# Blackfeet Men, "Toxic Masculinity", and Gender Entanglement

Dianne F. Baumann

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2019

Reading Committee:

Jean Dennison, Chair

Holly Barker

Danny Hoffman

John Hopkins

Jose Lucero

Dian Million

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Department of Anthropology

University of Washington

## Abstract

Blackfeet Men, "Toxic Masculinity", and Gender Entanglement

Dianne F. Baumann

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Jean Dennison

American Indian Studies/Anthropology

Violence is one of the most serious issues Blackfeet men face today. Too often conversation about violence in and beyond the Blackfeet focusses on men as perpetrators while ignoring the complexity of how gender intersects with violence. This dissertation scrutinizes the entangled roles of gendering and settler colonialism in how they influence the epidemic of violence by and against Indigenous men. Through Blackfeet life histories and stories, I identify and examine how some men navigate colonial gendering and violence to create better worlds for themselves and their families. While the life histories and stories used here contain elements of pain, my focus centers pushing beyond a 'Vizenor-esque' survivance to an understanding of thrivance and what it entails, including the need for creating communities of support, personal growth, and healing. This comprehensive examination of Blackfeet masculinity contributes to gender studies, feminist studies, and settler colonial studies; but most importantly it offers the hope of

understanding through reinforcing some positive Blackfeet masculinity models to encourage a more balanced and harmonious community.

**Table of Contents**

## Preface

I was raised by a strong Blackfeet woman. She gave me strength. My mother made sure we were connected with our Blackfeet roots. She took us back to the reservation on which she was born and raised so we would know our family and connect to our lands. However, my siblings and I were raised in a white community, moving wherever our first-generation German American fathers' job necessitated.

Mother kept a very close eye on us. particularly when we were on the reservation. She inferred that some Indian men were not safe to be around. "Stay away from him. He's dangerous when he drinks and he's always drinking." I do not remember ever hearing this off reservation. I discovered in my adult years that my Blackfeet grandmother had also watched over her children similarly and for good reason. I began to wonder what this thought process, which they certainly felt, instilled in our men and boys? Were we ourselves perpetuating the settler colonial construct of the 'scary brown man' or had we become so indoctrinated in settler colonialism that we could not see past anticipated danger and self-preservation to identify the root problems? I believe both idioms are accurate.

Over the years I have read feminist Indigenous authors[1] and I remain impressed on how they (and others) address the abuse of Native women at the hands of settler society and Indigenous men. This is good and valuable research, necessary to address the violence perpetrated against Indigenous women. Yet, the more I read the more I wonder what we as Indigenous women are doing to recognize the trauma our men continue to endure? As the mother of six children, five of whom are male, this became an important and relevant question to ask of myself.

[1] Including, but not limited to Sarah Deer, Audra Simpson, and Mishuana Goeman.

I began investigating. I read the abysmal statistics for Indigenous men for suicide, homicide, substance abuse, and death at the hands of police throughout the United States and Canada. I was shocked when I realized how closely these horrible statistics touch my family. I thought about my own sons and wondered, why are we ignoring this and laying the blame for 'toxic masculinity' solely at the feet of our men? Cree feminist scholar Kim Anderson speaks out in support of research around Indigenous masculinity saying [that], "Our families are only going to be as healthy as our men are, too. Perhaps it's time to pay attention to men who haven't had as much of the focus."[2] I wholeheartedly agree with Anderson, understanding that healthy families are the best way for Indigenous peoples to thrive.

The identity politics of dividing and ranking the needs of Native men and women has and continues to be an effective way to divide and conquer – perpetuating the settler colonial agenda of eliminating the Indian. To heal and effectively reconstruct their own identity as Native men the support and encouragement from their peers, communities, families, and partners is essential. We can begin this process by hearing their voices and recognizing their experience under the oubliette of settler colonialism. I need my research to contribute to and encourage this conversation while emphasizing the use of decolonizing methodologies.

If employing decolonizing methodologies were as simple as de-emphasizing western research practices and knowledge while emphasizing Indigenous practices and ways of knowing, it would be happening with a vengeance at "progressive" institutions throughout the United States and Canada. One stumbling block may be a lack of Indigenous and other scholars of color, for although there are many of us in academia, there are relatively few compared to our white contemporaries, and fewer still in academic positions of power. Decolonizing research

[2] Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, '*Indigenous Men and Masculinities*' (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

and other aspects of academia is impeded by academia itself. White privilege, classism, and other ugly relics of settler colonialism continue to regulate our campuses, just as it regulates our country. For myself, working within my own community is an effective means to push-back against the harmful vestiges of settler colonialism within academia while illuminating Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and thriving.

Writing about one's own community is difficult. How much of myself do I insert in the narrative? How do I position myself without talking over my participants? These questions are a constant struggle when working with family and a lot to ponder in one simple dissertation. Even the terminology is complicated. Some members of my family refer to themselves as Indian, others as Blackfeet, and still others as Native. Everyone in this story is a relative of some sort or another, thus this entire dissertation is in some ways about my relationship with the Blackfeet Nation. When sharing life histories, I use generalized identifiers and titles as a means of conveying respect, signifying relationship, and protecting anonymity.

Then there are what I consider the essential academic questions. Who am I conducting research with and from what lens am I looking? Some of the men participating in this project are direct family members and others are relations as accorded by Blackfeet kinship understandings. All of them are significant to this story by their demonstration of thrivance on their own terms. Their stories touch me in a deep and personal manner. I am honored by their willingness to share their stories and I hope that honor shows in my writing.

## Introduction

On New Year's Eve 2016 my cousin, 21-year-old Matthew Grant was found murdered in an alley behind our relative's house. He was missing for two weeks before his beaten and broken body was discovered under a mound of snow with ten knife wounds in his back. There was no warning of impending danger; he was a living, breathing, healthy young man who left one evening with a group of young adults and inexplicably never returned home. My family searched frantically for two-weeks, hoping against hope that he would be found with a youthful and inconsiderate explanation for his absence. However, within days of his disappearance we anticipated the same dreaded outcome of so many missing Native men. Our family had been here before. Twenty-five years earlier a cousin was murdered in a bar, and fifty years before that another cousins' father was found bludgeoned-to-death days before her birth. Matthew's girlfriend gave birth six months after his murder to a baby boy whom she named in memory of the father he would never know. Another Blackfeet child who would grow up without a father because of senseless violence.

Memorial at the location Matthew's body was discovered.
**Photo Credit – Rhonda Grant-Connelly**

Violence perpetrated by and against Blackfeet men can be identified as one of the most serious issues facing them today. Indian reservations across the United States face crime rates more than two-and-a-half times the national average, including some of the nation's most violent cities.[3] Crime data throughout the United States is compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) via the agency's 'Uniform Crime Report' and 'Supplementary Homicide Report'. According to an investigative report done by the 'Missoulian'[4] using FBI and other nationwide statistics, nearly one-half of all Native murders are not captured in FBI records. Also concerning, and particularly haunting to the friends and families left behind, is the low rate of prosecution and convictions for the violent crimes committed in Indian country. The FBI has jurisdiction for serious violent crimes committed on reservation lands, making it difficult to understand how so many Native homicides are not found within the agency's own system. Low prosecution rate, conviction rate, and inaccurate reporting lead some tribal citizens to consider federal jurisdiction to be a "second class system of justice that encourages law breaking" and apathy.[5] This is certainly true with Matthew's murder.

Our family reported Matthew missing to the Blackfeet Law Enforcement Agency (BLEA) within days of his failure to return home but received little assistance. The BLEA has been managed by the 'Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) under the umbrella of the 'United States Department of Interior' since February of 2003, thus all crimes reported on the Blackfeet Reservation are under federal, not tribal jurisdiction. When Matthew's murdered body was

---

[3] Timothy Williams. 2012. *Higher Crime, Fewer Charges on Indian Land.* February 20. Accessed 2019. https://www.nytimes.com.

[4] Sam Wilson and Mike Kordenbrock. 2019. "Native American Homicide Rates are Soaring but Causes aren't Clear Due to Inconsistent Data." *missoulian.com.* April 14. Accessed 2019. https://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/mmiw

[5] Timothy Williams. 2012. *Higher Crime, Fewer Charges on Indian Land.* February 20. Accessed 2019. https://www.nytimes.com.

found the case was turned over to the FBI. Athabascan scholar and ethnic studies PhD Dian Million depicts federal control of Indigenous peoples as the work of colonialism; used as a means of the settler government to "legally control and socially modify all aspects of Indigenous life"[6] and law. These laws and controls are "racialized, sexualized, and heterosexual in a way that is biopower" which she defines as power focused on "a person's sex and phenotypes (the shade of skin, hair texture, cranial measurements, etc.) and relations."[7] Matthew's aunt supports this theory in her own terms by stating bitterly "the only thing the federal government cares less about than missing or murdered Indian women is missing or murdered Indian men."[8] These statements are demonstrative of the gender entanglements and systematic organizational and structural violence linked to settler colonialism, which is a central focus of this dissertation.

**Gender(ing)**

Gender most frequently enters conversations about violence by focusing on men as the primary perpetrators however, the way in which gender intersects with violence is far more complex.[9] The 'Bureau of Justice Statistics' and the 'Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice' report the murder rate of American Indian men as three times higher than that of Native women (which is twice the rate of non-Native women), twice as high as white men, and occurs at the hands of law enforcement at a higher rate than any other racialized group in the United States and Canada.[10] The violence perpetrated against and by Native men is epidemic, under-reported,

---

[6] Dian Million. 2013. *Therapeutic Nations - Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Conversation between author and Rhonda Grant-Connelly on February 19, 2019. Used with permission.

[9] N.F. Russo and A. Pirlott. 2006. "Gender-Based Violence." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 178-205.
Anderson, Kristin L. 2013. "Why Do We Fail to Ask "Why" About Gender and Intimate Partner Violence?" *Journal of Marriage and Family 75*(3). 14-18.
James Seager. 2005. "Violent Men." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 26-49.

[10] Steven Perry. 2004. *American Indians and Crime.* Government, Washington D.C.: United States Department of Justice - Bureau of Justice Statistics.

and under-researched. This dissertation scrutinizes the entangled roles of gendering and settler colonialism and how they influence this epidemic of violence.

