based practices by distracting us with "state-centric" discourse, politics that reinforce the "status quo", and the "commodifying" of our "relationships, responsibilities, and resurgence efforts" (p. 97). These gatherings and spaces together with the families were what Simpson (2017) describes as an "embodiment," as generative and emergent qualities of centering our "Indigenous presence" and it compels each of us to step into our Indigenous selves in necessary ways, determined by us (p. 97, 192). Across this project we were compelled by these components of refusal and resurgence.

For this project, the cradleboard was one pathway towards resurgence. In Ochethi Sakowin epistemology, our ancestors possessed profound insights into childrearing and child development practices, embodying a culture of care approach that seamlessly intertwined spiritual teachings with practical considerations. Although "life revolved around basic survival" (Broughton, 2019; p. 11), Ochethi Sakowin people knew that their survival as a people was dependent upon systems of connectedness and reciprocity. Broughton (2019), shares an interesting concept of the "third mother" (p. 8), which basically describes the first mother as Mother Earth, the second mother as the one who gives birth to the child, and the third mother as being the cradleboard. Indigenous children had many mothers within the community and so this makes sense because the cradleboard is a social tool which kinship systems can be (re)generated and (re)created through.

Cradleboarding: A Way Forward Through Restored Kinship Systems

Our first gathering took place in May 2023 at the Sitting Bull College Visitor Center[43], a community space known for hosting classes around quillwork, beadwork, parflesch, and even cradleboards. We were generously offered the space, for free, to discuss the cradleboard study. We invited Wotapi[44], a local food catering service, to provide a beautiful meal for the families. As mentioned in the previous chapter on methodology, I created a graph of the families and where they are situated in the Northern Plains region and shared about my relationship to the families, as well as their relationship to each other. I also shared how my husband, Red Rock, and myself would co-facilitate the sessions and debrief after each session. Being in a familiar setting with familiar faces was very grounding and I had a beautiful feeling come over me once everyone arrived.

Red Rock and I opened up the discussion by introducing ourselves and the cradleboard study. Everyone in the room already knew me and Red Rock in some capacity: they are our relatives, they are classmates of ours, they are our community members; however, I was so nervous as we were preparing for the orientation/grounding of the cradleboard study. We could have taught a normal class on making cradleboards similar to those classes that the Sitting Bull College Visitor Center offers and it would have been easier than standing in front of everyone trying to explain why we are going to be enacting this cradleboard study as a part of the process to receive my Ph.D. at the University of Washington. I know this is a loaded statement, but it felt unfamiliar and extractive at its core. I was reminded of Linda Smith's famous statement that research is a dirty word in many Indigenous communities. It felt backwards no matter how hard I

[43] https://www.sittingbull.edu/about/community/visitor-center/
[44] Wotapi is a Lakota word that means "to feast" or "they eat", however you interpret it. I love seeing our community using our language in their local businesses. https://www.wotapicatering.com/

tried to replicate kinship protocols of introducing them to my family and my children, welcoming the families into a safe space, feeding them, and offering prayer. We were essentially making offerings to them, in exchange for their participation. Once the conversations started though, it all shifted. The question asked of the participants was "Please introduce yourselves, and if you would, please share your 'why' for wanting to create a cradleboard."

A few highlights from the sharings are below. I choose to share several here so that all the voices of the families can enter our learning:

> "I want to make one for my daughter… and one for the next one [child]"- (Lefa, 2023).

> "I always wanted to make one [cradleboard] for my first child... I thought it would always be cool since we're starting to bring a lot of things back… Having a cradleboard would be awesome to have in our family"- (Johnny, 2023).

> "I want to make a fully beaded one, but since he's going to arrive soon, I want to make a Pendleton one [cradleboard] for my son"- (Teyah, 2023).

> "I have two sons and one girl… My sister passed away… I'm raising her five kids. I raise another nephew, a niece and an adopted kid. I have 11 kids total... But she's my baby. I want to learn to make a cradleboard so it is something she and I can work on. And to bond and to eventually be able to make a fully beaded one… I wasn't raised in ceremonies so now that I'm older I want to learn and pass these teachings onto my grandbabies"- (Lynette, 2023).

“I would also like to learn and teach other women how to make a cradleboard. It’s kind of intimidating”- (Maya, 2023).

“I feel the same way, it’s intimidating but I’m excited to learn how and have the skills… I think it would be awesome to be someone people turn to for cradleboards”- (Memphis, 2023).

“I’m so thankful for Alayna and Red Rock, you know, kinda leading the way and for incorporating this back into our generation… We’re hoping to incorporate this child more and have their roots within Standing Rock and MHA [Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation] so it’s not so foreign to them”- (Savannah, 2023).

“There are a lot of people who aren’t here anymore and who don’t have that knowledge. That’s why it’s really important for me to learn as much as I can. I know my mother always stuck me in a cradleboard and I always thought it was because I was naughty, but it’s because I know there is a whole thoughtful process to it… Mashiis [white people] always think we just do things to do them, but there is always form and function. It’ll be good to learn the process”- (Mikey, 2023).

“In the past I worked with children and families. In that time we had a lot of different curriculums… In those curriculum they always talked about cradleboard and how it’s important for babies' self-regulation, brain development, especially when you’re

> wrapping left to right… I never personally learned how to make anything from my culture, so when I seen Alayna and Mni Wichoni Health Circle put out the announcement, I definitely wanted to learn because I read everything about it and we taught classes on it, but we never had one. I really want my children to be connected to their culture and have a sense of identity and know why we do the things that we do"- (JanaKate, 2023).

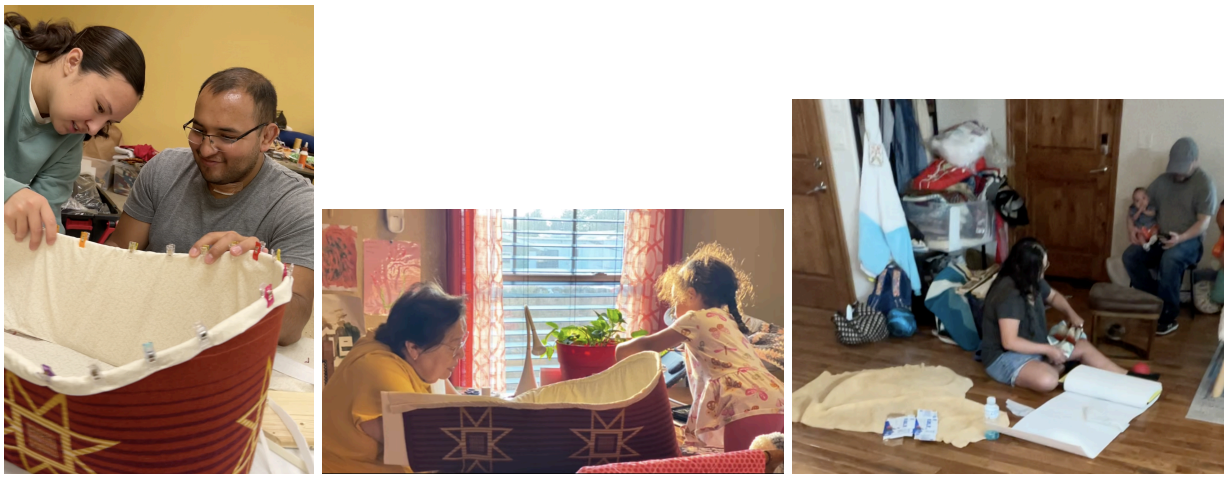
> "It's a new experience for me… It'll be for our 3rd child. I got really interested when I seen my cousin's [cradleboard]... I'm looking forward to how the process goes"- (Brandon, 2023).

From the beginning of our time together, the families who were able to make it to the orientation/grounding (JanaKate, Savannah, Teyah, Lefa, & Maya), and their support systems (i.e., partners, parents, relatives, children) each showed up in powerful ways for this chuwic'inpa study and expressed interest in learning and sharing with other families. All of the families showed up throughout the study in necessary ways beyond the orientation/grounding (JanaKate, Savannah, Teyah, Lefa, Maya, Misty, Kirah, and Xtal). They continued to spend the summer finishing their chuwic'inpa collectively and individually.

The main themes that emerged across time creating chuwic'inpa together, which many can foreshadow from the short introduction excerpts above, were: centering family/chosen family, returning to ceremony and enacting sovereignty, and Indigenous futurism and the responsibility to learn and share. In all cases, these themes are related and interdependent, but also deserve their own naming as they emerged through enactments in our work together. As I

observed, many of the families showed up within multiple themes. I will share brief examples of each theme and connect with a family or two for succinctness. Each of these themes encompass "consensual engagement", (Simpson, 2019; p. 161), or consenting to embarking on this project/study together. "Being engaged- deeply and consensually- in the physical real-world work of resurgence, movement building, and nation building is the only way to generate new knowledge on how to resurge from within Nishnaabeg intellectual systems." (Simpson, 2019; p. 161). The creation stories shared in earlier chapters are examples of the necessity for these stories and engagements to take place communally.

Centering Family/Chosen Family



Figures 16-18: Photos taken by Alayna Eagle Shield, Kirah and Xtal's oldest son during the different sessions of the cradleboard project with the families. Figure 16: Includes Kirah and Waylon at the Mni Wichoni Health Circle space on the Standing Rock Nation. Figure 17: Includes Kirahs grandma and daughter in their home in New Town, ND. Figure 18: Includes Xtal and her partner and son sitting in the entryway of my home in Mandan, ND.

In the context of all of creation, in order to imagine our futures, we need to anchor ourselves in the present moments and movements. What does it mean to seek consent from the water? What does it mean to carry creation stories on your back in a chuwic'inpa while it is holding your baby safely? This is how we decolonize and move towards our futures. It will take

us uncovering and unlocking our own shame and oppressions. I believe this can be accomplished through centering family and chosen families.

Xtal, Teyah, and Kirah were great examples of intergenerational learning, as well as centering family/chosen family. They lovingly and instinctively included their children in the process as well as their partners and parents stepping in to support and learn new skills. On June 17, 2023, we gathered around our kitchen table in Mandan, ND and worked on chuwic'inpa and ate a meal together. We began sharing together about our journeys so far. Xtal shared that she was happy that her partner jumped in and was brave enough to try sewing because she did not feel like she could do it. She said "This has been a learning process for me. When I went home, I did not work on it like I wanted to, but I'm so happy I have this [cradleboard] now… I just love him and want this [cradleboard] for him" (Xtal, 2023, Figure 18). Xtal worked in the medical field on the Standing Rock Nation and serves our people in such a beautiful way. We were grateful to support her through this small part of her journey. Her and her partner, Ron, came to every gathering except orientation/grounding due to their work schedules, but they did not give up and they were not afraid to ask for help with sewing and cutting out. They always brought their beautiful sons with them. Xtal's oldest son was so helpful and outgoing. He helped me video document the families creating their chuwic'inpa. Also, my mom used to babysit him as a little boy, so we had a longer relationship with him than with his mom. He is such a bright kid. At one point he asked his mom if we were his real aunties and uncles. It was so sweet.

In Ochethi Sakowin lifeways, there's a term called hunka or hunkayapi. Hunka or hunkayapi is a ceremony, which includes specific protocols, where an individual and/or their family take an individual and/or their family as relatives. It is a ceremony of the joining of families in a public way and in front of the spirits and ancestors. Nowadays, the ceremony is not

as common, yet there have always been ways we still use hunka, or hunkyapi, by choosing families and relatives that we want to continue in our lives. We claim each other by using kinship terms. For instance, Xtal's oldest son knew we were his "aunties", but he questioned if we were his real aunties as a curiosity of the roles we carry in his everyday life. In Indigenous communities we often use kinship terms to show our responsibility to each other. We believe that when you call someone by their relative term, then you take care of them as a relative.

Teyah was with her mom Lynette for most of our sessions together. I will share more in the next chapter about the beautiful ways Teyah and her partner Dedrick incorporated ceremony into their birth; however, through centering family and chosen family, they share a great deal about their home life and how Teyah as been privileged to have many siblings that Lynette has taken as her own children. They also share about the ways that chosen family was incorporated into their birthing ceremony. They were great examples of enacting kinship in the most beautiful ways. Lynette is my cousin, our dads are brothers, John Eagle Shield and Fritz Eagle Shield. Even though I did not grow up with Lynette, now as an adult, I have learned so much about the way she fiercely choses family and supports family. It has been beautiful to witness and to be a part of. Especially the way she enacts kinship by calling folks by their kinship name. For example, anytime we interact, she calls me "cousin" or "cephansi". Cephansi means female to female cousin in Lakota. In Lakota kinship teachings, when you call someone by their kinship term, you treat them in that way. Therefore, you take care of them as kin and it impacts how you radically show up for your kin and chosen kin.

Kirah was into her third trimester and would drive for over three hours from the Three Affiliated Tribes to Standing Rock to join us in the chuwic'inpa making sessions. When her partner was not in his medical school classes, he would join her and learn a lot of sewing for the

first time (Figure 16). Kirah ended up finishing her chuwic'inpa in the winter of 2023 with her family on the Three Affiliated Tribes reservation boundaries (Figure 17). She shared in a post on social media after she finished her cradleboard with the following message: "We did it. For baby Amoura. 3 Generations worked on baby's cradleboard. Way [Waylon] did most of the sewing and my brother did the wood staining. This means so much to me. I'm so thankful for Alayna and Red Rock for their guidance in completing this project. She's already about to outgrow this one. I want to make more." (Instagram @_kirahm, 2023). The connectedness that Kirah was able to experience with the other families in the chuwic'inpa project, as well as within her own family was felt when she shared how the process was going with her. Kirah and Waylon never hesitated to call myself or Red Rock when they needed support. They would video chat and continued to stay connected while they were finishing their cradleboard on their own. Kirah's daughter would call our sons "brother". Each of our kids instantly claimed us as aunties and uncles within the families. I felt so honored with how attentive and caring Kirah and Waylon treated our babies as if they were their own. This is enacting kinship in the most beautiful ways.

Returning to Ceremony and Enacting Sovereignty

Every time we visited with the families, we reminded them of the protocols we learned, encouraged them to reach out to their family members, and invited their own family teachings into these spaces. Me and Red Rock have been sharing what we have been learning over the years and over our own lifetimes, but we know it is not all encompassing and could never include every family tradition or protocol. We offer our teachings as a starting point for others to engage with their families, learn more, and continue developing their relationships with the ceremonies and technologies (i.e., chuwic'inpa).

Figure 19 is the families gathering for a hoksichantkiyapi (publically welcoming a baby) ceremony in May 2023 on the Standing Rock Nation. I will share later about this beautiful ceremony and the important teachings and learning that came from it. This innately incorporates protocols, because when we discuss ceremony or any kind of teachings, we are extending those teachings to the families and we are inviting their family teachings to come through. It is not a one way street of knowledge transmission. You will continue to see that as families share and uplift their own teachings and learnings.

Figure 19: Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of the Hoksichantkiyapi.