While violence is always a gendered discourse, "gendering" is too infrequently a discourse applied to violence. Gendering, or the "process of ascribing characteristics of masculinity or femininity…usually resulting in power and privilege…as drawn along the lines of sex and gender"[11] is examined here by identifying and defining the effects of the gendering of Blackfeet men as achieved culturally, psychologically, socially, and violently by "destroying to replace"[12] via the construct of settler colonialism. The gendered identity of Blackfeet men is forged out of ongoing settler colonial processes as well as community and individual navigation of these processes, thus complicating and altering historical gender roles and identity.

Terms used to identify specific genders or gender types continue to fluctuate within academia and media. These concepts present in a more pronounced and fluid manner with the inception of and easy access to the internet and social media. In the early 1980's "hegemonic masculinity"[13] was the terminology used to represent the practice of male domination and foster dialog around the complexities of gender construction for men. Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell states that "hegemony does not assume violence but does support the use of force to perpetuate oppression through institutions and culture"[14]. I assert that because the use of force to perpetuate oppression is in itself violence; violence and masculinity become entangled and subconsciously connected.

---

Mike Males. 2014. *Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice.* August 26. Accessed February 2017. http://www.cjcj.org/news/8113.

[11] Kelly Dye. 2010. "Gendering." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J Mills, Gabrielle Durepos and Elden Wiebe, 414-419. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[12] Patrick Wolfe. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 387-409.

[13] R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 829-859.

[14] Ibid.

Building on the theories of hegemonic masculinity studies, violent actions and behaviors attributed to men are now regularly referred to as a consequence of "toxic masculinity" reinforcing the identity of masculinity as inherently damaged.[15] Political feminist Amanda Marcotte defines toxic masculinity as "a specific model of manhood, geared toward dominance and control. It's a manhood that views women and LGBTQ people as inferior, sees sex as an act not of affection but domination, and which valorizes violence as the way to prove one's self to the world."[16] While Marcotte's definition is accurate to what she considers toxic masculinity it does not address the complications of Indigenous gender relations as historical, subject to change, and deeply influenced by societal expectations and oppression. Ignoring these complications, particularly in Indigenous contexts, contributes to masking our men as perpetrators without considering the effect of centuries living as targets of colonial, gender, and racial violence.

The way in which gender intersects with violence is complicated, particularly when considering the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous masculinity. Directing conversation away from the primary observation of masculinity as toxic, negative, and dangerous, toward a positive narrative is a necessary and welcome change for men, boys, and their communities. As masculinity studies expand beyond gender to include race, ethnicity, sexuality, and settler colonialism, so must the gender politics around "toxic" masculinity. Substantial research examining violence against women continues to flourish, while research examining epidemic violence against men of color, particularly Indigenous men in North America, remains relatively silent. Gender politics contributes to minimalizing masculinity research as some scholars and

---

[15] Jeremy Posadas. 2017. "Teaching the Cause of Rape Culture: Toxic Masculinity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 177-179.
J. Hammill. 2001. "The Culture of Masculinity." *Development* 21-24.

[16] https://theestablishment.co/heres-how-toxic-masculinity-is-killing-us-in-so-many-ways-b2fc9bf2b0ce

advocates associate male focused research as denigrating to the experience of women. However, it is my argument that this research is necessary to understand violence against women by men ***and*** violence against men at the hand of others.

**Colonialism**

Settler Colonialism is the framework for inequality in the United States and Canada. Sociologist Barbara Chasin, an expert in inequality and violence studies, defines class, racial/ethnic, and gender inequality as the three major types of inequality that lead to vulnerability and violence.[17] Contrary to 'American dream' ideology that pontificates success attainability via pulling [oneself] up by the bootstraps the reality remains that we are born into a socioeconomic, racial, and gender identity that impacts readily available opportunities and our vulnerability to violence. Chasin characterizes this as repercussions of capitalism, but I contend that because capitalism stems from the framework of settler colonialism, it is also settler colonialism that impacts the causes and effects of violence.

Despite epidemic rates of violence in American Indian communities, few have addressed the toxic masculinity narrative within the construct of colonialism. Labeling these men as toxic reduces their scrutinized actions and behaviors to shameful and deviant yet fails to address root problems. Examining the power dynamics of settler colonial gendering and its' effects on the lives of Indigenous men is essential to beginning the interruption process. To understand Blackfeet men through the context of settler colonial gendering is not to condone or excuse behavior, but to clarify how it perpetuates the institutionalization of power relations both for and against them. The goal is to inspire a space for Indigenous men and women to work together to challenge settler colonial power.

---

[17] Barbara H. Chasin, 2004. *Inequality & Violence in the United States - Casualties of Capitalism.* Amherst: Humanity Books.

Settlers are historically portrayed as strong, competent, and intelligent modern men bringing civilization and prosperity to America, while Native men have been depicted as a literal piece of wilderness – savage and uncivilized. Settler masculinity became the model for the new world into which Native men were indoctrinated and gendered.[18] Australian anthropologist and ethnographer Patrick Wolfe defines' settler colonialism as "destroy[ing] to replace" and perpetuating the "logic of elimination" via 'killing the Indian and saving the man'.[19] Settler colonialism has and continues to attempt to destroy and replace the gendered identity of Blackfeet men thus corrupting historical gender roles and identity. This is not to imply that Blackfeet gender roles pre-colonization were not problematic, but that Blackfeet men continue to negotiate the roles, stereotypes, and power inequalities imposed by settler colonialism. Unpacking this concept requires an examination of information available around Blackfeet gender roles provided by anthropologists and historians of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as a discussion of the impacts of the colonial process within the community.

**"Fake" News**

Historically, *written* accounts of our ancestors have not been readily available from the Blackfeet people ourselves. White traders, anthropologists, missionaries, and historians recorded much of the archival information available for examination of early Blackfeet gender roles. These outsiders did not live or understand the Blackfeet experience, which has resulted in missing information and a lack of critical context. Historical information from non-Indigenous

[18] L. Gahman. 2016. "White Settler Society as Monster: Rural Southeast Kansas, Ancestral Osage (Wah-Zha-Zhi) Territories, and the Violence of Forgetting." *Antipode* 14-335.
Sara Mills. 2010. "Gender and Colonial Space." *Gender, Place & Culture* 125-148.
Scott Lauria Morgensen. 2012. "Theorizing Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2-22.
[19] Patrick Wolfe. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 387-409.

social scientists invite the possibility of ethnographic refusal on the part of the participants. For this argument I refer to ethnographic refusal as a decision and right on the part of research participants to reserve specific information from the investigator as a means of protecting Indigenous knowledge from misuse or misinterpretation by non-Indigenous scholars.

Misinformation is not only an historical issue; even more challenging is the misrepresentation that continues to plague American Indians today. Stereotype, misinformation, and willful ignorance reinforce the "mythical Indians" of America as savagely fierce; promulgating the notion that the settler must remain vigilant against impending danger at the hands of Indigenous men. This is propagated through white supremacy and reinforced by education and media, creating a normalized and acceptable racism.[20] Native men are left to the exhausting chore of defending themselves against stereotype and altered perceptions, or hazard becoming so inundated that they risk negative internalization and self-sabotage.

These ideas are so deeply ingrained in American society that racism and stereotyping of American Indians remain socially tolerated, as with the "constructed Indian-ness"[21] of mascotry. Native peoples are the only racialized group in North American society in which it is acceptable for racist slurs to represent an entire community. It is ludicrous to imagine that America would accept a professional sports team called the Washington N*ggers or the Kansas City Sp*cs, yet the National Football League continues to support the use of the R*dskin name and mascot despite the term being defined as "dated and offensive"[22] by Oxford Dictionaries and the on-going public outcry by Native organizations[23] for termination of all Native mascotry.

---

[20] Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson,. 2015. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities.* Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
[21] Michael Taylor. 'Contesting Constructed Indian-ness' (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), title.
[22] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/redskin
[23] 'Not Your Mascot'; 'MascotsDB'; 'Change the Mascot'

The Cleveland 'Indians' participated in the 2016 World Series using the offensive 'Chief Wahoo' mascot without constraint, celebrating a cartoonish stereotypical image of Native men. Johnnie Jae, Otoe-Missouria/Choctaw journalist and founder of 'Not Your Mascot' explains:

> "People don't understand that these issues are rooted in racism. They [white settlers] did eradicate almost 99 percent of the population. Today, a lot of people are not aware we're still here. They talk about Native Americans as if we're in the past, and you never really hear about Native Americans as we are now in the modern times. So, it really does perpetuate the idea that Native Americans are an extinct people."[24]

This idea of Native Americans as "extinct people" is created and proliferated by settler structures reflecting the ideas of "conquest, colonialism, dislocation, dispossession, identity, tradition, and nationalism"[25] as the inherent right of settlers as superior beings; creating an environment in which Native men and boys are historicized, romanticized, and villainized as "savages" effectively erasing the space to imagine contemporary Native masculinity. Colgate University professor Michael Taylor of the Seneca Nation draws a correlation between Native mascotry and black-face as a settler white male method of "mimicking blacks and Native peoples in order to establish a personal and social hierarchy of power through mimicry."[26] Mascotry and stereotype continue today reinforcing settler colonial racism, oppression, and white supremacy.

According to the 'Reclaiming Native Truth' project the "*voices* and stories of contemporary Native peoples" are missing "across the education curriculum, pop culture entertainment, news media, social media and the judicial system."[27] Changing the known

---

[24] Britni Danielle, 'Native American Groups Want You to Know They're More Than Mascots' from www.takepart.com/article/2014/11/27/not-your-mscot-movement.
[25] Michael Taylor 2013
[26] Ibid, 111.
[27] First Nations Development Institute 2018.

narrative of Indigenous men through the use of Indigenous stories, life histories, and the proliferation of continued achievement can be transformative to their entire community by challenging the dominant ideas and stereotypes conveyed by conventional media.

**Methods and Theory**

This dissertation gathers information from Blackfeet men, Blackfeet creation stories, Blackfeet land records and treaties, and the writings of anthropologists and historians to demonstrate how some Blackfeet men proclaim a life beyond mere survival. I begin with Matthew's death to humanize the reality of violence experienced by and from Indigenous men. Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang point out what we know "from years and years of academic colonialism that it is easy to do research on people in pain" and "that kind of voyeurism pratically writes itself."[28] Matthew's story is not voyeurism as it emphasizes what is at stake and lays the foundation to examine how some Indigenous men maneuver beyond violence. Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor honors Native survival through what he terms survivance:

> "The theories of survivance are elusive, obscure, and imprecise by definition, translation, comparison, and catchword histories, but survivance is invariably true and just in native practice and company. The nature of survivance is unmistakable in native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and customs and is clearly observable in narrative resistance and personal attributes, such as the native humanistic tease, vital irony, spirit, cast of mind, and moral courage. The character of survivance creates a sense of native presence over absence, nihility, and victimry."[29]

Survivance theory is important as it emphasizes the exhistence of American Indian peoples in todays world, and encourages Native peoples to examine and think about our own

[28] Eve Tuck and R. Wayne Yang. 2018. "R-Words: Refusing Research." In *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, 223-228. SAGE Publications, Inc.
[29] Gerald Robert Vizenor. 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

history and survival. University of Washington professor and provost Chadwick Allen in reviewing Vizenor's book 'Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence'[30] suggests that to understand the merits of survivance as "critical lens and analytic tool" it is necessary to "examine the possible limitation of the term and its typical deployments."[31] Allen's sentiment supports my assertion that survivance is valuable but limited, as it does little to accentuate the value and contribution of Indigenous peoples today. I propose instead a concept of thrivance, which picks up where survivance leaves off; both are valuable analytical tools, yet different chapters of the ongoing story of Indigeneity.

Rather than contributing to "damage centered research"[32] I gather life histories and Blackfeet stories to identify and examine how some men navigate the entanglements of colonial gendering and violence to create better worlds for themselves and their families. While the life histories and Blackfeet stories used here may contain elements of pain, the focus centers on pushing beyond survivance to thrivance – a strong sense of self-assurance from appreciation of our own abilities, qualities, and identity as Blackfeet. This thrivance focus is important as it dives beyond the survival statement of "we are still here" to "we are productive, vibrant, and contributors to todays world." In addition, a thrivance focus accentuates the importance of healing to a positive self identity. Just as the settler colonial agenda of stereotype and mascotry contribute to a lasting negative legacy for Indigenous peoples, the positivityof a thrivance focus can reset the narrative for the constructive contributions and everyday normalcy of Indigenous peoples today.

---

[30] Gerald Robert Vizenor. 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

[31] Chadwick Allen. 2011. "(Review) Survivance: Narrative of Native Presence." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23(4): 120-124.

[32] Dolores Calderon. 2016. "Moving from Damage-Centered Research through Unsettling Reflexivity." *Anthropology & Education, 47(1), March* 5-24.

Life histories are intimate, and none is without conflict, struggle, shame, and joy; sometimes people tell their story but find it is so personal that they prefer not to elaborate beyond that telling. One life history participant asked that I wait until after his death to share the recordings and unedited narrative of his life with his family members. His request reminded me to appreciate the importance of each participant maintaining the right to ethnographic refusal in deciding what, when, and to whom their narrative was circulated. Cherokee novelist Thomas King warns "to be careful with the stories you tell…[for] once a story is told, it cannot be called back."[33] I recognize that I am accountable to all that share their life history stories here and I honor their participation by ensuring what part of their narrative is shared, or not shared, under our pre-agreed upon conditions.

What Blackfeet practices shape or reshape masculinity, what values and practices offer men and other tribal members an alternative to the hegemonic gender expectations of settler colonialism, what lenses are used to view and enact masculinity today, and what changes need to occur are some of the questions engaged through life histories by the community itself. In addition, I explore the significance of ancestral homelands to identity through Blackfeet stories and how the fight for land sovereignty serves to challenge colonial formations and ideologies while exemplifying thrivance, without reinforcing a problematic "plight of the Indian"[34] logic. These questions, concepts, and theories are traveled through in a kinship order, beginning with 'Old Man' then 'Uncle' and 'Cousin', and finishing with 'Son'.

Kinship ties are important to the Blackfeet community, so it makes sense that many of our stories revolve around the doings of 'Old Man' often referred to as 'Grandfather' or 'Napi'. Family positions, titles, or labels have different meanings for different communities. In ours, and

---

[33]Thomas King. 2003. *The Truth About Stories - A Native Narrative.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
[34] Vine De Loria, Jr. *'Custer Died for Your Sins – An Indian Manifesto'.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

many other Indigenous communities' some cousins may be considered immediate family like a brother or sister. Distant relatives, people with some convoluted familial tie, and other Blackfeet citizens are also cousins. If there is a generation gap, then cousin becomes uncle or auntie. If there is a considerable generation gap, then uncle or auntie become grandfather or grandmother. For the sake of anonymity, I refer to my life history participants by their appropriate titles rather than their given names.

**Dissertation Summary**

This dissertation is a comprehensive examination of Blackfeet masculinity that contributes to gender studies, feminist studies, and settler colonial studies; but most importantly it offers the hope of understanding and reinforcing some positive Blackfeet masculinity models that will help bring about a more balanced and harmonious community. Masculinity studies are relevant to the prevention of all violence, including contexts ranging from domestic and sexual assault to institutional violence and war, but especially for the prevention of violence perpetrated against men, particularly Indigenous men and men of color. Recognizing the gender and racial discrimination these men experience at the hands of the police and other institutions of power does not expunge the violent experiences of women; it validates how gender discrimination entangles with racial discrimination to oppress the non-settler body regardless of gender. I argue that in many cases of violence against Indigenous men, the violence against them gets justified ***because*** they are men. I see this as an outcome of living under the institution of settler colonialism. Critical race theorist Kealed Beydoun supports this in pointing out that the fear of minority masculinities is rooted in western society as the antithesis of white hetero-patriarchal masculinity.[35] All of this points to not only the complexity of Indigenous masculinity as a

[35] Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, '*Indigenous Men and Masculinities*' (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 10.

complete category, but the importance of continued research on the social, psychological, and political issues facing these men today.

In the next chapter I focus on Blackfeet 'Old Man' Napi stories around our creation and societal development, which go back to our place in time before colonization yet remain relevant today. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Māori scholar and author of 'Decolonizing Methodologies' considers stories "an integral part of Indigenous research."[36] For myself, drawing from Blackfeet literature is core to understanding my people's history and lays the stage to my own research and identity.

The 'Old Man' stories I share in chapter two push back against the unrealistic utopian time imagined by some Blackfeet when uttering the mantra "…back before the white man came…" and the "stone age Blackfeet"[37] of the 18th century as depicted by some anthropologists and historians. Instead, this exploration of Blackfeet stories, land significance, and land advocacy create a compilation of how some Blackfeet understand our historical and contemporary principles of identity. This assembling of sources allows an examination of our historical values; tying together Blackfeet cultural knowledge and beliefs and emphasizing how story and territory continue to influence our unique identity. To thrive in the world and ensure our survival, the Blackfeet Nation continues to protect the lands and the stories differentiating us from the settler world and identify us as Niitsitapi[38], exercising sovereignty and demonstrating thrivance through the preservation of our identity.

In chapter three I share the life history story of 'Uncle', a Blackfeet elder who bridges the gap between his identity as the son of a Blackfeet mother and English Canadian father. Born on

---

[36] Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[37] John C. Ewers. 1958. *The Blackfeet - Raiders on the Northwestern Plains.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
[38] 'Niitsitapi' is a Blackfoot word meaning "the people" and is a collective name for the four bands of the 'Blackfoot Confederacy', of which includes the Blackfeet Nation.

the Blackfeet reservation where he was raised and educated until he and his family relocated to Washington state the fall he began high school. His remarkable story of thrivance in a world in which he is considered both oppressed (Blackfeet) and oppressor (settler male) presents an opportunity to examine first-hand the entanglements and navigation of gender, race, and identity.

In chapter four a couple life history stories are enmeshed to create 'Cousin', the journey of a 40ish Blackfeet man who has lived his entire life on the reservation. Cousin's story is both similar and different from Uncle's, with the similarities of being surrounded by family and living in poverty on the reservation, and the differences of being raised by a grandparent and identifying solely as Blackfeet. His story shares negotiation through violence, neglect, chemical dependency, and his own problematic behaviors before finding his way toward healing through his immersion in the plains Indian practice of Indian Relay.

'Son' is the final chapter. Here I bring it all together with the Blackfeet story of 'Star Boy' and how he navigates difficulty and treachery in his life. This story is similar to the stories of 'Old Man', 'Uncle', and 'Cousin' as it recognizes the need for family and community support to live a good and honorable life, while emphasizing that Blackfeet men can thrive everywhere.

## With Old Man

**'The Blackfeet Story of Marriage'**

*There was a time when men and women lived separately. The men were excellent hunters but did not know how to properly tan hides from which to make moccasins, clothes, and teepees. The women were skilled hunters, tanners, seamstresses, and teepee builders.*

*The men saw the shabbiness of their own clothes and teepees and upon realizing the high quality of goods produced by the women they felt sorry for themselves and complained to Old Man Napi. Pitying the men and himself he went to Chief Woman and told her of their plight. Chief Woman felt compassion and told him to bring the men to the women's camp, so each woman could choose a mate.*

*When Old Man and the men arrived at camp, Chief Woman had just finished butchering a buffalo and was bloody and dirty from her work. She went forward first to pick her mate, but when she chose Old Man he was embarrassed and refused her because of her appearance.*

*Rejected, Chief Woman walked angerly back to the other women and told them all to ignore Old Man when picking their mates. The other women went one-by-one to choose, behaving as if Old Man wasn't there. This panicked him into dancing and singing frantically to draw their attention, but still they ignored him and chose other men.*

*Once all the women had chosen a mate, Chief Woman returned, washed and dressed in her finest clothing and jewelry. Old Man was now very attracted to her, but she too ignored him and chose a different man.*

*Now all the men and women were coupled except for poor Old Man, who stood all alone on the plains. Angry still, Chief Woman turned him into a scraggly pine tree.*

Lone Pine Tree
**Photo Credit – Blackfeet Archives**

*Today when you see a pine tree all alone on the plains you will remember Old Man Napi and how his arrogance kept him from marrying.*

Blackfeet people utilize Old Man (Napi)[39] stories to teach values, practices, and history. There are variations of each story from family to family and clan to clan, but the moral and normative lessons remain the same. Referred to by anthropologists and historians as 'myths', our stories are as consistent in basic content as the ethnographies and histories that are often used to represent Native pasts today.