Figure 20 is of Misty wearing her beautiful baby inside the cradleboard she completed. Misty missed our first few gatherings together due to work and being on maternity leave. She had been a part of the Hoksichantkiyapi and was very determined so we of course allowed her to join. She completely surprised us because she had been uplifting and returning to ceremonies in her own life long before joining the study, and she shared how excited she was to be using the cradleboard in her everyday life. While we were gathered around our kitchen table on June 17, 2023, Misty shared, “It gives both of us a sense of security because if I lay her down with just swaddling she wakes up right away, but when I put her in her cradleboard, she sleeps for a few

hours" (Misty, 2023). Misty shared how healing and beautiful it has been to have this connection with her baby and to see the beautiful ways that the cradleboard has been incorporated into their lives.

Figure 20: Photo provided by Misty of Misty with her baby in the cradleboard we made together with the other families.

Figure 21 is of Savannah working on her cradleboard for her baby who was still in her womb at the time. Savannah's grandmother was a true matriarch and knowledgeable Elder within our community of Standing Rock. She has since passed on. As we sat on the floor, swivel chairs, or table at our home in Mandan, ND on June 17, 2023, we visited about this chuwic'inpa project so far. Savannah shared that her grandma always encouraged her to make her own things such as regalia. She shared how she took it for granted that her grandma would not always be here when she had questions. She shared, "we're losing those people who have that knowledge. And so a lot of us get worried that we're doing something wrong and I think it holds a lot of us back" (Savannah, 2023). This was a powerful statement, because I think that is a huge barrier in returning to ceremony, but when you do something through prayer and seek support with a good heart, the right people, experiences, and understandings will come. Ceremony will always be a

path for our people to return to, but we need to feel supported and uplifted and have healthy, solid teachers. I pray that me and Red Rock can continue to be healthy, solid teachers for others.

Figure 21: Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of Savannah.

Figures 22 & 23 are Figures of JanaKate's completed cradleboard with her baby inside. While we gathered at our home in Mandan, ND on June 17, 2023, Jana shared "I'm just amazed at the beauty of this project and how it's come together from the beginning, when we first started… I'm really thankful and I'm actually considering buying a sewing machine and trying to sew more often because I don't know, I felt like I didn't know how before or didn't have the skills… I really enjoyed this. It's really been special for us" (JanaKate, 2023). JanaKate shared when she used to work for a program on Standing Rock that she would teach about the importance of Indigenous teachings such as: ceremonies, cradleboards, moccasins, and more, yet she did not experience them herself until now. She shared the significance of being involved in the Hoksichantkiyapi and how it has been a dream come true for her and so healing. What JanaKate experienced was what Simpson (2017) shares about seeing "practice" but not "theory" or "intelligence"; however, through engagement, different understandings emerged on the how

and the process (p. 19). I witnessed JanaKate reflect on all the years of research in her profession and piece it together by her first-hand experiences.

Figure 22: Provided by JanaKate with baby in Cradleboard.

Figure 23 Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of JanaKate holding finished cradleboard.

Figure 24 is of my sister-in-law, Lefa, creating a chuwic'inpa for her and my brother's first baby together. Her and my brother discussed the style, type, and methods they would use to create their chuwic'inpa, and many of the ideas such as using rawhide instead of screws to tie it together and helping us with cutting the wood. These processes were co-created by Red Rock and my brother, Johnny. A lot of my brother's own teachings are involved in what we now share as our process. It was beautiful to see the ways Lefa and Johnny communicated and worked through the process of creating a chuwic'inpa together. I shared earlier in the chapter that there was tension between me and my brother, Johnny, through the chuwic'inpa making process. This is due to the fact he is very knowledgeable in how chuwic'inpa were made and is very creative in his own way, such as with animal hides, among other things. He was enacting his sovereignty because he had a particular vision in how he wanted his chuwic'inpa, and me being his older sister, we communicated through it.

Figure 24: Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield. Includes Lefa finishing Cradleboard.

On June 7, 2023, Lefa and Johnny stopped by our home in Mandan, ND to visit with us and so Lefa could get beads to finish her chuwic'inpa. Lefa shared, "it was a learning experience for me, so I wanted to just learn and do, but he had something else, or a different vision, in mind" Lefa, 2023). Then Johnny shared, "the way an unci taught him [Johnny's chosen uncle], was how I envisioned it" (Johnny, 2023). We were able to have a discussion about how we have created this template for chuwic'inpa but it can be altered and adjusted. It was a great example of how even within my own family, we are able to see the differences in teachings and acts of sovereignty show up. Many of my brother's teachings are similar to mine because we grew up together, but many of our teachings are different as well.

On June 19, 2023, Teyah, Dedrick, and Lynette stopped by our house to pick up their chuwic'inpa that Red Rock had finished assembling for them. All the families gathered again that day at our house as well. Teyah had just gotten out of the hospital after delivering her baby. After Teyah welcomed her baby Earthside, we all got to listen to her experience and how brave she was for demanding that her lifeways be honored most gently and humbly. As a group, we began conversing about how beautiful the experience of birthing with traditions and creating a

chuwic'inpa was and began discussing future moms within our community. Lynette shared "there are a lot of other moms out there that didn't grow up around ceremonies or learning the language… I'd love to just come together and make one for other moms if anyone knows other moms out there who want one… Because being able to help baby be connected to Mother Earth when he was born and just being able to pray over him. I don't know. I had a big lump in my throat because he was wide awake just watching and observing" (Lynette, 2023).

These are all examples of sovereignty enacted. Not waiting or requesting permission to pray over your baby, or grandbaby, or bring ceremony into a hospital setting. Or ask permission to bring ceremony into any setting. You are thinking of the future mothers who are expecting and wanting to wrap their babies in love, abundance, and guidance and knowing that your ideas can live on in teachings of anything and be continuously built upon. And the transformative act of regenerating neural pathways through engagement of our lifeways (Simpson, 2017).

Indigenous Futurisms and the Responsibility to Learn and Share

In Laura Harjo's (2019) book, *Spiral to the Stars*, she shares futurity practices which suggests that our Indigenous communities have what they need to sustain themselves through spaces to heal, dream, and activate their Indigenous futurity, despite the eliminatory work of the U.S. Nation-State. Each of these families are enacting futurity in profound ways. Harjo (2019) outlines many different actions for futurity praxis: individual, one-on-one, group settings, intratribal, and more (p. 203) and though this list could never be all encompassing, it reminds me that every single day that we are truly performing futurity by refusing "what Indigenous artist and hip-hop scholar Jarrett Martineau calls the trope of dying, disappearing Indian— a trope that has been necessary for the settler to take Indigenous lands and lives" (Harjo, 2019; p. 201). Figures 25-28, are moments in time where futurity praxis is happening through art making,

beading, sewing, intergenerational teaching, learning and observing, sharing space and home, cooking gluten-liberated frybread, dining together, laughing, and being authentic Indigenous selves.

Figures 25-28: Photos taken by Alayna Eagle Shield during the different sessions of the cradleboard project with the families. Figure 25: Includes Valerie, Kirah, Xtal, and Xtal's oldest son sewing and learning at the Mni Wichoni Health Circle space on the Standing Rock Nation. Figure 26: Includes Maya, Memphis, Alayna, Xtal and son, Lynette, Teyah, and JanaKate sewing and visiting. Figure 27: Includes Lynette, Misty, Savannah sewing their chuwic'inpa and visiting at my house in Mandan, ND. Figure 28: Includes Red Rock and Mikey making frybread at my house in Mandan, ND.

I was nervous to embark on institutionalizing this practice for the sake of my Ph.D. degree; however, the flexibility of futurity praxis was essential to this project. It did not have to look formalized, clean cut, no one was the expert, even though I had a tension that I needed to be the expert. I was even tested with this with my brother, which I later determined he was enacting his own sovereignty and I will share later. Each family and individual showed up with their own teachings and creative abilities and some families came later and some were there the whole time, but it did not determine if they finished or felt worthy or accepted into the spaces. They each were welcomed as their whole selves, immediate and extended family included. I know I do not usually go anywhere without my plus five (husband and four kids). Whether the families were tired, nervous, excited, had their whole families with them, had their support partners, or

came late and left early, there was a sense of innate kinship. A loving familial energy and essence was ever present. There was overwhelming support while some families stepped up and helped others sew certain parts, others were in the kitchen helping prepare and serve the meals. There was radical love for each other while holding each other's babies and playing with each other's older kids. We had consensus decision making on where we would meet, the times, and the dates. It was a process of trial and error and we were all present for the journey.

When you meet with an Elder or knowledge keeper in my community and ask for knowledge, even a simple, but deep story of our Indigenous intelligence, we often do not have the ability to extend or refuse consent (Simpson, 2014), so using our medicines and foods to opagi (make an offering in exchange for something) is a crucial part in the transmission of knowledge. An Elder, or knowledge keeper, has the right to either accept or refuse the offer, but it is all handled within the protocol of opagi. In engaging with Simpson's work on Nishnaabeg intelligence and consent (Simpson, 2014), I gained so much from this process of working with the families because they each wanted to learn and to engage in these practices of revitalizing the chuwic'inpa teachings for their own babies, and for future children who will be coming into the community.

Figures 29 & 30 show Maya and Memphis putting their baby into the cradleboard they finished. When Maya was pregnant with her baby, she and Memphis and their families made intentional decisions to include ceremonies they were learning and it was so beautiful to be a part of that journey. There was a group of Indigenous birth workers who were supporting them via social media. And through social media, Maya's generation began having conversations around birth and ceremonies. Witnessing this unfolding through Maya's beautiful dialogue on social

media was beautiful. Maya and Memphis also intentionally chose to create a chuwic'inpa for their baby and it was so beautiful.

Figures 29 & 30: Photos taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of Maya and Memphis with their baby in their cradleboard.

I have had the privilege of witnessing Maya and Memphis be such awesome parents and while they shared their desires to create a cradleboard for their baby. Maya and Memphis both shared this sentiment of being intimidated because they did not have experience, but they pushed through the process of making a cradleboard and continued to learn and grow in their confidence. On June 27, 2023, we were sitting around a table and visiting with Maya about the chuwic'inpa project at our soon-to-be new space for our nonprofit, the Mni Wichoni Health Circle. Maya shared "It's been really awesome, like just the learning process because it felt like if I do make mistakes, I can always go back and fix it. And just the repetitiveness. It's been really nice because I learned more through repetition. Instead of just doing it right the first time" (Maya, 2023). We discussed how many times people do not join classes or try to learn something themselves because they do not feel like they can or have the ability or for a number of different reasons do not even try, until they see someone like Maya and Memphis and other familiar faces

doing things like making chuwic'inpa. Maya also shared, "I'm super excited because we don't see people using cradleboards besides you [pointing at me] (laughs). It's so cool because eventually that'll be more common… We have a cradleboard but it just hangs up in our family room and we only used it once for a picture" (Maya, 2023). Maya was prophesying that chuwic'inpa will be more common and she would directly like to be involved in making that happen within our community. She shared that she could give pointers on how to make a chuwic'inpa, but once she felt comfortable enough to teach the whole process, she shared, "I think it will be a responsibility of mine to share because I don't want to be stingy… so many people are not willing to share, like making cradleboards or teaching the language and going to ceremonies" (Maya, 2023). On May 29, 2023, we were gathered at our soon-to-be new Mni Wichoni Health Circle space and Memphis shared a similar sentiment as Maya. He shared "I hate stingyness… That's why me and Maya like coming here… There's no specific way, we're all here for the same goal" (Memphis, 2023).

What Maya shared is so similar to how I felt growing up. Many people do not like to share their knowledge and it is sad because what I have been able to experience, is the abundance that comes with sharing your teachings allows more teachings to come in from many different teachers. Figure 31 is of Misty with her baby in the cradleboard she finished. On June 17, 2023, while at our home in Mandan, ND, Misty shared "I've had a friend who told me they won't share patterns or anything with anybody because they worked so hard to Figure it out themselves and they don't feel like they should share" (Misty, 2023). I shared how important it was to have my mom and Red Rock to be accountable to because we encourage each other and we love teaching others. We have all had similar experiences of people not sharing teachings and it is not a practice we want to pass on. Misty shared how she's teaching her family, especially her daughter,

how to craft and make things, as she is learning. She also shared how this experience has been so beautiful because she is "always wanted someone to craft with. It is always so nice when you can sit and visit with people as you make stuff" (Misty, 2023).

Figure 31: Photo Provided by Misty with baby in cradleboard.

Misty shared about different relatives who were expecting babies and how her and her husband would name the people they were planning to make a chuwic'inpa for; however, there were challenges such as how they would make the wood frames, get rawhide to attach the frames and the backpack straps. Misty has a strong spirit and is determined to continue learning and sharing. The conversations around returning to community, reclaiming ceremonies, chuwic'inpa, and other teachings continuously came up and Misty shared about her journey of returning to her communities and reconnecting in adulthood. She was very open and I felt privileged to hold space with her and remind her that these are her teachings as well and she has a right and responsibility to share and teach them, no matter her journey. She has relatives and is a citizen of Standing Rock, as well as other nations. I offered the same encouragement and call to action to all the other families. This chuwic'inpa project was a space and opportunity for families to learn

and share this beautiful craft and to feel called to learn and offer and share their own teachings alongside others. This responsibility to learn and share is a practice of futurity that Laura Harjo (2019) shares in her work, because anytime communities gather and share knowledge, "whether big, small, informal, or formal, can use together with their members to provide a platform for producing local knowledge, sorting through and reflecting on individual and collective wants, desires, and issues, moving information through the community, and devising concrete actions" (p. 221), especially when done in safe space for all to engage within.

Onward: Lakota Code of Conduct

Throughout this chapter, I aimed to invite you into my story through ceremony and cradleboarding. I aimed to offer insight into the ways I invited the families who were a part of the chuwic'inpa project to step into their own power and right as Indigenous mothers, fathers, and families to reclaim these practices through intentional conversations and by engaging in ceremony and cradleboarding together. Throughout the process I was able to highlight Indigenous futurity, centering family/chosen family (hunka), returning to ceremony and uplifting protocol, responsibility to learn and share, and enacting sovereignty through the stories, dialogue, and our beautiful time together. I witnessed these themes through my lens of Lakota Code of Conduct, but I will share more about that meaning through other Lakota scholars.

In the book *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* (Red Shirt & Lone Woman, 2002), Red Shirt shares stories and lessons she learned from her grandmother Kheglezela Chaguwi (Turtle Lung Woman). Red Shirt shares about the "Lakota Code of Conduct" (Red Shirt and Lone Woman; p. 63) and the importance of wotakuye (p. 74) (knowing your kinship relations) – this is of utmost importance in Ochethi Sakowin communities because children were, and many times still are, reared communally. Understanding wotakuye meant you knew you belonged to your

community and to your people, and they belonged to you. It illuminates a reciprocal responsibility to each other. I hope that each of the families realizes our responsibility to each other. Corntassel (2012) shares that understanding the continuous renewal of "peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories" (Corntassel, 2012; p. 89) as being at the forefront of resurgence practices, reinforces necessary kinship structures and Original Instructions (OI)[45].

My dad, John Eagle Shield Sr., a respected Elder within my community, came to our home in Mandan, ND after running errands in June 2023. He shared with me that in the Ochethi Sakowin kinship traditions:

> Thunwin (aunties) and leksi (uncles) main job was to discipline the child. The child had deep respect and reverence towards their thunwins and leksis. I was called 'hoksila (boy)' by my uncles. I don't have anyone to call me that anymore [his voice began to tremble]. But you know, the only job of ina (mother) and ate (father) was to love and offer gentle teachings to their children (Personal Communication; J. Eagle Shield, 2023).