Stories influence how we see ourselves as Indigenous peoples individually and as a community; also important is the way in which they interrupt our inadvertent integration into the colonial narrative. Old Man Napi has the capacity through stories to connect the past to the present and future with analysis, interpretation, and moral lesson. One story might teach a lesson to make a point, the next may explain how the natural world came to be, and another might warn against behavioral vices, such as greed or pride.

Stories may be found under a variety of titles depending on the author. This chapters introductory story, 'The Blackfeet Story of Marriage' is found under several different titles: 'Story of Marriage'[40], 'Napi and Woman Selecting Husbands'[41], and 'Old Man Induces Men and Women to Mate'[42]. The 'Story of Marriage' and 'Napi and Woman Selecting Husbands' are written by Blackfeet citizens as they remember them narrated by elders. The same story as recorded by ethnographer Walter McClintock is titled 'Old Man Induces Men and Women to Mate'. While all three accountings are consistent in storyline, the ethnographies and histories

---

[39] 'Old Man' is sometimes referred to as 'Napi' or 'Grandfather' depending on the narrator and/or context.
[40] Blackfeet Heritage Program. 1979. *Napi Stories.* Browning: Browning Public Schools.
[41] Bullchild, Percy. 1985. *The Sun Came Down - The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers.
[42] McClintock, Walter. 1910. *The Old North Trail - Life Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians.* London: Macmillan and Co.

researched and written by formally trained social scientists may present a greater level of credibility for some readers.

When searching for reference materials on 'Blackfeet stories' the most cited[43] source is 'Blackfeet Lodge Tales' by Euro-American anthropologist, historian, and naturalist George Bird Grinnell. This is problematic. In her book 'Therapeutic Nations'[44] Dian Million suggests that "academia repeatedly produces gatekeepers to our entry into important social discourses because we seek to present our histories as affective, felt, intuited as well as thought." This idea is profound as Blackfeet stories told by Blackfeet peoples are certainly more nuanced and consistent than those communicated to non-Blackfeet "gatekeeper" ethnographers. Most ethnographers have a responsibility to tell the story in an academically palatable manner, while citizens of the Blackfeet Nation are responsible first to the community and continuing the moral and teaching values of the story.

Early recordings of Blackfeet stories published by anthropologists and historians demonstrate how interpretations are corrupted by the ethnographers academic training and lack of Blackfeet foundational knowledge. This is demonstrated in the title of McClintock's 'Old Man Ind*uces Me*n and Women to Mate'. The use of the word "induces" is indicative of the bastardization of a Blackfeet story to fit a westernized version of gendered control by implying that Old Man somehow manipulates Woman to marry, which is inaccurate to the story's lesson. In western society normative conceptions are gendered and assigned according to biological sex; and conferring to its own patriarchal rules and expectations situate people into two stringent hierarchical gendered roles. Gender and gender "roles" are two separate social constructs often

[43] https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt

[44] Dian Million. 2013. *Therapeutic Nations - Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

mistaken for one another. American sociologists West and Zimmerman explain gender as "[the] activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category."[45] While it is difficult to imagine how gender may or may not have been deployed pre-colonialism, exploring 'The Blackfeet Story of Marriage' an imaginative lesson about pride, relationship, and gender parity gives a possible glimpse into pre-colonial Blackfeet beliefs. Today, with 'Old Man' stories more readily available in printed form from Blackfeet historians and writers, the power of the stories engage and educate in the ways and norms of the Niitsitapi using the entertainment and dark humor valued by the community.

Examining the story of marriage introduces some significant differences between historical Blackfeet understandings of gendered roles and relationships, and later interpretations shaped and influenced by settler colonialism. In this story men and women are not gendered to a specific role or imagined fulfilling a preordained duty as "husband" or "wife"; instead, there is commitment to community and a sense of responsibility to society as a whole. The story works on several levels. As a history, it provides a Blackfeet chain of relationships that differs from non-Blackfeet perspectives, as in the writings of white, western-trained anthropologists and historians. As an ethnography, it offers particular details about Blackfeet social and emotional life such as the value of living in community. Most importantly, it is precious for what it reveals about pre-colonization community, relationships, and power. This story offers a pre-colonial image of gender, gender roles, gender relationships and gender power dynamics; while emphasizing underlying Blackfeet values and principles.

The story of marriage has men and women living independently from each other without discernible discord between the two. While there is no deliberate explanation for the initial

[45] Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1 (2): 125-151.

separation it does bring emphasis to the non-gendered responsibilities of both factions. Both survive through hunting, gathering, processing and producing shelter, clothing, and food with men and women participating in all aspects of community. While each community has a clear leader with Napi and Chief Woman, there is no blatant gendered power of man over woman or vice-versa. Power dynamics do not emerge as patriarchal in nature and may lean toward matriarchy. Women lead women, men lead men, and the story doesn't expand beyond the choosing of mates. In choosing partners women have the power of choice, while the men standby hoping to be chosen. This strength of women is re-emphasized again when Chief Woman uses her power to turn Old Man Napi into a tree.

Both men and women support their own survival, but women have the skills of superior processing and manufacturing coveted by the men. Hunting and gathering skills are represented equally between the men and women and with the absence of distinct gendered roles is the confirmation that value of an individual is based not on gender, but on contribution to community. This is supported by the emphasis on partnering due to the men lacking skills, rather than for sexual gratification. While Chief Woman is sexualized by Napi's disdain for her disheveled appearance and ensuing desire for her beauty, his desire for beauty over value to community is ultimately scorned and punished.

The limited observations of those unfamiliar with Blackfeet life and values lend emphasis to the necessity of including multiple sources, literature, and information in order to form a multifaceted understanding of pre-reservation Blackfeet life. Historian and ethnographer Malcolm McFee wrote that pre-reservation Blackfeet divided responsibilities "quite sharply by sex" – men were the hunters and defenders, women the collectors and manual laborers.[46] While

[46] Malcolm McFee. 1972. *Modern Blackfeet - Montanans on a Reservation.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

it may be correct to some extent that responsibilities were divided up between men and women, the 'Blackfeet Story of Marriage' actually demonstrates individual roles and responsibilities more accurately. According to the 'Pikunni Traditional Association'[47] prior to mandated reservation living men and women would travel into the foothills hunting together. When large game, such as buffalo was hunted, the men and women worked together hunting and slaughtering, but the women alone processed the meat and hides. In addition, women owned their home as it was "constructed, furnished, and taken care of" by them.[48] McFee may not have been privy to or understood the historical value of Blackfeet stories and perspectives as this is missing from his account. His failure supports my resolve on the need for multiple sources, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy when attempting to reimagine pre-reservation and contemporary Native American life.

Stories detail relationships through a variety of situations to highlight underlying values and principles. Napi stories are fluid in nature and may or may not work in a chronological manner. In this situation the 'Blackfeet Story of Marriage' specifies the finality of Old Man Napi being left alone to emphasize the consequence of selfishness and pride. David Stirrup, professor of American Literature and Indigenous Studies at the University of Kent, refers to the "change, the vitality of the ever-folding, ever-developing nature of [Indigenous] stories" as "key" and "a process" (Stirrup 2013). The relevance of the story rests not in its anthropologization through forced chronology and order, but in appreciating Blackfeet ways of knowing and relationships. In the Blackfeet 'Story of Marriage' Old Man is relegated to living as a tree, but in

[47] "The Pikunni Traditional Association represents ceremonial leaders from the Blackfeet Reservation. Its purpose is to assist in keeping a positive and peaceful balance in the circle of life emphasizing physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being." – 'People Before the Park' (2015)

[48] Sally Thompson, Kootenai Culture Committee, and Pikunni Traditional Association. 2015. *People Before the Park: The Kootenai and Blackfeet Before Glacier National Park.* Helena: Montana Historical Society Press

this next story he is a man in a marital relationship. He is who he needs to be in each story to teach the lesson or prove the point. This remains accurate and relevant in this circumstance as the previous Old Man Napi story taught a lesson in humility, while the following story emphasizes the "cycle of existence"[49] in the natural world.

**'The Blackfeet Story of Death'**

*One day long ago Old Man Napi and Old Woman were enjoying a leisurely stroll along a deep and softly flowing river. They stopped to rest.*

*Old Man bent to the ground and picked up a stick and a rock. He presented the stick and the rock to Woman and told her,*

*"I will throw these into the river, and you will tell me which you prefer."*

*He flung the stick into the water. They watched it dip under, reappear, and float gently down the river. Then he tossed in the rock, which disappeared beneath the current not to be seen again.*

*"Well?" he asked, "The rock or the stick?"*

*Woman chose the rock.*

*Many seasons later Old Man Napi and Woman had a baby boy. They were quite happy to be a family, but one day the boy got very, very sick. None of the medicine men or women could cure the boy's sickness and he died.*

*Woman was heartbroken. She cried and cried for her boy, begging Old Man to bring him back to her, but he told her that their child was gone forever.*

*"You chose the rock that sank, over the stick that floated," Old Man said. "It is because of your choice*

Image of Death
**Photo Credit – Roland Reed**
**National Geographic Image Collection**

[49] Blackfeet Heritage Program. 1979. *Napi Stories.* Browning: Browning Public Schools.

*that when people get very sick or very old, they will die, never to be seen again. The families will grieve and lament the loss of their relatives."*

*Old Woman's decision is why, today, all generations of our peoples die.*

This story demonstrates how some Blackfeet people explain the natural and supernatural that celebrate our beliefs. The 'Story of Death' is one of a group of stories that make up the complex Blackfeet 'Creation' stories, which accentuate the similarities and differences between them and Judeo-Christian beliefs. This is relevant as religious indoctrination was a tool of colonization and continues to support the hegemonic constructs of patriarchy and settler-colonialism today. It is vital to convey the scope of pre-colonialism Blackfeet life as fully as possible to push back noble savage romanticization. It is clear that while it was likely not a utopian society prior to invasion, it is also apparent that the challenges were not the same as what developed and evolved through the onset of colonialism.

In this story Old Man Napi is in the position of power and control. He devises and administers a test and waits until Woman has suffered the worst of losses to lay the blame of death at her feet. Woman's responsibility for death is similar to Eve's (of the Christian origin story) responsibility for 'original' sin. A significant difference between the stories is while Eve is depicted as being fully aware of the repercussions of her decision to eat the forbidden fruit and then encourage Adam to partake, Woman is unaware why Old Man is asking her to make a choice between the stick and the stone. Eve is marketed as deviant and willfully oppositional; while Adam is perceived as gullible, innocent, naïve. Eve as evil – Adam as pure and compliant.