I can only imagine the beautiful privilege of having access to kinship systems that provided such a harmonious, consistent and sustaining responsibility to each other and the next generations. I believe this project was a deep ripple in the consciousness of our communities to have a space where we were able to internalize the knowledge, information, stories, and commitments to the next generation together. It is the foundation of sovereign Nations and Indigenous resurgence (Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2017, Grande, 2018).

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[45] Original Instructions (OI) refers to the "ancient teachings regarding the protocols, practices, and responsibilities to enact Indigenous Knowledges and are expressed through stories, songs/chants, dances, ceremonies, as well as calendrical, spiritual, teaching, clan and governance systems" (Nelson, 2008, as cited in Walters et. al., 2020)

As the mother to four beautiful children (15 y, 10 y, 3 y, and 2y), I hold tight to those teachings of my ancestors and also work to build the kinship systems we need now. I aim to also be available as a thunwin (auntie) and I hold myself responsible for sharing the knowledge I have been privileged to carry while encouraging others to take this knowledge and make it their own. Simpson (2017) shares, "Indigenous thought doesn't dissect time into past, present, and future. The future is here in the form of the practices of the present, in which the past is also here influencing" (p. 213). Reiterating our collective need from Chapter Three and calling on what Akwesasne Elder and midwife, Katsi Cook (2011) describes as "mountains of love" (p.89). We need "mountains of love", if we are going to recover and start, or continue, on our healing paths. In these spaces with the families, I witnessed this through the enactment of kinship praxis. We each shared mountains of love in those sacred spaces together.

I witnessed each of the families see themselves as influencing the chuwic'inpa process going forward and seeing it as an extension of their responsibility to take the knowledge of the chuwic'inpa, add their own teachings, and to make it their own. I hope the families began to see that they do not need permission to share the knowledge they have been given; however, in a world predicated on the theft of Indigenous knowledge and the dangers of writing "without thinking critically" (Smith, 2012; p. 37), Smith (2012) shares that sometimes our writing may "reveal ourselves in ways which get misappropriated and used against us" (p. 37). Each of the families involved in this study were able to articulate their responsibility to continue to share and teach about the chuwic'inpa, as well as their intentions for supporting future mothers and families. That is how we wrap our future generations in radical love.

Chapter 5: Makhoceowapiya (Mapping): Mapping Paths Towards Collective Abundance

Introduction

Since I can remember, my dad has always emphasized the importance of knowing your relatives, knowing who you are and where you come from, and having a worldview. He would share the story of Lala (grandpa) One Bull. Lala One Bull was Lala Chief Sitting Bull's nephew and Lala Chief Sitting Bull later took him in as his son. My dad shared that in his generation, people would reflect on the attributes of One Bull and say that is how Lala Chief Sitting Bull also carried himself. Those attributes of Lala One Bull were:

> 1) *He had a firm foundation of Lakota values, language, traditions, and lifeways*. He knew and lived by our woophe sakowin (seven sacred values that I shared in previous chapters). He knew our landmarks, where to harvest our medicines, and understood protocols and ceremonies in deep and intimate ways. He carried himself in a very respectable and honorable way.
>
> 2) *He had a firm disposition on life*. He cherished our way of life and lived in such a way that he knew exactly who he was and the plight of our people, but never swayed into despair. He carried himself in such a powerful and strong way because of his love and abundance mindset.
>
> 3) *He had a worldview*. They say he traveled all over Makhoche Waste (the good lands), what some folks call Turtle Island and would make relatives and build relationships along the way. He knew territories and respected those lands. He mapped the lands, people, places, and was always grounded in his lifeways.
>
> (Personal Communication, J. Eagle Shield, 2024).

Growing up, anytime we traveled, my dad knew relatives in almost any town/city we crossed. We would pull over and stay with relatives (including chosen relatives) and we were always taken care of. We did not have electronics, so we would take turns blasting our favorite cassette tapes and every so often, he would turn the music off and share history with me along our travels. I loved that my dad knew so much and connected with people everywhere we went. It felt like my family expanded across the whole world, and in many ways it did.

My dad would share stories about being a part of the "Rodeo Far West" Tours[46] that came to the reservations searching for Native talent and labor. My dad was 19 years old when he traveled from our reservation on Standing Rock, all the way to Europe. The tours went through Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, England, Spain and Switzerland during his time with them. He was a stunt man and worked labor with the tours. He later returned to the United States, and went as far as New York City, where he was the NYC Chapter President of the American Indian Movement (AIM)[47] during the Siege at Wounded Knee in the early 1970's[48]. My dad then moved to Las Angeles, California where he was a part of the Stunt Union[49] and was in a few documentaries and films. He would put on a video and say "there's me", pointing at an Indian riding on a horse getting shot off the back of it and falling to his death. These films were usually reenacted where the cowboy always won. My dad was so proud. He was in a film and he got to see the world. He made relatives all along the way. Even as we were growing up and would

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[46] An updated version of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Shows created by an enthusiast by the name of Allen Jacobs (Personal Communication; J. Eagle Shield, 2024)
[47] The American Indian Movement was started in the 1960's, when Indigenous activists gathered to address critical issues facing Indigenous communities. https://libguides.mnhs.org/aim
[48] The Siege at Wounded Knee took place in 1973, where the AIM activists were called to help protest corrupt Tribal leadership and to highlight the corrupt U.S. Federal Indian Laws and unhonored treaties
https://www.npr.org/2023/02/27/1159630250/wounded-knee-occupation-50th-anniversary
[49] Now considered the Stuntmen's Association of Motion Pictures
https://www.stuntmen.com/stuntmens-association-of-motion-pictures/

travel, he would say “if you’re going through [state], stop in and see [relatives]. They’ll feed you and you can rest” (Personal Communication, J. Eagle Shield, 2024). Just that reassurance made me feel so grateful to have relatives.

I have leaned heavily on Laura Harjo’s work around mapping. Harjo (2019), shares that mapping can be made by anyone and can be a “way-finding tool” that is “guided by embodied local and community knowledge. The map as a tool of futurity then, is created from wishes to maintain Mvskoke lifeways, including language, community, ceremonial grounds, medicinal practices, and values like vnokeckv (love), generosity, and reciprocity. The legibility of the map is for the people themselves and not any other authority or interlocutor” (p. 82). Growing up, I was able to map my relatives and map time and space in similar ways that my parents would, especially my dad. The ways my mom and dad have both taught me to map is tangible, as Harjo, 2019 shares, “it’s embodied, it’s felt, it’s realized in daydreams and interstices” (p. 116). Later when I would travel to different states for conferences, powwows, or other events, older people would ask my name and say “I once knew an Eagle Shield” and through the conversation we would discover that it was my dad, and sometimes my mom, they were referring to. No doubt that they both had hardships along the way, but they both traveled and experienced life outside of the prisoner-of-war camps[50] we were forced to live on in the 1800s.

My mom and dad met in 1988, while working in healthcare on Standing Rock, my mom was a registered nurse and my dad was a Community Health Representative (CHR). I was conceived shortly after. My parents built a beautiful home together, with many hardships, but far more celebrations, especially of life. They are abundant with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Their love story and dedication to the health of our community is what led

[50] Indigenous communities often refer to reservation life as prisoner-of-war camps due to the extreme poverty and reliance on the government after we were forced onto reservations through forced signing of treaties. https://www.ted.com/talks/aaron_huey_america_s_native_prisoners_of_war

me to the healthcare field as my own career. Their love and dedication to our lifeways is also why I chose that avenue as a path towards health and wellness. They have been guiding me all along.

When my dad would share his movies and experiences with us, I did not understand why those types of movies were so harmful or why mascots and caricatures negatively impact the psyche of Indigenous youth, until I learned about "historical unresolved grief and historical trauma" (Heart & Debruyn, 1998; p. 60) and the dehumanization that those things reflect. I think of my dad, living in a time when our ceremonies were outlawed and having to grow up where things had to be in secret, growing up in the underground generation, as I mentioned in previous chapters. I think of the compartmentalizing he had to do as an Indigenous youth, as a young Lakota Hunkpapa person. The ways he had to map out when he could be his full, authentic Lakota self and when he could not. He has been a part of so many movements: the American Indian Movement (AIM), the movement of reclaiming our ceremonies, the Water Is Life movement, and now being able to witness our languages and our lifeways resurging through direct efforts made by my dad and other powerful Ochethi Sakowin Elders. My dad literally mapped language, ceremonies, relatives, land, movements, and history.

The literal maps my dad has used to navigate this world helped him through place and time, through relationships, through hardships, and always brought him back to his homelands. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe was established in 1873[51] and roughly spans 2.3 million acres. It was a stark reduction of land since the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1851[52], which Ochethi Sakowin Nations were forced into signing, and even then, the United States government only received a

[51] https://standingrock.org/about/

[52] https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iii-waves-development-1861-1920/lesson-4-alliances-and-conflicts/topic-2-defending-lakota-homelands/section-3-treaties-fort-laramie-1851-1868

fraction of the votes they required and pushed it through anyway. The original Ochethi Sakowin treaty boundaries spanned what is now North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana. It was amended in 1868 after the discovery of gold. My dad grew up in the Little Eagle district[53] on Standing Rock. He would share this history with me. He also wanted me to know where the sacred sites and the medicines were, where societies were born, and of course, where to find the best hunting spots. I think he wanted me to have a relationship with our homelands in intimate ways so I would not forget things that are not in history books or written down and I would pay close attention.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways mapping has influenced my life and how I began to see the ways the families were mapping their origins and their paths to and through this chuwic'inpa project. In her work on mapping and Indigenous futures, Laura Harjo (2019) encourages us to "renegotiate how we conceive of the Indigenous community, particularly in our current moment, because we do not stay fixed in our communities of origin. People are constantly in movement, for school, work, and other pursuits… Rethinking the Indigenous community allows us to step back and consider the ways in which Indigenous community surfaces; in doing so, we refuse the eliminatory logics of settler colonialism. Another approach to rethinking the Indigenous community is imagining unactivated possibilities– disrupted dreams" (p. 33). I share this passage in particular, because when I think of my dad's journey through countries and lifetimes, through movements and Federal Indian Policies, through relationships and learning about himself, he held onto his lifeways. For various reasons, many people did not have that opportunity to hold onto their lifeways, but those people are still important, they still

[53] The Little Eagle District is named after one of the six officers, Officer Little Eagle, who killed Lala Thathanka Iyotake (Grandpa/Chief Sitting Bull) while trying to arrest him. As a community we also refer to it as Running Antelope on the Standing Rock Reservation. Running Antelope was a great and honorable chief from Standing Rock. Little Eagle or Running Antelope is located on the South Dakota side and is one of eight (8) districts that make up the Standing Rock Nation.

matter, and their lifeways are still ready to be remembered and reactivated. The families who were involved in this project have lived on the reservation, moved away and returned, are reconnecting, and everything in between. The families are each a valuable part of this project because it helped me to see them and see their dreams and intentions for community and for reconnection, in celebration of their journeys to where they currently are and where they will be. This project was a beautiful testimony of rethinking Indigenous community and highlights the ways folks showed up as their authentic selves.

I aim to share the ways that the families lovingly share their familial maps and history with me and others. While demonstrating that regardless of their physical locations and paths to this project, they each continuously carried their traditional teachings with them and the hunger to want to learn more and share more through the act of resistance, act of knowledge transmission, and act of resiliency, which Tiffany Prete (2019) describes as the "three principles that form the conceptual basis of beadworking" (p. 30). We do minimal beadworking through this project, but we each learn together what that practice revival means to them and their families, and how these principles apply to cradleboarding as well.

Makhoceowapi Mithawa kin Weksuyaya (Recalling my own Maps): My Journey to Mapping the Cradleboard Project

Reflecting on my own journey of growing up in our traditional lifeways: being a part of our ceremonies and the revitalization of Wiwayang Wachipi (Sundance), learning the history of how we were put onto reservations, and spending so much time on the land that Sitting Bull lived and died on. All of this shaped who I am and how I view mapping in my own life. Mapping is about knowing who to call on when you need respite; it is knowing who can share protocols and teachings; it is knowing the land so you do not get lost; it is staying spiritually grounded so you

can always find your way back to yourself and your lifeways. Mapping is material, placed-based, and spiritual.

I became a single, teen mom at 19 years old and met my husband, Red Rock, when my daughter was 2.5 years old. He has raised her as his own since, and we have traveled the world together as a family. I worked in various jobs on my reservation and beyond. These jobs have ranged from being a clerk in our Indian Health Service Hospital, to being an language immersion instructor at our Lakota language immersion school, to being the language specialist at the Standing Rock Language and Culture Institute, to being a Native American Community Academy (NACA) Fellow and founding the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Wounspe (Defenders of the Water Learning Space), to being the Standing Rock Tribal Health- Health Education Director, and currently being the Co-Executive Director of the Mni Wichoni Health Circle, as well as doing research for other organizations and universities. Each of these positions helped me to map the ways that the health of our people and our lifeways overlap each other. I was having to navigate and compartmentalize my life in similar ways as my dad did as a young person; however, it was through academia, the workforce, and through organizational development.

When I co-created the Mni Wichoni Nakicizin Owayawa (Defenders of the Water school) at the Ochethi Sakowin Camp during the Water Is Life movement, it was out of necessity, because I knew from my upbringing that you listen to your thunwins (aunties), uncis (grandmas) and Elders. Growing up, my dad always said “Nigluwinyeya (prepare yourself). You never know when you’re going to be called upon or for what, so be ready.” (Personal Communication, J. Eagle Shield, 2022). Whether it is living relatives or non-living ancestors, you follow through with what is being asked of to the best of your abilities. I am still learning to tap into those callings and guidance to this day. During the Water Is Life movement, the Elder’s sentiment was

that they knew the first thing that the government was going to come after was the children. They witnessed this through boarding schools, through sterilization of Indigenous women/birthers, through adoption and children being forcibly removed from their homes, and in a number of different ways. They knew the school had to be created for this reason. It was an essential space to teach students the true history, connect them to the land, and to remind them that they have relatives.

One thing I learned how to do at an early age, was map out my relatives, including my relatives through lineage and my chosen relatives. Certain relatives have certain roles in our communities and we were raised that not everybody knows it all. Not everybody carries every single teaching. That is the way that we work together. Everybody has a role. Some have multiple roles, but no one was an all-knowing person. There were medicine people that knew certain things and had answers to certain things and, if they did not, they would consult with other medicine people who did. We always had plant experts, birth keepers, end-of-life and death knowledge keepers, house and clothes making knowledge keepers, and more. Others had specific skills like chuwic'inpa making, quillworking, beadworking, hide tanning, and more. Many of our community members had multiple roles and skills, but they knew how to work together and share their skills. Everybody in our communities knew how to map, in that way. We knew who our relatives were and how to lean on each other and how to call upon each other. We knew how to share skills based on the needs of the community. This is why I felt it was important to invite the families, including my own, to be a part of mapping, using the chuwic'inpa (cradleboard) as an anchor and a site of revitalization and resurgence for our futures. In this way, the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers would understand the ways they already map and can continue to map their lifeways and histories.