Woman on the other hand is not depicted as deviant or evil like Eve, but she is responsible for death, including the death of her own child. Old Man Napi lives up to his reputation as a trickster, but his cunning in deceiving Woman and his cruelty in placing the

burden of death on her, is a deviancy in itself. He created the situation, but Woman is forever responsible for life and death.

The 'Blackfeet Story of Death' and the Christian creation story both tell gendered tales, but there are important differences in how gender is characterized between the two. The Eve/Adam story presents as "male mythology striving to deal with the complexity of social life and in particular with women" while underscoring the "evil inherent in all women"[50] – concepts base to deprecatory patriarchal Christian theologies. The 'Story of Death' is gendered similarly but without implying the evil intention. Woman is responsible for death, yet she is responsible without placing blame based on a gendered deviancy. Intention is key to understanding the differences between the two stories and the differences between settler Christian and pre-colonial Blackfeet ideologies. The way in which the intention of the Christian story intersects with privilege, marginalization, and oppression creates impact. The intention is that woman is responsible for original sin and death. The impact is the oppression and marginalization of women and the privilege of men.

In the next story Creator forms the universe and places Old Man Napi on Earth. Old Man creates the Blackfeet peoples and fashions our territory according to our needs. While similar to the Christian creation story 'In the Beginning' does not place limit on the peoples but emphasizes our connection and responsibility to the world.

[50] Pamela Milne. 1989. "Genesis from Eve's Point of View." *The Washington Post.* March 26.

***'In the Beginning'***

*"In the beginning Creator (A'pistotooki) made the Sun (Ki'sómma). Creator was lonely in this great dark hollow of space. He thought he would make some small balls of dirt to play with, and so he made the planets circle around him and the Sun. He soon chose Earth (Ksaahkomm) to be his favorite. He surrounded her with air, and Sun kept her warm so all future things would grow.*

*Creator made himself small so that he could play on Earth. He made a snake as his first playmate. Soon there were so many snakes they became very disrespectful. Creator then made Earth so hot that all snakes died except one female. This one female was left so that in later years there would still be snakes.*

*Creator noticed that Earth was bare of nice things, so he created the green grasses and flowers. And again, he thought he should create something in his image to play games with while he was on Earth. He created Moon (Ko'komíki'somma) and blew air in its nostrils and gave her life. Moon provided Creator with many children. Moon was Creator's first wife and Earth his second wife.*

*Creator also made First Old Man (Náápi) to be his human helper. Old Man was given special powers to help him accomplish his deeds while roaming Earth.*

Ninaistako (Chief Mountain)
**Photo credit – Rod Jones (IPTC)**

*In those early days, Humans and Star people lived on Earth together. Soon Humans became jealous of the Star people. When Humans killed a Star child, Star people moved into the sky. The Star people convinced Creator to flood Earth to kill off Humans. Creator made the rains for many, many days and nights. Star people watched from above as waters filled Earth. Finally, Old Man and a few animals were stranded on Chief Mountain (Ninaistako). Here Old Man made the rainbow, Napi's Rope (Náápiwa otokáa'tsis) and roped the clouds to make it stop raining.*

> *Old Man asked the animals to dive down into the water and retrieve some mud. The first animal to try was the duck. He failed. Many other animals tried but failed. Last to try was the muskrat. He was gone for a long time but finally surfaced with a fistful of mud. That is why muskrats have paws like Humans today. Old Man used the mud to make the water recede.*
>
> *Then Old Man traveled about the plains piling up rocks to make the Backbone of the World, including Badger-Two Medicine, and gouged out beds of rivers and lakes and filled them with water. He recovered the plains with grass. He made new animals and the birds. And then, from a lump of clay, he made himself a wife. Together Old Man and Old Woman designed the Blackfeet People (Niitsitapi) and determined how and where they should live."*[51]

In 1988 Vine Deloria, Jr. reprinted 'Custer Died for Your Sins – An Indian Manifesto'[52] with a new self-authored preface. He wrote of "marvelous things" coming from the next generation of "Indian Tribes, assuming [that] the present generation can successfully defend…against the continuing attacks of racists and corporate exploiters."[53] In this way Deloria lays the groundwork for his enduring argument (from the first printing of 'Custer' in 1969) that to be Indigenous in the modern era is to be resilient against colonizing structures. He expands on this in 1995 with 'Red Earth, White Lies' by provoking the colonizing structure of Christianity with:

> "Flood stories are almost always linked with the concerns of fundamentalist Christians, who believe that Indian accounts of a great flood will provide additional proof of the accuracy of the Old Testament. With their cultural blinders in place, it never occurs to them that the Old Testament may very well provide evidence of the basic accuracy of the Indian story."[54]

---

[51] Ibid.
[52] Vine Deloria, Jr. 1988. *Custer Died for Your Sins – An Indian Manifesto*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
[53] Ibid, *xiii*.
[54] Vine Deloria, Jr. 1995. *Red Earth, White Lies - Native Americans and the Myths of Scientific Fact.* New York: Scribner.

I argue that what Deloria does here in pushing back against the colonizing structure of Christianity is demonstrative of the move beyond "resilience" or "survivance" to thrivance. This is illustrated through the story of 'In the Beginning' (as recounted by Blackfeet elders)[55] in that despite the colonial pressure of Christianity the Blackfeet people continue to embrace our own creation story.

'In the Beginning' gives a platform of understanding to move beyond creation stories to examine the contemporary Blackfeet Nation from a 'Delorian' framework as the sovereign inhabitants of their lands and territories. Through examining Blackfeet connections to, and advocacy of the land and surrounding territories, the on-going thrivance of the Blackfeet people and who we aspire to be as a sovereign nation is demonstrated. Blackfeet stories, particularly our creation stories remind us of our connection to the land, and connection to our land is relational. Our first relative is the earth from which all other relationships stem. Our on-going thrivance is demonstrated here through some Blackfeet men's actions against the history and continued threat by colonialism.

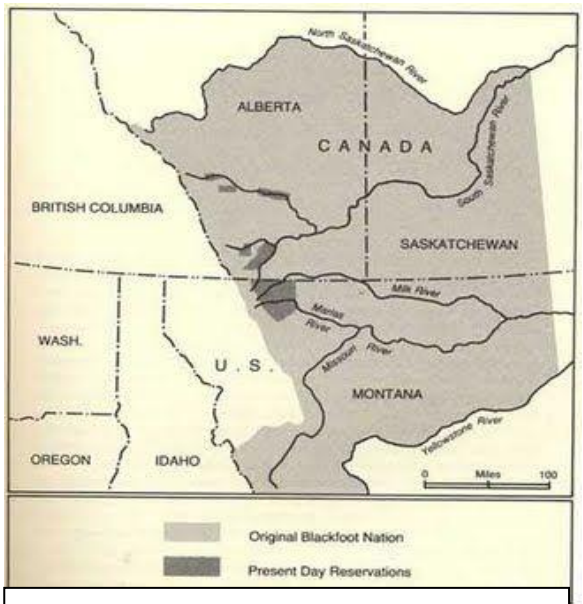


Photo credit – nativeamericanroots.com

The Blackfeet Nation is the tenth largest Indian nation in the United States, with over seventeen-thousand enrolled tribal members and ten-thousand registered descendants.[56] According

[55] Sally Thompson, Kootenai Culture Committee, and Pikunni Traditional Association. 2015. *People Before the Park: The Kootenai and Blackfeet Before Glacier National Park.* Helena: Montana Historical Society Press.

[56] On August 30, 1962, the Blackfeet tribal council amended the constitution from lineage to include a blood quantum-based enrollment policy. Anyone born after that date must prove one-quarter Blackfeet lineage to enroll as a member. Those who prove lineage but are under the one-quarter blood quantum are registered as "descendants". This abrupt change has culminated in immediate families having split status. For example, my

to the 2010' Census over one-hundred-thousand Americans self-proclaimed affiliation to the Blackfeet Nation.[57] Prior to colonization of the northern plains in the mid-19th century, the Blackfeet lived semi-nomadically in a broad area west by the Rocky Mountains, north by the Saskatchewan River, south by the Missouri River, and east by the Milk River, in what is now the state of Montana and southern Canada.[58] Governmental recognition of Blackfeet lands, under the 'Fort Benton Council of 1853'[59] and the 'Lame Bull Treaty of 1855'[60] established territorial boundaries covering 4/5th of the northern half of the Montana Territory.

Following the goldrush of 1862' which brought an influx of fifteen-thousand miners and settlers, Blackfeet leaders agreed to sell two-thousand square miles of their land south of the Missouri River to the government for one-million dollars. That treaty was never ratified, but

---

sister, whom is two years older than me, is a fully enrolled member, while I, born in October of 1962, am a registered descendant. She has the right to participate fully in political matters, including voting for amendments and council members but I cannot.

[57] Tina Norris, Paula Vines, & Elizabeth M. Hoeffel. 'The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010' (*2010 Census Briefs*, January 2012).

According to the 2010 Census 5.2 million people in the United States [self]identified as American Indian and Alaska Native, either alone or in combination with one or more other races. Out of this total 2.9 million people identified as American Indian and Alaska Native alone. Almost half of the American Indian and Alaska Native population, or 2.3 million people, reported being American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races. The American Indian and Alaska Native population experienced rapid growth, increasing by 39 percent since 2000. This information is collected via self-report only, without restriction as to who can or cannot identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

[58] John C. Ewers. *The Blackfeet – Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958).