In January 2024, I visited the Whitney Plantation[54] in New Orleans, Louisiana and the tour guide was showing us the beautiful, traditional names of the Black relatives that were forcibly brought across from Africa. There is a sentiment that is shared across enslaved folks and Indigenous folks. They said a lot of times what is taught to us is that slavery was a good thing because it gave enslaved folks certain skills such as: ricing, blacksmith training, education, and so forth, but that is from a colonized, white supremacist viewpoint. In reality, owners of enslaved folks would bring people from Africa and other continents who were experts in their field. Experts in rice growing, wheat growing, blacksmithing, and so much more. It was not that they brought them to teach them those skills, because they already possessed those skills. It is the same with boarding schools. They say boarding schools were necessary to teach Indigenous folks to be civilized and educate them in things like homemaking skills, planting, gardening, harvesting, and other important skills, but we knew how to grow food, how to make clothing and shelters out of animal hides. Colonizers do not map the land and relatives (i.e., humans & more-than-humans) with honor and care like we do. They only know how to steal and appropriate.

When I think of my own journey from my upbringing, to the work in my community, to the Water Is Life movement, to my educational journey… It feels cyclical. As I shared in the introduction, during the Water Is Life movement I got connected with some amazing scholars who lovingly call themselves the Defenders of the Defenders of the Water School (DDWS). They stood with us against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) at Standing Rock. They are each an expert in their fields, though they would never claim that, and they have each advocated for me towards a higher degree and guided me through the whole process. I never would have

[54] Legally known as the Whitey Institute, is a Black owned non-profit museum that is dedicated to educating folks on the history of the plantation, from the perspective of Black folks. https://whitneyplantation.org/

imagined leaving my community to go to school. I learned so much about how my community can expand beyond anything I could ever dream of. This project came to fruition through my graduate journey.

In 2019 when I started my PhD program, we traveled fluidly between North Dakota and Seattle, WA. At the beginning of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we made the decision to move home. A few weeks early, we found out we were pregnant with our third child and it did not feel safe for us to be so far from our family and our homelands. As shared in the previous chapter, my passion for learning, sharing, uplifting, and revitalizing the chuwic'inpa teachings began with the journey of our third child's birth. Throughout the next year we would travel back to Seattle, WA for a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's (MMIW) Gathering where my children helped to lead the march and pray with the families. We missed our family in Seattle, WA and could not wait to return. We moved back to Seattle, WA in the fall of 2021 and continued to fluidly travel back and forth from Seattle, WA to North Dakota monthly or bi-monthly.

We were creating beautiful programs and movements, both in Seattle, WA and on Standing Rock. In Seattle, WA our family co-created, with other families, a family services space in Seattle, WA called the Native Family Learning Lodge, we also co-created an organization called Ancestral Sisterhood with my chosen sister, Ixtli White Hawk, and we taught many different classes ranging from language to singing and more. We also continued to map and co-create beautiful programming and other opportunities with our relatives on Standing Rock such as: Isnathi Awichalowapi (coming of age ceremony), Hoksichantkiyapi (welcoming baby ceremony), two-spirit gatherings, food sovereignty initiatives, and more. My whole journey through my PhD program has been physically and metaphorically mapping space and time, while

carrying my relatives with me. Finally, when my dissertation proposal was due, I knew I wanted to share what I have been learning about the chuwic'inpa and invite families to take part. What I was able to witness and experience has been a true blessing. The families were vibrant, amazing and eager to continue sharing these teachings with others. They each had their own stories and beautiful energies to bring to the space and make it come to life.

Wichooyake unkithawapi Acheyagthun (Bridging our Stories)

In this section I seek to bridge my own family's story of mapping our Indigenous futures with those of the families in the chuwic'inpa project. I use the Lakota work for bridging to underscore how the process unfolded. Once we had an idea of who the families were that would bless this chuwic'inpa project, we knew right away that it was not just about making an object or an artifact, it was about creating community and bridging our stories together. We were literally mapping our histories together in real time and, as I share in the next chapter, the chuwic'inpa was a meaningful cultural anchor through which we could map together. The families were each from multiple communities and shared similar desires to continue uplifting language, culture, and lifeways into their lives in intentional ways.

There are many types of chuwic'inpa that exist throughout Indian Country and my husband, Red Rock, and myself were learning different skills and techniques to use with our chuwic'inpa. We have been focusing on learning all we can about Lakota style chuwic'inpa, and making them our own. I also learned how to make another plains style chuwic'inpa while I lived in the Pacific Northwest from an amazing organization that is called the Native American Women's Dialogue on Infant Mortality (NAWDIM)[55]. They make chuwic'inpa for expecting families in the Seattle area and I was grateful to learn the style and gift the first one I made to an expecting mother.

[55] https://www.seattleurbannatives.org/native-american-womens-dialog-on-infant-mortality

My husband and I have also been co-creating chuwic'inpa with family and community by observing Figures of our chuwic'inpa as babies. We did not have the actual chuwic'inpa at the time that we started to make our chuwic'inpa together in 2020, we only had Figures and memories. We researched symbols and found the best materials to use through trial and error (i.e., cotton rips if you have it on the back sleeve that holds the chuwic'inpa to the wood frame). We decided to use backpack straps because a long time ago chuwic'inpa were made with a leather strap that could be put over your shoulders or could be hung on a horse, so backpack straps were the modern twist our family put onto them, which started with my mom. My mom made a toy chuwic'inpa for our oldest daughter, Kyyalyn, when she was in the Lakhol'iyapi Wahohpi (Lakota Immersion Nest)[56]. She always took it to her school and was proud to be a Lakota and learning the language every day. We even got to the point of specifically using NorthFace backpack straps because they were a lot stronger and would not curl up with the weight of the beadwork and the baby as they grew. We have tried other backpack straps, but they would dig into your shoulders and so they have to be firm and flat and take up a bigger surface area.

We researched and molded all these things into the techniques that we use and incorporated into the ways that we create chuwic'inpa for families and teach chuwic'inpa making to families. By the time we began the chuwic'inpa project, we hoped that the families could feel all of the people's spirits and energy who put their skills, techniques, and prayers into these chuwic'inpa that we teach. From here, the families could take it and make it their own and they could decide if they wanted it wider on the sides to fully cover the baby or lower so that the baby could get more air, or if they wanted a hood to act as a barrier so that the baby's face would not be exposed, or if they wanted it straight. They could decide if they wanted the wood runners that

[56] http://wotakuye.weebly.com/

reinforce the wooden frame to be slanted, pointed, or forked, or any other design they wanted, or if they wanted the wood to be stained or painted. There were so many options that they could take and make it their own, which includes adornments. They could add beads, bells, jingles, shells, elk teeth, and so much more. it is all about the effort they want to put into it and the creativity they want to lean into.

Whatever we were learning, we incorporated into our process and shared the teachings and shared why we chose to do things a certain way. We were unknowingly learning with the families about different mapping skills. As I detail in Chapter Three, it was only on reflection and using Lakota lifeways as an analytic tool to make meaning of our time together that I was able to understand the mapping we were doing. Families were mapping out stories within their own families and getting curious about what kinds of designs and techniques they wanted to incorporate into their chuwic'inpa and we were mapping our cradleboarding timeline and process. Through the process we shared history about the chuwic'inpa and made space for other teachings to come up as well. We asked the families to share a little of their interest and desires to create chuwic'inpa and if they wanted certain colors, designs, blanket or fully beaded, and if they had experience. Below are a few of the summaries the families shared with us about their overall interest and family lineage:

Mikey and Savannah, both from the Three Affiliated Tribes and Savannah is also from the Standing Rock Nation. They both lived in the Southwest areas and other places throughout their adulthood, and were eager to learn and uplift the teachings of the Hidatsa (MHA) people, as well as the Lakota (Standing Rock) people. They both shared that they wanted to use greens and use a material that had geometrics similar to Hidatsa and Lakota geometrics. They both shared that they knew there were certain family designs but they wanted to make a Pendleton

chuwic'inpa to start, and go from there, since they were so close to the baby's arrival. They both said they did not have experience making a chuwic'inpa, but they had family members who had and they were excited to learn.

Lefa and Johnny, currently live on Standing Rock. Johnny is my younger brother and he is from Standing Rock. Lefa is from Canupawakpa Dakota First Nation in Canada. They both follow our traditional way of life. Lefa shared that her family did not have these chuwic'inpa teachings but she really wanted to learn how to make one with a lime green Pendleton blanket and then eventually learn to make a fully beaded chuwic'inpa. Johnny was really excited because he shared that his chosen relative in South Dakota, a white man who was learning the Lakota ways of life, was making his new baby a quilled chuwic'inpa and he was looking forward to getting that chuwic'inpa in the near future. They both expressed how beautiful it would be to have a chuwic'inpa that they made within the family and to be able to continue making them and share the things they learn with others. My younger brother helped us incorporate rawhide into our chuwic'inpa process. Instead of using screws to fasten it together, we used rawhide to tie it together and it has been a beautiful and natural addition.

JanaKate and Brandon, are both from Standing Rock and have lived on Standing Rock a majority of their lives. They have been instrumental in many programs and other programmatic and community development initiatives on Standing Rock since as long as I could remember. JanaKate shared her passion for early childhood care and how she had been doing research around early childhood interventions. She also shared how chuwic'inpa have intrigued her for a long time, but she never knew where to go or who to turn to. She shared her excitement to make a chuwic'inpa for their third child. Brandon shared that he saw his cousin have a chuwic'inpa when her first baby was born and was interested in it. This demonstrated the need for

cradleboarding to be normalized within the community for others to feel like they can have one and use one as well.

Maya and Memphis, are both from Standing Rock and currently live in a border town, on the outskirts of the Reservation. They have been very involved Indigenous youth advocates since high school and have traveled many places as youth advocates of Standing Rock before they became parents. They are awesome young people. Maya and Memphis both shared the importance of knowing our history and our lifeways and that they would really like to learn to make chuwic'inpa. Their baby was close to a year old, so they wanted to make a larger chuwic'inpa and wanted girly colors so they chose a pink and blue Pendleton blanket. They worked hard and completed it with their baby beside them every day.

Xtal and Ron, currently live on Standing Rock. Xtal is from Standing Rock and Ron is not. They expressed their desire to learn more about the lifeways and their excitement to make a chuwic'inpa for their baby. They chose a turquoise Pendleton blanket material. Neither of them knew how to sew yet they both jumped in and learned to use a sewing machine and did not give up. They were determined to complete the chuwic'inpa for their baby.

Teyah and Dedrick, were accompanied by Teyah's mom, my cousin, Lynette. Teyah and Lynette are from Standing Rock and Dedrick is from the Spirit Lake Nation in North Dakota. They were preparing for their first child and chose a blue colored Pendleton. They both have grandparents who are very knowledgeable in our lifeways and shared that they were having conversations to incorporate ceremony into their birth. It was so exciting to see their transformation into preparing for parenthood as young parents.

Kirah and Waylon, currently live on the Three Affiliated Tribes. Kirah is from the Three Affiliated Tribes and Waylon is from Standing Rock Nation. They both shared their desire to be a

part of the chuwic'inpa project and intentions to create something beautiful for their new baby on the way. Kirah and Waylon both shared that they had not really created or sewed anything before that and were excited to learn. They decided to use a maroon Pendleton blanket with stars.

Misty and Adam, are both from Standing Rock as well as other communities. They connected with a Pendleton that was donated by Kirah's family because it had animals on it and Misty specifically wanted animals to be on her chuwic'inpa. Misty had shared her interest in learning this style of making a chuwic'inpa but also had experience already creating a fully beaded chuwic'inpa. She shared that it is hard to get support from others because they don't like to share their knowledge. Even though Misty started later than other families, she finished hers in almost a full day. She was determined and shared how she and her daughter had begun learning to create and were excited anytime they got to learn something new and learn skills from others who are willing to share.

It was awesome to see how each of the families brought their family lineage into the spaces and shared their intentions for learning and sharing. We got to see who had experience with sewing and creating/crafting and who did not. Each of them had the drive and determination and were at different stages of the chuwic'inpa making process throughout our whole time together. It was awesome to see all the families excited about specific colors and designs and to engage in cradleboarding in such meaningful ways.

Below are some findings around mapping that were revealed through my meaning making from a Lakota analytic perspective. This, I believe, was us collectively mapping our time together. Building off of the work of both Harjo (2019), Prete (2019), and Romero et. al. (2014), we incorporated futurism, beadworking paradigms, and domains of cradleboarding. By uplifting the work of Romero et. al. (2014) domains of Pueblo Giftedness that was founded on the

ontology of Pueblo people and framed by their mother tongue, our construct of the chuwic'inpa kagapi, or cradleboarding, was also founded on the ontology of the Ochethi Sakowin people and is necessarily framed by our mother tongue as well. Through bridging our stories, we mapped three domains of chuwic'inpa kagapi that showed up: 1) chuwic'inpa kin oaye na ic'iksapa (the practical and evolutionary cradleboard): expressions of culture and acts of resistance; 2) chincathunyan ogna igluhapi na i oyuzunta: Resiliently birthing a sovereign nation and transferring of character; & 3) unkigluwinyeyapi: Preparing ourselves and our communities for the next generation.

Chuwic'inpa kin Oaye na Ic'iksapa (The Practical and Evolutionary Cradleboard): Expressions of Culture and Acts of Resistance

In May 2023, during our orientation at the Sitting Bull College Visitors Center, Mikey, the partner of Savannah, who was carrying her newest baby within her womb at the time of the project, shared some history that his grandmother shared with him. His grandmother, "who was born in 1913, was raised by her grandmother, born in 1825 on the Three Affiliated Tribes" (Mikey, 2024). He shared that his grandmother told him they would always have chuwic'inpa ready for their newest relatives and he remembers being placed into one as a baby. Mikey shared "We would always do prayer through actions as Indian People" (Mikey, 2023), meaning we did not do things just to do them; we always led with prayer and learned from experience.

My younger brother, Johnny, who was the partner of Lefa, shared Standing Rock history of the stages of women and what they would go through in order from as young as four years old to Elderly age: 1) Backbone Society, 2) Dentillium Society, 3) Elk Teeth Society, and 4) Breastplate Society (Johnny, 2023). He shared how they each had specific roles from knowing war deeds and songs, to having a specific place of reverence amongst the people. Depending on

the society women were a part of or what dreams they had for their children, they would adorn their chuwic'inpa with those specific things (i.e., dentillium, elk teeth, and other shells). Nowadays, we use what feels right to us to use because many of these women's societies are not active within our communities anymore. Johnny and Mikey are local historians within their respective communities, raised by Elders, and they had many back-and-forth conversations throughout our time together.

Both of their stories and history accounts shared the significance placed on women[57] and their responsibility to share history, pass on stories, and teach about the societies our people were a part of. Mikey later shared the history he learned from his grandmother about the practicality of chuwic'inpa and the need for chuwic'inpa to be simple for various reasons. He shared that his grandmother told him "you gotta understand why we needed them [cradleboards] to be practical, especially if the enemies were to come; we needed to be able to get up and leave quickly. Also, a big concern back then was the big grizzlies in the badlands when they would go berry picking along the river" (Mikey, 2023). He shared beautiful stories with a rich history of training babies in their chuwic'inpa to be quiet. We also have stories like that because our people were nomadic and we needed babies to be silent, for many of the same reasons that Mikey named. We also needed extra technologies to hold our chuwic'inpa to travois and horses. That is why we had leather straps attached to our chuwic'inpa, which Red Rock and I later replaced with backpack straps.

Mikey also shared that Indigenous art practices really began flourishing in contemporary ways such as intricately beading patterns on doctor's bags, chuwic'inpa, and other important

[57] I want to note that every society in our Nations has specific roles. There were no doubt Two-Spirit Societies; however, due to colonization, we are still uncovering what those societies and roles were or could still be. I do not intend to share a binary of only men and women roles, but this is what was specifically shared by these two men/fathers/reciprocal learners/co-researchers.

items in the 19th century when they were put onto reservations. He shared that it was “our expression of culture where our culture was being actively suppressed on reservations. So they used any cultural outlet to express who we are” (Mikey, 2023). This struck me because we literally mapped our stories and our histories in resistance to the suppression of us, as Indigenous peoples, onto anything we could. Each symbol had a meaning and would tell a story. Also, the designs and styles of beadwork, especially chuwic'inpa, were very specific to certain tribes. Mikey shared “my grandma used to say that in the nineties we used to go to powwows and she could tell what family beadwork patterns were and what tribes people were from. She goes ‘now you never know’” (Mikey, 2023). As social media makes it more easily accessible to share patterns and beadwork and learn from other tribes, it is not as common to have specific family patterns or styles specific to your tribe anymore.

Reflecting on the previous chapter, I shared my chuwic'inpa when I was a baby (a cloth chuwic'inpa) and Red Rock’s chuwic'inpa when he was a baby (a leather bag on a wooden frame with limited beadwork, fringe, and the remnants of old furs). They are completely different but are influenced by their ancestors' teachings during the times they were created. Then look at the chuwic'inpa Red Rock and I made for our children (Figures 32 and 33). We both were born in the late 20th century (1989 and 1990), and have been influenced by the beautifully booming contemporary powwow era and have been able to be in a time where Indigenous artistic expression has exploded into clothing, home goods, murals, sculptures, chuwic'inpa, extravagant regalia, and so much more.

Figure 32 and 33: Photos taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of the two fully beaded chuwic'inpa created by her and her family. Figure 32 is the chuwic'inpa created in 2020 and Figure 33 is the chuwic'inpa created in 2022.

The numerous chuwic'inpa we created are a continuation of that cultural expression in resistance to the suppression of Indigenous peoples' histories and rights in this country. We use primarily Lakota geometric patterns, but with more contemporary colors. We were taught that when our people did Winter Counts and other pictographic work, they always oriented themselves to the South. Dakota Good House has great resources about this type of mapping compositions.[58] Our chuwic'inpa are definitely an evolution and far from practical. They are heavy with beads, and are mainly "safe"[59] for winter use due to the hot temperature it gets inside

[58] https://thefirstscout.blogspot.com/p/a.html

[59] According to the Healthy Native Babies Project, factors that increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is overheating.

the chuwic'inpa. We have used our chuwic'inpa year round, but have had to have fans all over them to keep the babies cool in the summertime. Disclaimer: Please consult with your Elders, pediatricians, and other experts when using chuwic'inpa that are fully beaded in warmer climates and warmer seasons.

At our house in Mandan, ND on June 17th, 2023, Mikey shared that "it's beautiful to be revitalizing these practices but sometimes we forget about functionality, and the way you guys took modern elements like the backpack straps, it's brilliant and incredibly functional… I told Savannah, those guys are doing exactly what we did a long time ago. We took new technology and implemented it to make our lives easier. And just your process of trial and error. Our people would try things and fail a lot in order to figure out the best possible ways to do things" (Mikey, 2023).

These stories and testimonies demonstrate the ways cradleboarding offers space for families to remember with their relatives, engage in story sharing together, and resist through trial and error to make the chuwic'inpa a technology that can be relevant to our current time. Our chuwic'inpa are fully functional and evolving. Each time we gathered for the chuwic'inpa project, a family would share about their history of where they grew up, how they were brought to know what they know, their desire to learn, and their commitment to this project for their future generations. Some examples are shared in this section and some in the next few sections. They each shared their beautiful skills and did not give up. We also invited the families to engage in ceremonies with us throughout this process because this whole project was a ceremony for us—a ceremony of preparation, of patience, of intentionality, and or prophesying.

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https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/documents/healthy_native_babies_workbook.pdf

Čhiŋčáthȟuŋyaŋ Ogná Iglúhapi na Í Oyúžuŋta: Resiliently Birthing a Sovereign Nation and Transferring of Character

Some deeper teachings and understandings come through Elders' teachings, including protocols, original teachings, and living in harmony. Engaging in these too, is a process of rememory (Paris, 2017), as we recover original teachings by calling on Elder wisdom. For example, the word “oyate” which means “nation” is a collective call to action meaning when you use that word, you intend to take care of each other in that oyate kinship system. These are the theoretical anchors for our Intelligence (Simpson, 2014). Throughout this project, the families learned from Elders, the other mothers and their partners/support systems, and the community about reclaiming traditional birth practices and body sovereignty practices.

On May 27, 2023, the families got to engage in a Hoksichantkiyapi (publically sharing your love for your baby making their way Earth side) together (Figure 34), that our organization hosted. The teachings of the Hoksichantkiyapi were passed down to us from my chosen sister, Ashley Phelps, from the Pine Ridge Reservation. The Hoksichantkiyapi has many ceremonial elements such as wase (Earth paint), smudge, dirt, wooden bowls (to represent Earth), and traditional foods like chokecherry juice, wastunkala (dried, pounded corn), wasna (dried buffalo meat, fat, and berries), and water. These items were used in a particular way to feed, smudge, and paint the Earth, the spirits around us, and the families and their children. Songs were shared and everyone was painted and the families were told that it is so the spirits would see and honor them for the rest of their lives, long after the paint wears off.

Figure 34: Photo provided by Hillary Alkire a family supporter. JanaKate is in the left of the picture while Tasha and Alayna prepare for the ceremony.

The Elders shared stories and teachings. The Elders prophesied over the children and their families and the parents of the children were instructed to do the same. Each parent/support system got a chance to speak directly to their children in their arms, in their wombs, or their partners' wombs, in a powerful and affirming way and it was so beautiful and emotional to witness them each go through that process. These deep teachings are grounded in our traditional lifeways, foods, and Earth elements.

The first time I experienced a Hoksichantkiyapi was in March 2021, when our third baby was a few months old. We went to the Pine Ridge Reservation. I had never experienced it before and since my first two babies had never experienced it either, they painted them as well and I got to speak life over all my babies at once. It was an incredible experience. Later that year, we invited Ashley to come to Standing Rock to facilitate the Hoksichantkiyapi for families on

Standing Rock. After that, she shared the ceremony with us and encouraged us to continue the ceremony in our community and has continued to mentor me and guide me on the protocols of how to do it. I am eternally grateful for her teachings and those of her Elders and ancestors to keep this ceremony going within our homelands.

On Saturday, June 17th, we invited the families to my house in Mandan, ND for another sewing session to complete their chuwic'inpas. They were each in various stages of completion. We decided on this date together. After a full day of sewing, eating, laughing, and visiting, I asked to record our conversation, which was free flowing and everyone consented. JanaKate reflected on the Hoksichantkiyapi and how she always wanted to experience something like that. She shared, "when our babies come into this world they should be welcomed by their family and community and feel that love and knowing that language and hearing the songs and just knowing who they are with that sense of belonging. Because there has been such a disconnection because of historical trauma. I really enjoyed Hoksichantkiyapi and hearing Teyah's and your birthing stories'" (JanaKate, 2023). We all continued to share our stories. I got a lump in my throat as we continued to visit and have these meaningful conversations. In separate voice recorded messages that Kirah and Waylon sent to me on February 11, 2024, they each shared their experiences. Kirah shared:

> I didn't even know there was a ceremony like that. It was so special and aside from the ceremony itself and everything that was shared by everyone else, we learned a lot… Some of the things your dad shared about not washing our clothes together because when we have a hard day it could get passed to our babies. Sometimes you don't know if you don't ask, but sometimes you don't know what to ask. So just being in this space where people openly share knowledge like that

> was so helpful. We try to be a lot more mindful with our girls and kind and gentle, even when it is really hard too because we remember the teachings that we got and how special they [children] are. And just being a part of things like that reminds us how special the babies are and that they are not ours and you know we have to guide them the best we can… Having traditional teachings incorporated into our parenting will really help our girls and us (Kirah, 2023).

This was a beautiful reflection she shared because a part of the Elder's responsibility during the ceremony is to share any teachings they had growing up about babies, parenting, relationships, lessons, hardships, celebrations, and more. It is a beautiful chance to hear teachings and lessons from Elders about our lifeways and beliefs. Example: You never take babies to funerals or take them around death because they are so close to the Creator and the spirit world that they could decide they want to go back. We have to love them continuously [babies] and guide them and remind them why they are needed here on this Earth. Waylon shared:

> The baby welcoming ceremony really helped make it real that tiny [baby] was coming. She had a lot of love around her and a lot of hope and prayer… It was really nice that there was a community around her… the making of community through all the relatives who were present through intentional ways that we choose to live and people that we choose to surround ourselves with. Really goes back to that community side of bringing somebody into this world and they're going to be raised by a community. On my Anishanaabe side, my relatives always say that, you know, babies choose their lives, choose what we're coming into. We

> choose our parents and our communities. Babies aren't just the parents' responsibility. Babies are a gift to the community. Everyone has to do their part and help each other out. So it's really nice to meet some relatives and people who are also bringing some tinies [babies] into this world and to share that love and respect for each other (Waylon, 2023).

The beautiful teachings that Waylon was highlighting are things Lakota people, as well as other Nations, believe as well, that our babies choose us and that babies are a gift to the community. As shared in previous sections, all of our people had a role and it's our responsibility as parents and as community members to help those babies to discover their roles and step into them. Also, we have the shared responsibility to support each other as parents and as community members so that we feel seen and held by the community. In unci (grandma) Ella Deloria's 1988 book titled *Waterlily*, which follows the life of Waterlily and highlights her relationships with her thiwahe (immediate family) and thiyospaye (extended family). In the book, Deloria,describes the strengths and social importance of communal responsibility for caring for children within the community. She highlighted the security and self-assurance all children would feel at such a young age where they could definitely declare "I am not afraid; I have relatives" (p. 16). This is what we hope all of our children feel, that sense of safety and care, where they feel so comforted with the fact that they have relatives and would always be taken care of.

On June 17th, we were visited by Teyah and her beautiful new blessing, her baby boy, who recently got out of the hospital. After Teyah brought her baby Earth side, she came to our house and I showed them how to tie their baby into their chuwic'inpa (Figure 35) and Teyah shared her journey of birthing her baby at the hospital with us (me, Red Rock, and the families).

We asked if she had any problems and she said she did not. The hospital complied with everything the family requested. She shared “I knew I wanted some traditions at our birth, and I am thankful for you and Red Rock because I did not know anything about makhagna or transfer of character… It went good” (Teyah, 2023).

Figure 35 and 36: Photos provided by Lynette of Teyah & son.

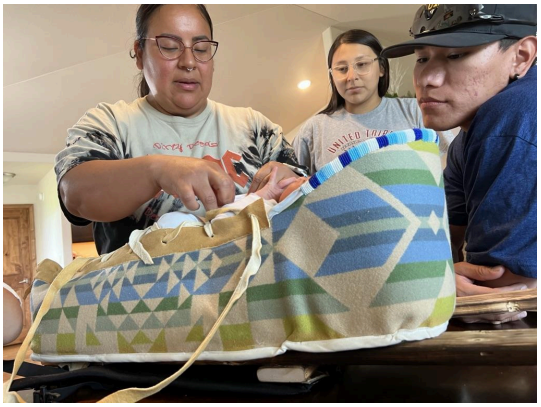

Figure 37: Photo taken by Alayna Eagle Shield of Alayna showing Teyah and Dedrick how to tie up the chuwic'inpa.

My niece Teyah (Figures 35 through 37) reminded me of myself as a young mom. I was 19 when I had my first child. Teyah was 20 when she had her baby boy. He is so loved and so cherished within their family. Shortly after the Hoksichantkiyapi, Teyah’s mom, Lynette, asked me and Red Rock to meet with Teyah and her partner, so we met on Zoom online and discussed with them. We shared traditional stories and ways they can prepare for her baby and asked them if they had any questions. Teyah said she was interested in ceremonies that were allowed within the hospital[60]. We shared with her and her partner that there were a few ceremonies they could do

[60] A past occurrence that took place within hospitals, from my own Indigenous experience, is “doulas” were not allowed unless they were licensed and it was taboo to request your placenta. Even though doulas are basically supports, which has historically been our aunties, grandmas, sisters, and other important community/family members. We are reclaiming those support systems. There are other horror stories about being treated as less than human for requesting

when their baby was born. One particular ceremony is *i oyuzunta,* which is the transferring of character. When a baby is born, the family chooses an individual (usually of the same gender(s)) who speaks their language, lives through their lifeways, displays integrity and a strong and humble character, and other characteristics important to the family, to wipe out the mouth of the baby through a series of protocols. This is why it is considered a transfer of character; whoever the chosen person will transfer their character to the baby through this process.

The other ceremony is "makhagna" which is when the amniotic fluid of the mother mixes with dirt, and the baby touches it as they are born. This creates that connection between the baby and Unci Makha (Mother Earth). Makhagna is a term, and ceremony, shared with us by leksi Tim Mentz Sr. Leksi Tim's khunsitku kin (his grandmother) was named Zintkana Waste Win (Good Bird Woman) in Dakota and her Charlotte Laura Big Head in English. She was a Dakota midwife and birth worker. We are relearning how to bring our babies into this world in the best way possible, while still working through, alongside, and with these systems that tell us our bodies don't know. We do not wish to shame anyone for their choices; however, we know our bodies are so powerful and when we reclaim our births and birthing ceremonies, our communities will be stronger and more healed. We have been advised by Elders, including my dad John Eagle Shield Sr., to get a specific dirt because it is considered the cleanest dirt. So much of the land is contaminated, especially around crops and farming areas, so I would always consult an Elder, or knowledge keeper before doing any of these ceremonies.

After sharing these teachings with Lynette, Teyah, and Teyah's partner, Teyah's partner, Dedrick shared how he was brought up in these teachings as well, in his community. However, his family does not practice them anymore. He shared with us: "I've been brought up in these

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traditional practices being upheld, but every day hospitals are trying to meet the needs of the community and that comes through many advocates fighting for the rights of our birthers.

ways too, but I am kind of one of the last ones to be brought up in that way… My mom told me we didn't forget these things but we haven't done them with my nieces and nephews. So I guess it will be the first time I'll be doing it again in our family" (Dedrick, 2023). Me and Red Rock were excited to hear this. We just encouraged both of them to reach out to their grandparents/Elders and bring groceries and/or gifts and ask them for knowledge and teachings on any particular protocols they need to follow. It was a beautiful dialogue exchange because they both started sharing other things they wanted to do. You could tell their families have been in conversation around these things and it gave me so much pride and joy that our young families are having these kinds of conversations and reclaiming their birthing practices so their babies have the best opportunities to be connected to our lifeways.