[59] "It was at Fort Benton that Isaac I. Stevens held a council between three Native American tribes, the Blackfeet, Piegans and the Bloods. Stevens had also recently spent time among the Gros Ventres and attempted to speak on their behalf during the meeting. At this meeting Stevens speaks on behalf of the US government and its desire that there should be peace between all of the Native American tribes, and that most importantly they should all protect the white people passing through their territories. When conveying the messages to the different Chiefs, Stevens refers to the President as "Your Great Father" and identifies the Native Americans as "children" of the "Great Father". By comparing the relationship of the US government and the Native Americans as father and child Stevens is reveling that the US government already views the land between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean to be the property of the US government and therefore all peoples living in that area are subject to the authority of the United States. This is an important event in the northern survey because it illuminates the intentions and expectations of the US government in regards to westward expansion and the role of the railroad in eventually bringing more American citizens westward." – 'The Pacific Railroad Surveys; 1853-1854'

[60] The Blackfeet refer to the Treaty of 1855 as the "Lame Bull Treaty" as Chief Lame Bull was the first signatory. This treaty took place at the mouth of the Judith River with the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and the Salish and Pend d'Oreille. Some treaty language also refers to the Flathead tribe.

under President Grant's 'Executive Order of 1873' the land was taken, and a group reservation was established for the Blackfeet, Blood, Gros Ventres, Piegan, and River Crow. The new 'Great Northern Reservation' (defined by an act of congress in 1874') was composed entirely of the territory designated for the Blackfeet under the 'Treaty of 1855' minus 200 miles of the southern border, which the government had taken previously without compensation.

Legally, the Blackfeet had ceded no land, yet thousands of settlers had established government subsidized homesteads, ranches, and farms on Blackfeet territory. In mid-winter of 1887' land cession hearings were held in Washington that led to an act of congress demanding the split of the 'Great Northern Reservation' into three individual reservations, one being the reservation of the Blackfeet Nation. All three reservations were located on Blackfeet land from the 'Treaty of 1855'. The Blackfeet were compensated with $1.25 million for cession of seventeen-million acres.

Everything comes back to the land. "Land is life," argues Patrick Wolfe, "or, at least, land is necessary for life."[61] I support this theory by differentiating settler and Indigenous approaches to land. Settler government promises, including treaty responsibilities (such as education), have been used in an attempt to eliminate the Native body, promote white/settler superiority, and position land possession as uncharacteristic and unreachable for Native peoples. Superintendent of the infamous 'Carlisle Indian Industrial School' Richard Henry Pratt gave a textbook example in the late nineteenth-century of settler colonial positioning with the following statement:

> "A wild Indian requires a thousand acres to roam over, while an intelligent man will find a comfortable support for his family on a very small tract…Barbarism is

[61] Patrick Wolfe. Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native, (Journal of Genocide Research, 2006),387.

> costly, wasteful and extravagant. Intelligence promotes thrift and increases prosperity.'"[62]

This expression of essentialist philosophy, in which an emissary of the United States pontificates his agenda of land use as universal and non-binary is characteristic of settler-colonialisms continued attempt to "eliminate the Native"[63] through the erasure of Native agency. In his book 'God is Red'[64] Vine Deloria differentiates between Western and Indigenous understandings of land. He writes,

> "When the domestic ideology is divided according to American Indian and Western European immigrant, however, the fundamental difference is one of great philosophical importance. American Indians hold their lands – places – as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.'"[65]

UCLA Chair of American Indian Studies[66] Mishuana Goeman of the Tonawanda Band of Seneca continues Deloria's argument by relating land to such terms as sovereignty, belonging, rights, and responsibility, indicating that Indigenous epistemologies are intimately linked to land bases.[67] I suggest that in addition to both Deloria and Goeman's elucidation as to the importance of a land base, the Blackfeet Nation's historical and ongoing battle to protect and access our homelands is indicative of the spirit of thrivance.

---

[62] David Wallace Adams. 1995. *Education for Extinction - American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
[63] Patrick Wolfe. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 387-409.
[64] Vine Deloria, Jr., God is Red, (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1973).
[65] Ibid.
[66] University of California Los Angeles
[67] Mishuana R. Goeman, "From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous Nation-Building," (*International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 2008), 23-34.

**Backbone of the World**

The Blackfeet people's relationship with the land centers within the mountains on the east side of Glacier National Park, which we refer to as 'the Backbone of the World'[68]. Pieces of the 'Backbone' were sold not for profit in the entrepreneurial sense, but out of a frantic attempt to avoid starvation upon being remanded onto reservation lands. Following the 'Lame Bull Treaty of 1855' the combination of disease (smallpox), military skirmishes, decimated buffalo herds, and crooked Indian agents, one-quarter of the Blackfeet people died. The 'starvation winter' (1883-84') took an additional six-hundred Blackfeet men, women, and children, leaving a small desperate band of approximately one-thousand-eight-hundred people. To buy life-sustaining supplies the people sold pieces of their remaining land to the government, culminating in the 1895' sale of the eastern half of what is now known as 'Glacier National Park'.

While the Blackfeet were desperate to survive, they were careful to ensure that their rights to what they considered sacred and sovereign were reserved "with the agreement that tribal lands would not be subjected to allotments."[69] This agreement provided the Blackfeet with:

> "…the right to go upon any portion of the lands hereby conveyed so long as the same shall remain public lands of the U.S., and to cut and remove therefrom wood and timber for agency and school purposes, and for their personal uses… And provided further, that upon said lands and to fish in the streams thereof so long as the same shall remain public lands of the U.S. under and in accordance with the provisions of the game and fish laws of the State of Montana."[70]

---

[68] David R. Craig, Laurie Yung, & William T. Borrie, "Blackfeet Belong to the Mountains", (*Conservation and Society*, 2012).

[69] trailtribes.org. n.d. *trailtribes.org - traditional and contemporary native culture.* Accessed July 2017. https//trailtribes.org/greatfalls/shrinking-reservation.htm.

[70] C. Kappler, '*Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*', (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1904) 606.

This language was important to the Blackfeet as the 'Backbone of the World' was considered a "fundamental symbol of Blackfeet identity."[71] The 'Backbone' is the home of Old Man Napi[72] whom formed the mountains of Montana and the Niitsitapi themselves. It is here that he taught the people how to hunt and gather plants and collect the 'Beaver Medicine Bundle' from Ninaistakis (Chief Mountain).[73]

**National Park, Treaty Rights, and Allotment**

"Blackfeet Braves near Going-to-the-Sun Mountain, five men in traditional garb, one of the men is Two Guns White Calf, pre-1925. Probably a Fred Kiser photograph."
**Photo courtesy of Glacier National Park Archives**

The loss of buffalo in the late nineteenth-century only served to increase Blackfeet reliance on the mountains with its wealth of elk and deer. In 1910' the land specified as public land per the 1895' agreement was designated by the federal government as a National Park, thus removing public status. For several years park officials ignored the Blackfeet peoples continued use of park resources, even including pictures of them in park advertisement. Eventually the park management, in an effort to retain [the parks] its original wilderness condition began programs of predator reduction to increase nonpredatory

[71] David R. Craig, Laurie Yung, & William T. Borrie, "Blackfeet Belong to the Mountains", (*Conservation and Society*, 2012) 235.
[72] Grandfather, with Old Woman, of the Blackfeet peoples.
[73] "The largest, oldest, most complex bundle of its type in North America, containing over 600 songs and dances representing each animal person being in our [Blackfeet] territory. This was also a drumless bundle, In ceremony, rattles were tapped on the rawhide side of animal skins. The beaver (k)sis-t'uki, was one of the three original animals in Creation, and is considered the most sacred because of his role in the orchestration and allocation of water." - Jack McNeel (April 6, 2017 – Indian Country Today)

wildlife. Predator reduction manifested as policing of poachers, including peoples of the Blackfeet Nation in direct violation of the 1895' agreement.

In 1912' Blackfeet lands were opened for allotment despite the promises of 1895' and without the tribes' consent, resulting in nearly one-half of the remaining reservation (eight-hundred-thousand acres) opening to settlers. At the same time hunting and fishing disputes escalated between park officials and the Blackfeet peoples; coming to a head when the Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane issued an edict to the Indian agent that the Blackfeet lost their rights to land use upon its designation as a national park. The Blackfeet people refused to recognize the edict and continued to gather plants and herbs for food and medicinal purposes, hunted game (beaver, deer, elk, and moose), continuing to use the resources of their traditional land for food and ceremonial purposes as they understood to be their treaty rights.

In 1924' the Blackfeet Nation petitioned Senator Walsh of Montana to introduce legislation guaranteeing Blackfeet rights to continued park use as specified in the 1895' Agreement. Petition author Peter Oscar Little Chief, used the government's own word games stating:

> "[according to the Blackfeet, the tribe had] sold the United States Government nothing but rocks only. We still control timber, grass, water, and all big game or small game or all the animals living in this mountains. The [agreement of 1895'] reads that as long as the mountains stand we got right to hunt and fishing. And provided further that the said Indians hereby reserve and retain the right to hunt upon the said lands.."[74]

The petition was ignored by the senator, but Little Chief presented it again in 1926'. Receiving no response, Little Chief repeated for the third time in 1928'. Upon this third submission the petition was forwarded to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The

[74] Mark David Spence, 'Crown of the Continent, Backbone of the World: The American Wilderness Ideal and Blackfeet Exclusion from Glacier National Park', (*Environmental History*, 1996).

commissioner responded with "[the] Blackfeet have the same rights to hunt in Glacier National Park as non-Indians – which is to say, no right at all."[75] This statement is noteworthy as it fails to consider the inherent treaty rights and privileges denied the Blackfeet people by equating them with "non-Indians". In 1932' a US District Court agreed with the park service and 'Commissioner of Indian Affairs' stating "the Blackfeet had failed to establish the extent to which they used the reserved privileges from 1895' to 1910' [thus forfeiting all rights to use]."[76] I argue that the Blackfeet peoples not only established the extent of which they continued to maintain use of the territory, but that there was no point in which they did not maintain use. It always goes back to the land, and the Blackfeet stories of creation centering around the 'Backbone of the World' demonstrate for time immortal that the Niitsitapi and Ninaistako are one.

In 1932' four Blackfeet men were arrested for hunting inside the park boundaries. The men, unable to find attorneys to represent them, pled guilty and were fined one-hundred-fifty dollars. Park Superintendent Scoyen stated [that] "these arrests and convictions can only be interpreted as meaning that we have authority to keep Indians from hunting in the park."[77] The Blackfeet appealed to the District Court of Appeals, which reached a decision in 1935' siding with the Park Service. Tensions between the Park Service and the Blackfeet Nation continued into 1973' when following 40 years of uneasy truce (in which the Blackfeet were without legal recourse) tribal member Woodrow 'Woody' Kipp is cited by a ranger for entering the park and refusing to pay the entrance fee. Kipp's case went before the federal district court,

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] C.S. Ashby, '*The Blackfeet Agreement of 1895 and Glacier National Park: A Case History*', MS thesis, (Missoula: The University of Montana, 1985) 50.