We use many ceremonial practices to welcome babies into this world. We sing songs, give sage and cedar baths, take in warm and healing medicines such as bone broth and blood building syrups, teas, and more. Teyah asked if she could take her placenta and so we shared teachings around that and shared with her mom and partner how to advocate for her placenta.

It was heartwarming to see the movement of Indigenous lifeways being honored in many ways within medicalized systems that have historically harmed Indigenous peoples, especially women and children. It is becoming a known practice that Indigenous folks will request their placenta and the hospital has an obligation to give it to the family. The placenta is considered a relative that helped to keep the baby nourished and safe during the pregnancy, and is an extension of that baby. In Lakota lifeways, we do not eat the placenta. We wrap it in red cloth, pray over it with medicines, and bury it in your traditional homelands, where you want your baby to be connected to. The baby will always be connected with Mother Earth and it will always know where to return.

There were so many forms of mapping that we were engaging throughout these conversations around ceremony, especially, because growing up, we were always taught how to seek knowledge from relatives (i.e., Elders, knowledge keepers, medicine people, and others). You would find someone you wanted to learn from, take them a gift, offer them organ meat, which nowadays can be simply taking them groceries, and opagi (make offering in return of knowledge) them to receive a teaching and/or knowledge. We were also mapping our similarities in our community and Tribal teachings around ceremonies and beliefs around child rearing. In many ways we were enacting Harjo's conceptions of mapping as we prepared and welcomed the next generation. Harjo (2019), shares that "one version of the map to the next world is a futurity spiral that gathers together este-cate sovereignty, community knowledge, collective power, and emergence geographies – each of these concepts is rife with emancipatory and transformational possibilities." (p. 194). Our families may not know how ceremonies were performed in our ancestors' generations; however, we are using our collective power to determine what that looks like for us now and evolving those practices as we move forward and prepare the futures our wakhanyeza (sacred beings/little ones/children) deserve.

Unkigluwinyeyapi (Prepare Ourselves): Preparing Ourselves and our Communities for the Next Generation

The families engaged in the process of opagi (making an offering) and learned how it is all about consent, resiliency, resistance, and knowledge transmission. They knew how humor has been used in all aspects of our survival. They learned how sharing stories by the guidance of the stars is a part of our connections to the unknown, how makhagna (a birthing practice of placing the baby on the Earth that is mixed with amniotic fluid upon their arrival Earth side) is essential to grounding the baby when they are born, and how intergenerational sharing is a commitment to

bringing our lifeways back from underground because as our Elders remind us, they have always been here and our teachings never left us. The sustaining thoughts and philosophies that have uplifted the spirits of the individuals and collectives, encouraged kinship building, and supported each person's unique journeys through all their stages and phases of their lives, while strengthening lifeway connections.

The common theme I heard with families is their desire to return to their lifeways and setting intentions to relearn and find safe spaces and places to do that. Their intentions and prayers were a form of preparation for their journeys into reconnection. On Saturday, June 17th, 2023, when we were all sitting around my kitchen table eating the gluten-liberated Indian tacos[61] that Red Rock and Mikey cooked for us, Savannah shared "I've had such a lifetime of disconnect and I've put these intentions out about three years ago to reconnect to our culture and our ways… Our people are just so beautiful. We need these spaces like this to heal and celebrate one another" (Savannah, 2023). We continued to share our reflections on our time together and how much these few days, spread throughout the summer have impacted each of us. Mikey shared:

> It's been a really good process and a good reminder for us about how people did things long ago and how important it is to continue those traditions. It's kinda cool, you know, us building our own little community here [chuwic'inpa project families]… so many teachings are going into this process too. We were taught our people were prayerful through action and if people were acting up or not in the

[61] My husband Red Rock created a gluten-liberated (gluten-free) frybread recipe from his family frybread recipe while we were in Seattle, because our chosen family, the Paris family (Django and Rae), are gluten-liberated for the most part. Also, frybread is a bread recipe that is fried. This recipe was originally created through rations while Natives were put onto the reservation. It is a survival food and not a traditional food. However, it has become a huge part of our celebrations and culture as Native and Indigenous peoples.

> right mindset, someone would tell them to put that down or not to work on it because your feelings go into that. It's been a good lesson that has followed me through my other work when I'm working on a garden or other things… People don't understand that this is a process of preparation for your children (Mikey, 2023).

In the recording that Waylon shared on February 11, 2024, he also shared the importance of being in community to learn and prepare. Waylon shared:

> It was a really good project for the whole family. We all got together and worked on something together to put some love into tiny daughter's next home [chuwic'inpa]. Put some energy into getting ready for her. Just like anything else, getting our home ready. We were finding ourselves putting our best thoughts into the world that's ready for her… it was really a good thing to spend time like that together and spending time with other families to hear about their struggles and their difficulties and things that have helped them as parents. All those things that were super helpful: the advice circles, the counseling circles, all those beautiful things… to have been there to help support other families and just be around each other and to get ready for baby (Waylon, 2023).

We continued to discuss how it was done in the old days and how other families just don't know many traditional parenting, baby, or lifeways teachings these days, but how they would benefit deeply from cradleboarding together in preparation for their children. We

discussed how by preparing for their new babies through cradleboarding with other families they would learn other teachings such as naming ceremonies, Hoksichantkiyapi, makhagna, i oyuzunta, and more, and how these teachings would have a ripple effect within their lives. These lessons extend beyond making a chuwic'inpa.

Through a personal Zoom interview with Misty in July 2023, we discussed ceremonies and how the process of cradleboarding has been for her. She shared how she "always wanted to go to ceremonies, but because her grandma passed away when she was a little girl, she didn't have that connection anymore… knowing my daughter would be a part of the ceremony [Hoksichantkiyapi 2023] just made me happy" (Misty, 2023). She shared her story of moving back to the Ochethi Sakowin Territory after being away for various reasons. She shared:

> Moving back has really helped me get back to my culture. Like learning to make things and do some community things. There's just more to be involved with and learn… I don't feel like so much of an outsider, I guess, because it's really hard to reconnect… I've even had aunties and other relatives reach out to me for certain teachings, even though I may not be the best person to ask (Misty, 2023).

I reassured Misty that she was the best person for her family to reach out to. She is navigating and learning to return to our lifeways and it is such a beautiful responsibility to be the person within her family to share and offer teachings. Misty began reminiscing on why she pushes her daughter to learn how to sew and learn other cultural teachings. She recalls her grandma pushing her to learn even though she did not necessarily have the tools to teach Misty, she still planted it in her head to learn and carry our lifeways and teachings forward, so Misty has

been working hard to provide those opportunities for her daughter. Misty has been preparing for this time in her life when she will carry the responsibility of sharing the teachings and lessons she has learned.

Together, we mapped our shared histories and bridged our desires to connect through culture and our lifeways together. We also shared not only the responsibility of sharing the teachings and lessons of the chuwic'inpa, but also the need to be prepared. Like I shared in the introduction of this chapter when my dad shared the Lakota phrase and teaching, "Nigluwinyeya", be prepared. The families were learning to prepare for their babies in community and they were learning their shared responsibilities to each other as each other's babies as well, because as Waylon shared "babies are a gift to the community" (Waylon, 2023).

Mikey and Johnny shared so much history of the Standing Rock Nation as well as the Three Affiliated Tribes. Mikey pointed out lessons he was learning throughout this project: 1) processing emotions, 2) revitalization, 3) functionality, and 4) preparation. These are huge pillars I see throughout the process of cradleboarding that I would like to revisit in a later study. As I shared earlier in this chapter, these pillars call on other scholars' work such as Romero-Little, Sims, and Romero (2014) as they share the domains of Pueblo giftedness that is founded on the ontology of Pueblo people and framed by their mother tongue (Romero, et. al., 2014). Our construct of chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) is founded on the ontology of the Ochethi Sakowin people and is necessarily framed by our mother tongue as well. We are collectively understanding the work of uplifting our Indigenous lifeways to heal our communities is important work and we are aiming to provide the necessary resources and way-finding tools to back it up (i.e., research, analysis, community knowledge, language, ceremony and education).

Action Towards Futurity

There is a need to revitalize our lifeways and teachings, but more importantly to determine with the community the paths that we need to take to move forward. Through storytelling, we can gain a sense of what was, orient ourselves through our creation stories to situate where we are in proximity to all that is, and also, we get to decide what ways we move forward together. We are not ancient relics situated in the past. We are living and breathing and evolving our cultures every single day.

Throughout this project, I continuously reflected on Harjo's (2019) work around futurity praxis. She names individual actions towards futurity: "speaking Muscogee, singing in Muscogee, making art, practicing shaking shells" (p. 201), and she also offers examples for one-on-one, group, large intratribal, global settings for futurity praxis (Harjo, 2019, p. 202), as well as settings situated outside of Mvskoke jurisdiction (Harjo, 2019, p. 203). I got so excited because these are things we are currently doing within our communities, and with this project, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

We have romanticized the past for so long. No wonder none of us feel worthy to be Indigenous, to be Ochethi Sakowin, to be Mandan, Hidatsa, or Arikara. We are here now. We are in the present and we are following our ancestors' teachings. We are evolving the ways they knew we would. One important comment that Harjo (2019) shared was "I respond to the plurality framework that conceives of multiple nodes of futurity. I have chosen to focus on modes of futurity that do not center on the politics of recognition" (p. 204). This is an important statement as some of the families in the chuwic'inpa project are either finding their way back to community and/or reconnecting with ceremony while they have always been a part of community. There is no one path towards remembering and uplifting language, ceremonies, and

traditions into your life. It is all valid and all worthy if you are doing it with a good heart, with consent, and relatives and Elders who can mentor and guide you.

I share a similar sentiment as Simpson (2017) “I am absolutely sure that we as Nishnaabeg cannot survive as a people without creating generations of artists, thinkers, makers, and doers that live in Nishnaabeg worlds, that are in respectful relationship with each other, that create movement that joins us to other Indigenous nations to protect the land and bodies. We need to live deliberately and with meaning” (p. 16).

Throughout this project, the families mapped ways forward through many ways, the biggest one that stuck with me was helping new families prepare through cradleboarding, because through cradleboarding others can mentor them and share teachings around naming, ceremonies, support, and so much more.

Chapter 6: Ungluwinyeyapi Kte (We will Prepare ourselves): Invitations to Co-Design the Lush Promise of Kinship (Discussion and Conclusion)

"At the center of making relations is love, ceremony, song, laughter, and crying. The quiet persistence of love…It begins by listening" (Estes, 2022)

Introduction

As I sat down to write this final chapter, I meditated on my intentions for learning and sharing through this beautiful project which has shaped how I view birth and death and how I have shifted as a parent and a community activist. During my final months of storying alongside the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers, I was re-listening to the strengths and resilience in their voices. They each wanted their basic sovereignty rights: to be connected to their culture, to have their community surround them in helping to raise their families and support them as parents, and to continue to build their futures how they see fit. As I sat with the transcriptions and revisited the photos and videos from those moments in time. I was instantly gutted with the reality and the deep grief that as our visions and beautiful resurgence stories of reawakening our cultural teachings within our families were beautifully unfolding, our Palestinian relatives[62] and mothers were being forcibly robbed of their futures and the safety of their children.

I had to take many breaks, smudge, cry, pray, and refocus as sometimes the work felt hopeless and pointless. As I was explaining to my children the current genocide and ethnic cleansing happening around the world, especially to our Palestinian relatives, they immediately

[62] Palestinian relatives, and the ongoing atrocities against them, were first uplifted and brought to my attention through mainstream social media by Black and Indigenous activists in the fall of 2023. However, I first heard of Palestine and Gaza when a cohort of representatives came to stand with Standing Rock during the Water is Life movement in 2016. Before October 2023, I didn't fully grasp the atrocities that have been ongoing.

made connections to the atrocities our people faced throughout our history. As this genocide continues to unfold under capitalism, colonialism and white supremacy, I knew that my mission, and that of my community, was to continue to build our kinship systems and to push back against capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy. As I shared our Indigenous history with the Federal government in Chapter Two, I had to push past my uncomfortableness with sharing my true feelings and realize that mainstream Western universities and academic institutions are just now starting to bear witness to the unimaginable pain and suffering Indigenous peoples around the world have faced and continue to face. At the same time, so many Western universities remain silent (or worse) on the question of Palestine. I had to make the decision to share these beautiful stories while simultaneously witnessing and speaking out against a current genocide unfolding because it's our responsibility to continue to uplift and reawaken our communities. The balance between our world and the star world depends on it.

I'm grateful for the guidance, support, and encouragement of my Dissertation Community[63] as I navigated through my dissertation project, finding my voice and my writing style, the politics of academic institutions, my lived experiences and community responsibilities, and my commitment to my Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) and Otakuye Wichoh'an (Kinship Laws). I thought about my people, my kin, and the "vibrancy" and "spirit" of my relations (TallBear, 2017). My people are more profound than the state sanctioned definitions of my relations according to blood-quantum or ancestral ties – though those are my people too, or at least their proximity to humanness or the likeness of humans. My people are resilient, thriving, radically healing, radically resting, they're self-aware, and they engage in "caretaking" (TallBear,

[63] Dissertation Community is the loving term coined by Django Paris and Family (Django's advisees/mentees) as a way of kinship making by changing the name of Dissertation Committee (western logic) to Dissertation Community (kinship logic).

2017) both spiritually and materially; alongside me and with me, they are the entities that surround me, they are plants and animals, and they are the land and water.

I wanted to make sure that this work is grounded in our creation ontology, Ochethi Sakowin epistemology, and the ongoing theorizing of my people through our lived experiences and through storying that are "real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430); specifically around mother's, women, Two-Spirit/Native LGBTQIA+[64], babies and our birthing ceremonies, and our future generations as we're intricately tied to the land, the stars, and to each other. As I shared in this dissertation study, the *lush promise* that Laura Harjo (2019) was in conversation with through Joy Harjo's poem, *A Map to the Next World*, there are cautions that Joy and Laura share as we make our own maps, we must always remember that it comes from the land which we are all of, and to not lose sight that we are currently in the lush promise, because we forget.

Harjo (2019) shares, "our past, present, and futures are constructs of the lush promise" (p. 50). Ultimately, the lush promise is "shaped by and carries the hopes, dreams, and wishes of the people to live a life that is full" (p. 50). I trust and desire to lean into my own power and essence as a Lakota/Dakota/Arikara woman to attempt to map my ever-evolving ancestral frameworks, as I currently understand them, on paper, while being in conversation and calling on relatives and other Indigenous scholars to guide me through the beautiful intricacies of storying alongside each other. At the heart of the dissertation project is kinship. I believe kinship is one path to the lush promise. Making kin with each other, with the land, with our ceremonies and lifeways, and making kin with and through the chuwic'inpa. As Grande (2020) beautifully states:

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[64] Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual. Most Indigenous communities have always been gender fluid, but because of the influence of Christianity, many of those teachings of those roles in society, especially our language, have been stolen. Two-Spirit is a newly coined word by Indigenous folks for Indigenous folk.

> Building, nurturing, and sustaining good relations with partners, family, community, land, and the various forms of life she sustains is challenging and requires sacrifice and vigilance, especially in the form of commitment, prayer, and ceremony. Because the constant whisper of the sirens of capital – self above other, self above other, self above other – is relentless and seductive, holding space wears a body down, which is why our collective survivance can only come through strong relations and coalitions (p. 145).

Seeing each other as relatives, and imagining the different paths towards our own lush promise is also one way we prepare ourselves for our collective survivance. Ungluwinyeyapi kte (we will prepare ourselves).

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I will reflect on all the ways this dissertation study/project/framework/mapping process has helped me to understand our Indigenous teachings and lifeways more fluidly through our creation stories and lifeways, and how the anchors for our Indigenous intelligence surround us daily through our everyday Indigenous technologies (i.e., chuwic'inpa). Throughout this discussion, I invite us to revisit the major themes that showed up throughout my analysis of this dissertation project through cradleboarding as a kinship praxis through: cultural expression and acts of resistance, resiliency of uplifting ceremonial practices, and the importance of preparation as a futurity praxis. All while remembering the beautiful journey we were on, and continue to be on, with the eight beautiful families as we created chuwic'inpa together and prepared for the lives we wanted for our "gift[s] to the community" (Waylon, 2023), our babies/children, wakhanyeza (sacred beings). I will also share future

implications, offer possible research studies beyond this dissertation project, and offer discussions and a conclusion. Throughout these coming sections, I will also highlight the ways we are continuously preparing ourselves and are engaging in a lush promise of our own along the way.

Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): A Kinship Praxis Through Storying and Enactment

As I was preparing and re-reading while writing this dissertation, I felt like I was in another dimension. One thought led into a story, which led into another thought connected to a story, which led into another. I would reflect back to my classes throughout my PhD program and pretty soon I had books and articles scattered everywhere. I was reflecting with and calling on relatives, some in this physical world and some in the spiritual world, to make sense of it all. Also, to make sure the stories I was remembering were correct. It's my learning process. When I'm creating (e.g., beading, sewing, quilling, writing), curating (e.g., planning a community event or ceremony), or parenting (e.g., guiding and loving my children to see themselves), I make sure that I'm not doing it alone and getting advice when I'm adding in unnecessary steps. I'm making sure that the teachings behind our protocols are shared in ways that reflect my "relationships with family, (my) community, (my) nation, land, and nature" (Archibald, 2008, p. 2).

Grande (2020) reflects on Leanne Simpson's (2017) work on relationality and the Nation state and shares, "the opposite of settler capitalist logics of 'dispossession is not possession' but rather 'deep reciprocal, consensual attachment': relationality" (Simpson, 2017, as cited in Grande, 2020; p. 145). Relationality has been at the forefront of my work in my own community, as well as in my academic career. It is not an easy task, because we each have our own guards that show up in different ways; however, we each seek relationality and we refuse the

dehumanizing settler-capitalist logics (Grande, 2020). I hope this dissertation project can be an example to other Nations and communities that there are ways to create spaces and containers for relationality to occur, and they have always existed.

Carini (2001) shares how stories are a way to enter each other's humanness and I thought of all the ways that our Elders, as well as other scholars, have shared their own humanness through storying in masterful ways. The stories themselves offer beautiful paths forward for the individual, as well as the collective, partaking in the exchange of storying and listening. Leanne Simpson (2017) highlighted that storying through Nishnaabeg intelligence has theoretical anchors whose "layered and diverse meanings are revealed through time and space" (p. 151) in specific ways to individuals and collectives throughout their lives, each time offering new and important meanings. I pondered on Carini's (2001) statement: "there is that in learning and educating which is immeasurable" (p. 175) and how it exceeds our human perceptions and hints at mystery and spirit, yet we endlessly pursue the thought that it inspires within us. When I think of creation or re-emergence stories, I think of all the conditions shared through storying that created all that we know and are, yet, fundamentally, it's a mystery. Same with birth. Same with death. Same with gifts that folks hold. A mystery. Immeasurable. Through storying, especially when it happens on the land, we can re-center our Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander relationships in "reciprocal, consensual, and sustainable" (Elliot and San Pedro, n.d., p. 3) ways and "find a way to live together in peace, honesty, and respect" (Krawec, 2022, p. 14). Learning from the call to sustain all of our communities, Paris (2021) states, "these memberships necessarily intersect with gender and sexuality, with disability, with migration, with language, with land, with class and more" (p. 366), and I aim to continue learning with and alongside the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers to uplift and sustain our relationships.

Archibald (2008) shares that an important Indigenous tradition is sharing what one has learned and that can take many forms, one in particular, is personal life experience. Through the research of organizing my thoughts around the impacts and importance of storying, I have learned that stories have been our maps all along. They teach us all the necessary rigorous STEAM subjects such as science, technology, engineering, art, and math, but they also teach us about the moral code of our people.

Throughout my time spent with the families creating chuwic'inpa we began looking at the process as a verb, chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding), a resurgence site where kinship could be revitalized. There was a deep ripple effect that has occurred, and has been occurring since time immemorial, but more recently since the Water Is Life movement where our Indigenous technologies and ceremonies are becoming a resurgence site for revitalizing our lifeways. Through the Water Is Life movement and more recently through chuwic'inpa kagapi, or cradleboarding, I have been able to theorize the deep ripple effect to be this resurgence site where centering family/chosen family, returning to ceremony and enacting sovereignty, and Indigenous futurism and the responsibility to learn and share occur. I will detail the chuwic'inpa kagapi resurgence site components below.

Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): Centering family/chosen family

Wakhanyeza (sacred beings/children), Thiwahe (immediate family), Thiyospaye (extended family), Wichothi (village/community), and Oyate (people). These are some of the anchors for our original kinship systems. Ochethi Sakowin people, and all Indigenous people, have always had systems of care and kinship, but through colonization, we were forced to think individualistically and only care for our immediate family, our thiwahe. This has caused us to forget our important kinship systems. Through this project, we were able to witness thiwahe,

thiyospaye, and wichothi show up for each other to support in finishing these chuwic'inpa with the families.

As I shared in Chapter Four, Corntassel (2012) describes the politics of distraction as a way for the settler colonial state to reinforce the status quo as a way of moving us further away from our relational place-based practices and kinship systems. I argue that these resurgence sites are spaces where the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers were able to embody our Indigenous presence (Simpson, 2017) and invite our whole selves into the space, which includes our families. As you learned with the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers, Xtal (Ron), Teyah (Dedrick & Lynette), and Kirah (Waylon), they each brought their families (i.e., partners, support systems, children, and others) into the chuwic'inpa project in powerful and meaningful ways. We also got to witness the different ways that family and systems of support showed up for each family. Witnessing them immediately share their teachings and incorporate their learnings through their own lenses and viewpoints was the ripple effect in motion and in real time. They were impacting and influencing their own families and support systems and gently inviting their own families back into ceremonial spaces, traditional knowledge spaces, and enacting their sovereignty in meaningful ways.

Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): Returning to Ceremony and Enacting Sovereignty

Our Indigenous people have always had the knowledge and forethought on Indigenous parenting, child rearing, and pathways towards receiving guidance for these huge milestones in our collective communities. Our ceremonies are resurgence sites where we are receiving teachings and enacting sovereignty in profound ways. The families were able to engage in ceremonies they either weren't exposed to before, hadn't heard of before, or weren't invited to before. The way the families showed up was a ceremony in itself. Our ancestors patiently wait

for the moments and movements to come to relatives and support them through dreams and visions of their own, when they're ready and on their own time.

The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers Misty (Adam), Savannah (Mikey), JanaKate (Brandon), Lefa (Johnny), and Teyah (Dedrick & Lynette), were experiencing this return to ceremony while in space together through birthing ceremonies, teachings, and practices and while engaging in ceremonies such as hoksichantkiyapi (publically welcoming of baby ceremony). There were powerful ways that the families were showing up throughout the process of chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) as well. They shared their worries around doing things wrong, about the learning experience and having a specific vision for their cradleboard, about the connections and closeness the chuwic'inpa has brought to them and their families, and their desires to make chuwic'inpa for babies and future families within their communities. There were many examples of enacting sovereignty, and most importantly, leading with prayer and ceremony in the ways that felt right to them. They didn't need permission to pray and bring ceremony into the hospital settings, they enacted their sovereignty.

Chuwic'inpa Kagapi (Cradleboarding): Indigenous Futurism and the Responsibility to Learn & Share

The beautiful thing about Indigenous futures is they are constantly evolving, changing, redirecting, remapping, and continuously reverberating from the previous generations. Indigenous futures are in communication with the collective desires of the community as well as the guidance from anchors from Indigenous creation and re-emergence stories. The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers that blessed this dissertation study were all sharing their individual and collective desires for their futures as well as sharing their family histories and teachings. They wanted to continue to learn and create chuwic'inpa for others in the

community and share their knowledge with other families. They were accepting the responsibility that family members and community members were going to be turning to them for this knowledge around chuwic'inpa and where to turn to for ceremonies such as hoksichantkiyapi (publically welcoming a baby).

As described in Chapter Four, Indigenous futurism occurs in many different forms. Learning from Laura Harjo's (2019) book, *Spiral to the Stars*, Laura shares that there are many different actions towards futurity such as individual one-on-one, group settings, intratribal, and more. These futurity actions were happening throughout our time together as a group. We were beading, sewing, sharing teachings intergenerationally, sharing our homes and families with each other, cooking gluten-liberated frybread, laughing, planning/plotting futures together, and so much more. Our Indigenous futures include these actions and will continue to ripple through our subconscious within our families and as we continue to hold these spaces together and with others. Our Indigenous futures are intertwined with each other's histories, stories, families, and also rippling into our own future generations. These spaces were essential for our collective futures to be realized and honored, especially in passing on traditional birthing practices.

Birth as an Anchor: Re(SURGE)ance of Birthwork and the Continuity of our Collective Consciousness

In Ochethi Sakowin cosmology, an ancient entity that we pray to for newborn babies to enter the world in a safe and protected way, is Tho Win (Blue Woman). They say she sits in the middle of the Wicha Akhiyuhapi (Big Dipper) and is a doorkeeper between the portals of life and death. When we pray to Tho Win, we are acknowledging an ancient protocol and requesting protection and guidance for the newborn babies as they journey across the Wanagi Thachanku

(Milky Way). When we return to ceremony and pray to our ancestors, we are enacting our sovereignty in the utmost meaningful ways.

Birthing my babies has given me a tangible look into our ancestors' origins. I've been to the stars. Whether I was dreaming or so close to my own physical limits when I birthed my own babies. Indigenous communities know of these spaces where spirits exist. We are taught that it is not seeing is believing; it is believing is seeing. Kim TallBear (2017) shares that "materiality is a part of beingness, not the other way around." Our biophysical bodies aren't relinquished or created without spirit. This description is not meant to be mystical. Still, it's been one that has taken me physically birthing four babies and diving deeper into my own self-awareness to begin tapping into my ancestors' teachings. Others have their own paths to this realization, but this was mine.

Unci (grandma) Ella Deloria has shared her amazing family versions of our creation, re-emergence and ohunkanka (old stories), particularly our iktomi (spider/trickster) ohunkanka. However, I can't help but wonder about the religious, as well as colonial, influence that exists within her writing. In the *Ella Deloria Archives*, there is a section called *Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy*[65] in which she shares stigmas surrounding intercourse and conception, doubt and fear around using medicines for abortions and those who may or may not carry that knowledge, the curse of barrenness or infertility, and the way that women who are attuned with their bodies are perceived if they're able to prevent conception (i.e., a viable pregnancy) were considered murderers (Ella Deloria Archives, n.d.). She also discusses the differences of full-blood babies being born without a mucus deposit, compared to mixed blood[66] babies, as it can be a sign that

[65] http://zia.aisri.indiana.edu/deloria_archive/browse.php?action=viewpage&id=1612
[66] Highlighting blood-quantum in the differences (i.e., mixed blood= lower blood quantum). I do not agree with this uplifting of the settler-colonial logics of blood-quantum as a validation of the Indigeneity of our babies.

intercourse occurred at the end of the pregnancy which was completely shameful and reframed from while the mother was pregnant.

This reading didn't sit well with me because of the ways that women are portrayed for knowing about particular abortion medicines and being able to take care of their own bodies as somehow shameful and not how Dakota women were supposed to conduct themselves. It is seen in a negative, and if I'm being honest, a euro-centric Christian way. This is why I believe birth should be the starting point for us to revitalize our traditional birthing practices and address the stigmas created through settler colonialism and move forward in order to be truly sovereign.

One of the verb definitions for anchor, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is "to act or serve as an anchor for" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). When I think of the work happening within the communities I'm connected to, I think of all the ways that the pandemic gave birth to an era of the revitalization of so many ceremonial practices and lifeways, especially around birth. They became accessible, across the country and the globe, because social media became a placeholder for folks to meet and share and dream about life beyond the pandemic. Thinking of birth as an anchor for reconnecting to all that is, our eyes have been opened in so many ways to the possibilities of what could and should be and I have no doubt that it's scaring the U.S. Nation-State and their ongoing structure of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006). This is why politicians are buckling down and enacting harmful policies and terminating long standing, safeguarding policies.

I birthed two, of my four, babies during the pandemic (2020 and 2022), at home, unmedicated, unassisted, with a prenatal support midwife throughout both pregnancies. I had a midwife present at one of the births and midwifery support after one of the births. With my first homebirth, my midwife didn't make it to our home on time and I birthed my baby on my own.

The processes that supported me through my transitions and reSURGEnce through my (re)birth, as well as the birth of my babies, was rooted in my power to transform life. I had never thought about a homebirth until the pandemic because as we were working with my community, the Standing Rock Nation, to get support and medicines out during the pandemic, it seemed like I didn't have a choice. I was so afraid, and with all the uncertainties surrounding this scary time in our collective history, I was desperately trying to determine a path forward for myself and my baby.

I found a white midwife who was married into my husband's family and tribe, the Three Affiliated Tribes. I was so grateful for her knowledge as a midwife for all the teachings she carries and the sacredness she holds around birth and ceremonies. She agreed to take me on as a client, and also offered to treat it like a ceremony, and not charge us any money. This basically means there's an agreement on the supports needed from the healer/medicine person (i.e., midwife) and they would make every effort to meet those needs, and in exchange, the person asking for prayers and healing support (i.e., the birth ceremony) would put into it whatever they feel it's worth. This is really a vague way of describing it, but it's really a loaded responsibility that supersedes money. It's basically asking "what is this birth worth to you?" And there is no greater question I've ever been asked. It also made me realize that I never even gave my first two births this type of weighted worth. If something were to have happened (which I'm so grateful that my babies are healthy and thriving), the hospital definitely would have liability insurance and wouldn't blink an eye to brush me under the rug.

Gonzales (2012) shares in her book *Red Medicine*, that "lay midwifery and traditional midwifery care… had been banned or made illegal in numerous states from the 1940's onward." (p. 2) She also explains the devastation of losing that sovereignty from birthing in homes to

birthing in clinics and how our ceremonies became restricted, especially in clinical settings. Medical professionals don't always feel the weight of the responsibility to see birth as a ceremony, it's not a part of their training and this is why malpractice occurs way too often, most doctors and nurses have never seen a natural birth that is unassisted and unmedicated. Birth in the hospital is seen as routine and doctors think they can decide when and how a baby arrives on Earth.