[77] E. T. Scoyen, *Report of the Superintendent of the Glacier National Park to the Secretary of the Interior - 1933*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933), 6.

with the judge affirming that Blackfeet tribal members did not have to pay an entrance fee. However, the judge also reaffirmed the earlier decision that Blackfeet still had no legal right to hunt within the boundaries of Glacier National Park.

Later that same year Darrell Momberg, another tribal member and descendent of one of the four men arrested for hunting in the park in 1932, was cited for cutting timber in the park. The same judge that sided with Kipp earlier in the year found Momberg guilty based on testimony that the timber was being cut for commercial, not personal use.[78] It seemed the Blackfeet people were destined to take one step forward and two steps backward in the battle for recognition as rightful recipients of the glacier bounty. But still we persisted.

In 1992' Blackfeet tribal member Ed DesRosier opened 'Sun Tours'[79] (a 'Blackfeet Tribal Chartered Business') proclaiming 'Sun Tours' as "[a] vision of success and sharing knowledge…[and to] educate and inspire all to a higher respect, appreciation, and understanding of the Blackfeet world."[80] DesRosier's tours emphasized Glacier National Park's historical reputation as a region of sustenance and ongoing spiritual importance for the Blackfeet Nation. By emphasizing the Blackfeet peoples historical and contemporary connection to park land DesRosier cunningly used 'Sun Tours' to push back against previous court rulings.

The early conflict between the Blackfeet and park officials were representative of each entity. Park officials, under the umbrella of the 'Department of Interior' (DOI) pushed the

---

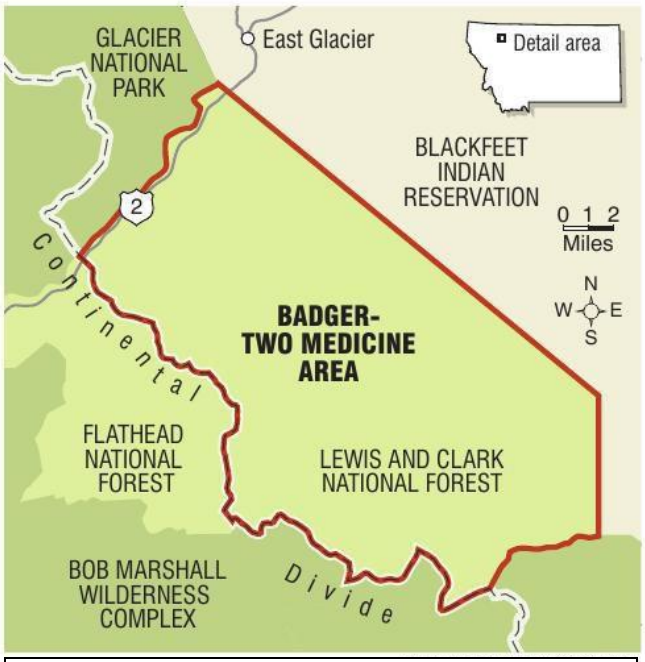
[78] Renee Rodriguez. '*Conflict between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the glacier region of Montana, 1895-1934'*, (The University of Texas – Pan American, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. 2009).
[79] "Ed [DeRosier] approached the Glacier National Park to explore the inclusion of the Native History and Cultural aspects of the Blackfeet Ancestral Home Land. At that time, the Park's existing interpretation of Blackfeet Tribal Cultural History was vacant/minimal. As a life-time resident of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Ed envisioned Blackfeet Guides possessing extensive knowledge and all-encompassing history and experience of the landscape of Glacier National Park's inhabited areas: park history, animal species, common plants and roots used for nutrition and medicine; and the spiritual and philosophical perspectives/stories of the Blackfeet people." – http://glaciersuntours.com
[80] Ibid.

assimilation or elimination of their 'Indian problem', which aligned perfectly with the governments 'Indian' schools purpose of self-sufficiency through civilization.[81] The Blackfeet Nation demonstrated sovereignty by remaining consistent in their quest to utilize traditional activities in continuing to hunt and gather the bounty of the park, as the original and sovereign inhabitants of the land.

Federal use and ownership of ceded (and un-ceded) Indian lands like 'Glacier National Park' continue the political history of the United States' dispossession and animosity toward its Indigenous peoples. The Blackfeet peoples struggle with the parks service is political, as the very act of continuing the struggle represents the sustained thrivance of a nation unwilling to disengage in practices that confirm their cultural and sovereign identity.

[81] "Indians must be taught the knowledge, values, mores and habits of Christian civilization…Since the days of the common school movement, the schoolhouse had come to achieve almost mythological status. Reformers viewed it as a seedbed of republican virtues and democratic freedoms, a promulgator of individual opportunity and national prosperity, and an instrument for social progress and harmony. Moreover, because of the common schools alleged ability to assimilate, it was looked upon as an ideal instrument for absorbing those peoples and ideologies that stood in the path of the republic's millennial destiny." – (Adams 1995)

In the early 1990's, 'Badger-Two Medicine' in the 'Lewis and Clark National Forest' (a section of the land ceded by the Blackfeet in 1895') was under consideration for development by several oil companies. The 130,000-acre Badger-Two Medicine is significant for its on-going spiritual, hunting and gathering use by the Blackfeet Nation. The Badger is also headwaters of two drainages that supply water to the reservation and beyond the northern plains. The forest service quietly sold several dozen leases to oil companies in 1982, but it wasn't until Chevron© began trucking in drilling equipment in 1993' that anyone on the reservation became aware of the impending threat to Blackfeet sacred ground. Tribal member Floyd Heavy Runner, distrustful of the federal court system, contacted the media, the United Nations, and the oil companies declaring, "What you're doing is putting us on the road to extinction. We are here to notify you that we have no alternatives. We are not going to stand back."[82] Heavy Runner campaigned against the proposed drilling to anyone willing to listen, explaining the sacred nature of the tribes' relationship to Badger-Two Medicine. He was soon joined by other Blackfeet, including Woody Kipp, now a Blackfeet Community College professor.




Badger-Two Medicine
**Photo Credit – Ken Barnedt @ the Missoulian**

> "[T]hose places are sacred places, and there's usually a story that goes with it. So, our stories, legends, and mythology go with the landscape. And trying to convey that to mainstream people is just…just almost impossible, because the concepts are not there. Our language says something different about the landscape than English.

[82] Andrea Peacock. 2011. Alternet. May 5. Accessed 2017. http://www.alternet.org/story/150852.

> English is a great language for commerce, for recreation, for sex, whatever. But it is not a sacred language, as our language is."[83]

The Blackfeet community led by Heavy Runner and Kipp joined forces with white environmentalists to stop the drilling. The 'Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance'[84] was formed and the fight began in earnest; lawsuits were filed, and neighboring communities were drafted to join. Their tactics worked. In 1993' the Secretary of Interior called a temporary halt pending completion of a cultural survey. In 1997' the Forest Service issued a 10-year moratorium banning any new leases in the Lewis and Clark forest. During the moratorium, the forest service worked with the Glacier Two-Medicine Alliance, resulting in two-thirds of the region, including Badger Two-Medicine being federally classified as a 'Traditional Cultural District', throwing all leases into perpetual limbo. As of 2016 all drilling leases have expired and no new leases may be issued. For now, our land is safe from oil drilling.

**Chapter Summary**

The Blackfeet Nation reservation today is much like other poor communities throughout North America. Sociologist Barbara Chasin compares reservations and inner-city ghettos as sharing a number of characteristics including "low employment, high poverty, and inadequate social services"[85] supporting Vine Deloria's statement [that] "the truth is that practically the only thing the white men ever gave the Indian was disease and poverty."[86] This is fueled by the settler colonial fallacy that the only "Indian" land remaining in the United States are

---

[83] Ibid.

[84] "The Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance (GTMA) is a local grassroots organization, based in East Glacier Park, MT, and surrounded by the glorious Badger-Two Medicine area, Glacier National Park, and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. We organized as a community of Blackfeet and non-Natives to protect the cultural and ecological integrity of the Badger-Two Medicine in 1984. We will continue to fight for this landscape, until we realize the implementation of a permanent protection plan." – https://www.glaciertwomedicine.org

[85] Barbara H. Chasin. 2004. *Inequality & Violence in the United States - Casualties of Capitalism.* Amherst: Humanity Books.

[86] Vine Deloria, Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins – An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

reservations. Reservation land was not *given* to the Blackfeet (or other tribal nations), nor was much of the land taken by settlers or set aside for the government *given* by the Indians. Mishuana Goeman supports and expands on this by pointing out that "all land in the Americas is Indian land."[87] The Blackfeet people displayed an early and innate understanding of these principles by fighting for the past 120 years to retain their land relationship to Glacier National Park and Badger Two-Medicine as both bodily and spiritual sustenance for their entire community.

All things considered it would be easy to believe the Blackfeet Nation is an incongruous community, yet every time it is necessary to stand together in resilience to fight for our sovereign rights to the land we have inhabited for time immortal, we do it. The ability to come together as an empowered community to demand our rights as the sovereign inhabitants of our lands and territories carries the Blackfeet Nation forward. To thrive in the world and ensure the survival of our grandchildren, the Blackfeet Nation must continue to protect the lands and the stories that identify us as Niitsitapi, thus exercising sovereignty and demonstrating thrivance through the preservation of our Blackfeet identity.

Our creation stories document our history, practices, legends, and rituals with a rich panoramic view. Passed on from generation to generation they not only relate our history, but also serve the purpose of teaching, guiding, and establishing our place as Niitsitapi today. White Earth Anishinaabe scholar Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark writes that "stories shape how we see and interact with the world" and "*Indigenous* stories outline relationships – the relationships we

[87] Mishuana Goeman. "Land as Life." In *Native Studies Key Words*, edited by Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith and Michelle Raheja, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2015), 71-89.

have to one another, and the relationship we have to self."[88] I share these stories to make observations about Blackfeet people's pre-colonization and contemporary, but I want to do this without muddying the point of the stories. Our stories lay the groundwork of demonstratable thrivance by showing Blackfeet ways of knowing that continue to flourish in the contemporary world and upset the idea that colonialism is our history.