I choose to lean into and uplift traditional birthing practices and ceremonies, which includes our Indigenous technologies such as the chuwic'inpa. I am still learning, but I see the importance of birth as an anchor for healing our intergenerational traumas. Gonzales (2012) shares that "these Indigenous healing models provide distinct ways of understanding the impact of trauma and emotional and spiritual dislocation on the human body" (p. 4). She also shares that "the knowledge is still there, but human beings have become disconnected from these ways of knowing" (p. 9).When I approached my midwife for support it was so unknown to me what the process was. She was very patient and kind and understanding that my disconnection is long and deep. She didn't have my lived experience but she was married into my husband's tribe and seen the way birth is approached and has been doing her part to share her knowledge around birth with tribal communities. We co-developed protocols together which included: gift giving (e.g., food, medicines, blankets, and monetary items), preparation for baby and my birth ceremony, and I learned that there is little to no formal paperwork (e.g., social security card, birth certificate, medicaid paperwork or other insurance), unless requested and needed based on the midwife's suggestions. For instance, I did request support in signing the birth certificate and social security card. We still need those documents to enroll our children into our Tribal Nations as citizens.

In 2020, on top of the pandemic and not knowing how we'd financially support our family during this time, I didn't know how much a homebirth would cost. Ironically, it's about $3500-$5000 (insurance can sometimes cover this, depending on the state where the midwife is practicing and the midwife's licensure) and that includes all the home visits, the birth, and aftercare; however, you may need to pay extra for a midwifery's assistant, a pool if you wanted, depends/pads, peri bottles, and other items for postpartum care. It's still a lot cheaper than a hospital birth. It's roughly one-eighth (⅛) of what it costs to give birth in the hospital, which is somewhere between $35,000-$60,000 depending on if you need medical interventions like an emergency surgery, additional medicines, extra nights of stay, food, and more. What accounts for the main difference in pricing, is due to the fact that there aren't a whole lot of medical interventions being forced on mother's with a home birth, unless a transfer is needed, and that's its own obstacle, or any unforeseen health concerns which the midwife offers the option of doing labs.

I leaned heavily into my Ochethi Sakowin teachings, as well as my Arikara teachings, while preparing my body for the unknown of a home birth. No one in my family had done this for generations, probably since we were first placed on reservations. To my community, home birth is usually associated with rich hippies. I can't convey the real fear I had of the virus impacting and infecting me or my baby through this entire process, but more astonishing, there was a complete absence of fear in trusting that my body would physically be able to birth my baby. I just knew I would be able to do it.

There were, however, relatives who feared for me and that was hard to hold, especially my mom, who was a registered nurse and worked for our Indian Health Service hospital for 30 years. I had to work through so much fear all around me. I had to tell people in my circle that I

could not have them around me if they were going to be fearful because I'm working through my own fear and my own shame, which stems from over 500 years of colonization telling me that our lifeways were demonic and illegitimate. I needed people to do their own work and understand where that fear was coming from. It wasn't mine to hold. What I needed to focus on was preparing my mind, body, and spirit to bring this baby Earth side. Once I had made the decision to step into this sacred space of birthing my babies, all the people, medicines, teachings, dreams, and paths forward opened up and gravitated towards me. My reSURGEnce as a mother, a language keeper, a medicine carrier, and a future ancestor began to flourish and new paths forward for myself, my family, and my community opened up, specifically around reclaiming our sovereignty and sovereign practices around birth and birthwork. As I was able to share my experience and learn from my own ways of teaching and sharing, I was able to support the mother's who were a part of this project and share different birthing practices. I was also clear that homebirth isn't for everyone and that everyone must do their own work, consult with their doctors and families, and make their own fully informed decisions based on their own desires for a homebirth. No one should ever feel pressure from others.

Having my last two babies at home, while trusting in myself and connecting with the spirits of my babies has been the most liberating and the most beautiful experiences of my life. I won't ever be the same and no one can ever take that away from me. I'm literally still reeling from the ways my cells were shifted in reclaiming this ancestral practice of birthing my babies through our songs, our medicines, our ceremonial practices, and with the power of trusting that my ancestors were there guiding my babies to me.

On February 26, 2024, during an advisory board meeting that I am a part of with many amazing traditional birth keepers, midwives, and knowledge keepers. I shared my story of

uplifting our lifeways (i.e., birth practices, cradleboard teachings, and this dissertation project) and how I worked through my own shame and healing. We were discussing sovereignty and the intersection of birth work as an anchor for our Indigenous lifeways to continue, Elder Katsi Cook shared a powerful message with us. She stated:

> These conversations never existed 40 or 50 years ago. You're the beneficiaries of a generation and the generations before where all of this was laid out. You can bet that if you named your lineage on both sides all the way back several hundred years, you'd find an ancestor in a dream that would say to you 'it's about time, I've been waiting 100 years for someone to pick this up in my family'. And so when your self-doubt comes in, open your heart, your mind, your being to those ancestors that are calling you to this work. Had they not, you wouldn't be able to express yourselves so beautifully as you have (Personal Communication, Katsi Cook, 2024).

Reflecting on the story of Fallen Star in the Prologue, and his destiny that was tied to the portal of life and death and those teachings our ancestors held steadfast to have been guides all along. Intersecting those stories of unci Tho Win (Blue Woman) who sits in the center of the Wicha Akhiyuhapi (Big Dipper) and is the gatekeeper of the portal between life and death, we are reminded that we're all connected. That continuity of our ancestors' knowledge and consciousness continues within each of us. We don't know what our futures hold, but we pray that our future generations can be the beneficiaries of all the work we do today to uphold our

Lakhol' Wichoh'an (Lakota Lifeways) and Otakuye Wichoh'an (Kinship Laws), because as Patty Krawec (2022) shares:

> We are related, and all of our creation stories make that point one way or another. So the question has never been *whether* we are related but *how* we live out these relationships with the land, and with other-than-human relatives, and with each other (Krawec, 2022; p. 146).

Iyachinya (Modeling) our Relational Commitments and Uplifting Indigenous Joy and Laughter

Throughout this dissertation project, I leaned into my creative and artistic side to uplift my spirits and ground me. I was blessed to be able to be a part of this small journey alongside the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers. To have the privilege of helping them to prepare and make a cradleboard with their families and support systems for their babies was a powerful experience. We were able to map in real time the joy and our relational commitments while learning about the importance of ceremony, kinship, and birth together. Cook (2011) states:

> Births that arise from the ground of an Indigenous identity and the processes of social and cultural memory underpin the reproduction of our Aboriginal midwifery knowledge. Birth is a ceremony. Its transformational power lies in the expansion of relationships, increasing depth of identity and in the possibility of purification (Cook, 2011; p. 85).

The transformational power that I stepped into was what Cook (2011) describes as the:

> Song in a dance of reciprocal consciousness, complexly interwoven in Indigenous concepts of reproductive power. The root language of the expressions within the song evokes seeds of consciousness pertaining to fertility, procreation and the orenda, or sacred power, of women (Cook, 2011; p. 87).

We aren't meant to parent, learn, theorize, heal or transform alone, though some circumstances require us to do our own personal work. According to Elliott-Groves (2018) "study findings support the thesis that disruptions of social and cultural formations undermine individual and collective abilities to prepare for the future" (p. 336), because we always gathered and prepared food in community and told stories on the land together. We've been separated from collective to individualism through "settler colonial theory" (Elliott-Groves, 2018, p. 337) where encroachment on our lands and denial of our Indigenous realities have been invasive. In order to center our Indigenous realities, we need tools and ways to "integrate elements of action, relationship, knowledge, and vision" (Elliott-Groves, et. al., 2018, p. 161) back into our societies to strengthen our relationships with the land and all life forms, and to each other.

In Ochethi Sakowin epistemology, the truest sense of education, keeping in mind the "false parallel (education=schooling)" (San Pedro & Bang, 2021, p. 1), comes from the natural world: the land, our more than human (MTH) relatives, the spiritual world, and the elements. By observing the regularity of nature, Indigenous peoples understood the "greater power that guaranteed enough stability to be reliable and within which lives had meaning… they understood that their task was to fit into the physical world in the most constructive manner and to establish relationships with the higher power, or powers, that created and sustained the universe." (Deloria, 2006, p. xxv), while honoring "the interdependent relational orientation of Indigenous

societies" (Elliott-Groves, 2018, p. 337). Throughout this project, and specifically in Chapter Five, we have seen how these teachings show up in powerful ways through: 1) cultural expression and actions of resistance; 2) the resilience of uplifting ceremonial practices; and 3) the importance of preparation as a futurity praxis.

As I shared in previous chapters, using the Figure of a cradleboard (chuwic'inpa) as an unfolding conceptual framework I worked with Elders, birthers and their families, and community members who took on different roles within the community to re-imagine spaces of healing, safety, and medicine teachings by enacting sovereignty through storytelling and birth work. At the center of the conceptual framework is the child, as is my commitment to taking care and centering the children and the supporting families to help their children on the paths they'll take someday. The chuwic'inpa is made of wood and embodies that connection to the land and the stars.

The connections our communities have with the Wichahpi Oyate is one that the Buffalo Nation knew well and was some of the first teachings, aside from their complete generosity by giving of themselves so that our people would live. The relationship between the Ochethi Sakowin people and the Universe has always been honored and the knowledge of these connections is still held by many of our Elders and knowledge keepers today. The star constellations are considered to be guides and mirrored reflections of the current Earth and realities we live within.

This imagined co-constructive model required agreement, consent, and dialogic participation (San Pedro & Bang, 2020) from everyone involved in the project. We hope everyone will continue to investigate what it means to be worthy of transferring their character to the next generation as well as their role in the futurity of our communities. In many ways, this is

a hope, an offering I give to others who might find guidance for their own mapping from this dissertation study.

Oyate kin Nipi kta cha Lechunk'unpi (We do this so that the people will live): Co-Creating Indigenous Futurity

This study has been a tribute to my community and my community organization, the Mni Wichoni Health Circle. This dissertation study and journey has directly fed into the ways we understand our work and the ways it has impacted our communities and the ways we're continuing to build kinship systems and rebuild our societies together.

Throughout my five year process of reading, re-reading, listening, engaging, organizing, mobilizing, embodying, enacting, inspiring, being inspired, feeling empowered, feeling defeated, witnessing utter devastation, and being a witness to myself experience two-rebirths (home births), my dissertation process was a culmination of all those emotions. They were all experienced simultaneously during a global pandemic (COVID-19), the Black Lives Matter uprising after the murder of George Floyd (among countless others), during a live-streamed genocide and ethnic cleansing of our Palestinian relatives by the Israeli and American governments (among other concurrent genocides happening around the world). Not to mention being a wife, working full-time, and being a full-time mom to four babies who I have to explain these concepts (i.e., pandemic, uprising, genocide) to and comfort.

It felt reminiscent of my Master of Public Health program when I was working on my thesis while being a wife, mother, and mobilizing within the Water Is Life movement at the Ochethi Sakowin camp. Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander (as well as many others) do not simply go and get a degree for letters of validation. There are many obstacles and odds stacked against us to get our voices heard and to continue to uplift our communities in the

process, while validating our own theorizing and our own resurgence efforts that have been ongoing since time immemorial. We do these things because our survivance (Grande, 2020) depends on it. Our survival depends on how we story together, build together, resist together, and uplift together in ways that we remember each other. As shared in Chapter Two, “Our histories never unfold in isolation” (Angela Davis, as cited in Krawec, 2022; p. 15). This project is an ongoing project of remembering together and being in community together, so that we remember each other’s stories, uplift each other's struggles and celebrations, and honor each other’s ontologies (ways of being) and epistemologies (ways of knowing).

Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses in her book “Decolonizing Methodologies” this idea of *Insider/Outsider Research* and how as an Insider it might seem easier to research within your community, but you are instantly placed in a category of researcher that has done harm and can “other” communities, therefore, using structures of kinship and protocols (i.e., opagi) can help to mediate any issues that may arise (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). These are issues that come up when we visit with elders when they jokingly discuss how they worry about academics coming in and stealing knowledge and making a profit.

I’ve always been in relationship with my community, but somehow knowing what I know through deep reading and going through the process of my own healing and understanding, helped me to see the conditions we are in now on the reservation, but also to see all the beautiful ways we are continuously (re)centering, (re)vitalizing, (re)imagining, (re)creating, and (re)connecting to our Ochethi Sakowin lifeways in ways that honor our communities of origin and legitimizes community knowledge systems (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

When you meet with an Elder in my community and ask for knowledge, even a simple, but deep story of our Indigenous intelligence, we often don’t have the ability to extend or refuse

consent (Simpson, 2014), so using our medicines and foods to opagi (make an offering in exchange for something) is a crucial part in the transmission of knowledge. An elder has the right to either accept or refuse the offer, but it is all handled within the protocol of opagi. In engaging with Simpson's work on Nishnaabeg intelligence and consent (Simpson, 2014).

Now think of this in the context of all of creation. In order to imagine our futures, we need to anchor ourselves in the present moments and movements. What does it mean to seek consent from the water? What does it mean to carry creation stories on your back while it's holding your baby (i.e., cradleboards)? This is how we decolonize and move towards our futures. It'll take us uncovering and unlocking our own shame and oppressions. It'll take rebuilding our societies again. As I shared in Chapter Three, okholakichiye (societies) were of utmost importance within our communities, and everyone belonged to one. Ochethi Sakowin communities have always had many different societies based on gifts, dreams, knowledge, abilities, ideas, and more. From women's societies, two-spirit societies, birthing societies, sewing and beading societies, coming of age societies, warrior societies, protector societies, and others. Everyone had a role within the community, and they had a responsibility to their society. The families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers were organically creating a society through this process by uplifting birthing practices, chuwic'inpa teachings, and parenting/child rearing. Chuwic'inpa kagapi (cradleboarding) was a container and a space for societies to be created, knowledge to be shared, and mapping to occur. I hope that this continues to ripple deep into our futures and our children remember these teachings from the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers. We ultimately do this so that our people will live. Our collective consciousness will continue into the future.

Our elders, youth, and community members have endless amounts of knowledge and lived experiences to share with those who are willing to listen and learn. The approach to the transmission of knowledge from spirit to spirit, which involves humans, surrounding entities, the land, water, dreams, etc. is a simple one which must be led by our protocols and examples. Otherwise, we get held up on what knowledge and who it comes from as being legitimate or not.

Reflecting back on the beautiful families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers that shared their families, dreams, desires, and authentic selves in this dissertation study, I want to reiterate the teachings of our Elders that our lifeways have always been here, they've just been waiting for us to remember them. These families and their support systems were essential in this act of remembering together. When we lean into our ancient and new structures of sovereignty, we're able to see that we're already enacting our futurism. We're already enacting some measure of "este-cate sovereignty, community knowledge, collective power, and emergence geographies. Even at the scale of the individual" (Harjo, 2019, p. 201). In that sense, every single one of the families/reciprocal learners/co-researchers who were a part of this dissertation study is worthy of passing their character on to the next generation through *I Oyutunza, the ceremony of transferring their character.*

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