Old Man Napi stories demonstrate through narrative why or how Blackfeet are expected to live and behave. Each development in each story is sequential with misbehavior or decision followed by repercussion and a word or example on the right way to live. The instruction can come from man or woman, as either a positive or negative example, as in the case of Old Man in the 'Blackfeet Story of Marriage'. The significance of the stories is in development of a compassionate and generous nature leading to a fundamental understanding of human to human relationship. Community remains more important to relationship than gender, and that community thrives through and on connection to home lands.

In this chapter I present Old Man and land sovereignty as a means to Anthropological theoretical storytelling[89] and thrivance. Stories come in all shapes and sizes, creating an inkling of patterns that fashion understanding of historical and contemporary society. In the next chapter I share the story (life history) of Uncle, an elder who successfully navigates through conflicting settler values and expectations, while recognizing and embracing his Blackfeet identity.

---

[88] Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark. 2013. "Federal Law Encounters Anishinaabe Diplomacy." In *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, edited by Jill Doerfler, James Niigaanwewidam Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, 259-278. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

[89] Carole McGranahan, 2015. "Anthropology as Theoretical Storytelling." *Savage Minds.* October 19. https://savageminds.org.

## With Uncle

Uncle was born in the tail end of the 1930's on the reservation lands of the Blackfeet Nation in north eastern Montana, to a Blackfeet woman and English Canadian man. He was the firstborn and only son of a family that would quickly welcome four more children, with his first sister coming less than one year after him. All were born on the reservation and all are enrolled citizens of the Blackfeet Nation.

Uncle's father (Dad)[90] was a working cowboy and jack-of-all-trades who was well-respected by the majority of reservation citizens. His white skin was noticeable among the darker skinned majority, but his good humor and willingness to help anyone that needed a hand went a long way toward acceptance. Uncle never saw 'Dad' involved in a fight, but he did hear from friends and cousins of several occasions in which he was challenged and thus garnered a reputation as a "scrapper" that could hold his own if necessary. Dad's family lived in Canada, except for the two older brothers who brought him to the states years earlier to find work. Family rumor was that Dad's elder sister "disowned" him because he married "an Indian". Uncle never met her, but he and his sisters used to joke about going up to Canada to meet her so she could meet her Indian "family".

Dad expected all of his children to behave respectfully, with particular emphasis on showing deference toward their mother at all times. It was not uncommon during that era for young people to refer to their mother as the "old lady" but Uncle and his siblings knew better as that was unacceptable to Dad. While Uncle recollects that his father treated all five of his children equally there were particular rules that Dad stressed to his only son. No swearing in

[90] For the sake of clarity Uncle's father will be hereafter referred to as 'Dad' as that is how Uncle refers to him throughout the narrative of his life history.

front of women (especially not within his mother's hearing), always work to the best of your ability, and always be honest. Uncle recalls his father telling him about getting caught stealing by his own father as a young child. He had taken something from a local trading post and when his father found out he brought him back to return the small item and apologize. Uncle said that story always stayed with him because of how deeply it still seemed to shame his father decades later. When asked about being taught to protect his sisters, Uncle said, "I don't remember anyone talking about that. It was just known. Assumed. You always take care of your family."[91]

Uncle's mother (Mom)[92] was an enrolled citizen of the Blackfeet Nation with additional ancestral ties to the people of the Shoshone and Crow nations. Mom was born on reservation lands and attended a Catholic boarding school through the sixth grade. As an adult, Mom worked outside the home, in fact she met Dad working as a cook for the outfit he worked for, but her primary occupation after marriage was taking care of her home and children. This was a full-time toilsome job, particularly since the family (like most reservation families at the time) didn't have electricity or indoor plumbing until moving off the reservation many years later.

While Dad had no family nearby, Mom was surrounded by sisters, brothers, and cousins on the reservation and nearby communities. Mom's family accepted Dad, although there were occasional snide remarks about her being married to a "white man" and thinking she was "better" than the rest of the family. This typically happened when Mom's siblings had been drinking or were angry with her for some perceived slight. Uncle attributed this behavior to jealousy of Mom and Dad's relationship and the way they took care of each other and the children.

---

[91] Conversation with 'Uncle' - 2018

[92] For the sake of clarity Uncle's mother will be hereafter referred to as 'Mom' as that is how Uncle refers to her throughout the narrative of his life history.

Mom was a good cook and caregiver and it was not uncommon for her to 'foster' nieces, nephews, and other children when their parent was away or unable to adequately care for them. Several stayed extended lengths of time, with one nephew living with Uncle's family more than his own. Although Dad made a point of teaching and disciplining Uncle and Nephew[93] in the ways of manhood, it was Mom who made the day-to-day parenting decisions about education and religion.

Uncle remembers his early childhood as fun and family filled. He had siblings and cousins with whom to play, fight, and roam the vast reservation lands. With so many aunts and uncles around the children understood that in the absence of a parent discipline could come from multiple people and "lickings" could be doled out by any of them.

Horses were a common form of transportation and Dad was known as a horseman and bronc buster. Few people owned tractors, so horses were necessary for ranch and farm labor and Dad was regularly employed to quick break teams for plowing. Uncle recalled that because the horses were so direly needed to work the rough land that there was never time to gentle break them. "He was no horse whisperer that's for sure," he said, "He had to break them quick and hard." He himself began riding at such a young age that Uncle has no memory of life prior to knowing how to ride. The children rode bareback (without a saddle) which he attributed to his father witnessing a man get hung-up in a stirrup and drug so violently that he suffered brain damage.

**"Indian" School Years**

When Uncle was around five years-old he and Nephew, who was a few years older, got sent to the local country school. They would ride several miles to school on 'Old Mike' (the

[93] 'Nephew' will be used as an identifier for Uncle's cousin throughout this chapter for the sake of anonymity.

family horse) until the snow got too deep and the cold too dangerous to attend. The school was a one-room building for grades one through six, with a barn to stable the horses, and two outhouses – one for the girls and one for the boys.

Uncle learned quickly from the older children that it was more important to be tough than smart. Every day at recess there were "knock-down drag-out" fights among both the boys and the girls from which respect and fear was garnered. If a child was too successful in the classroom and not successful enough with his or her fists they would be shamed by the other children and accused of acting white. Given the prevalence and history of boarding schools in the area it is little wonder that schooling was connected to whiteness. Uncle was lighter skinned than most of his peers and quickly developed into a good fighter and lackluster student to avoid or counteract the shame associated with light skin. This persona was an effective means to acceptance, particularly with Nephew at his side who was older, darker, and afraid of no one. Ultimately however, Nephew would get kicked out of school for excessive fighting.

The primary attitude among the reservation children was that education was for whites and being a good fighter and athlete was the Indian way. This characterization of fighting as honorable is presented various times by Uncle when speaking of his educational experience. Fighting to prove oneself is not limited to the reservation, but it does present disproportionately in Indigenous males. In 2017 while leading a discussion around Indigenous masculinity I asked participating[94] men to elaborate on what it meant to be a non-white male in the United States. Four men (three Indigenous/one Hispanic) spoke out about the pressure, particularly as an adolescent, to fight when any threat no matter how small, was perceived or risk being labeled a coward. To walk away from confrontation was not an option as the social pressures from their

[94] For clarity and accountability, I intentionally advised participants of my intention to gather their responses as it applied directly to my area of study. No identifiers are used beyond broad race and gender.

own peer group was too strong. In their minds to walk away from these encounters was paramount to accepting the settler construct of brown men and boys at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy which they subconsciously understood as detrimental to themselves and their communities. All four men agreed that it was acceptable for a "white dude" to back down or run away from a fight because his privilege of self-preservation was supported by society. We discussed this as a key aspect to how white privilege impacts gender roles. Protection from physical confrontation, or the shame of evading physical confrontation due to the "institutional set of benefits granted [them]" from their resemblance to the "people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions."[95] This is not dissimilar from Uncle's paraphrasing of "the Indian way" and demonstrates how settler colonialism impacts the formation of self among Indigenous men.

I asked Uncle if he as a child considered himself white or Indian and he said, "I always knew I was Indian *and* white because all I had to do was look at my mom and dad. I got teased about having lighter skin, but the kids all knew I was Indian." Uncle's statement is dually fascinating. Identity formation is complex[96] yet Uncle seemed to have his identity established in his own mind in primary school by stating that the other children "knew [he] was Indian", self-proclaiming to be Indian *and* white based on his parentage, and consistently referring to himself as Indian. This is interesting as it supports the concept that although whiteness is a racial identity, Indian-ness is a cultural and political identity that does not exclude one from also being white.

---

[95] Francis Kendall. 2002. "Understanding White Privilege." California. www.cpt.org

[96] Andrea Fiss. 2014. "Who Are You? On Being Half Indian and Half White." *LEARNing Landscapes* 7 (2).

After one winter of traveling back and forth through the bitter Montana weather Mom decided that Uncle would attend the boarding school north of Browning.[97] The school, simply known as 'the boarding school' was a cooperative effort between the federal government and the Catholic church. The children were divided by sex into dormitories under the supervision of priests and nuns. Boys and girls attended classes and ate meals together. Classes were a combination of educational and religious, with religion establishing the basis for rule (commandments) from which the children were indoctrinated.

Framing Indian education within religion is indicative of how religious institutions were complicit with governmental attempts to assimilate Blackfeet children into settler colonial society while alienating them from Blackfeet societal expectations. Ojibwe professor of American Indian studies Brenda Child perceptively describes Indian boarding schools as another form of segregation initiated to serve the interests of white America.[98] Reports of physical and sexual abuse were ignored leaving behind a wake of traumatized children and families whom are still dealing with the repercussions of abuse today. Language and cultural practices were quashed and replaced with English and settler expectations. Compounding this ongoing cultural genocide were the religious teachings about gender and sexuality which relied on implementing a colonial gender binary.[99] Two gendered groups were identified, and the children were expected to conform to the contrasting boy/girl behaviors.

All of the children had daily chores, with the girls assigned indoor tasks and the boys assigned outdoor farming tasks. Uncle's work was dirty and cold requiring repeated hand-washing upon returning inside. He reminisced about how dried and chapped his hands got,

---

[97] Browning is the central city within the Blackfeet reservation.
[98] Brenda J. Child. 2016. "Indian Boarding Schools." *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 0 (0): 1-3.
[99] Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson,. 2015. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities.* Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

which was not just painful but visibly noticeable, to the point that one of the white women working in the kitchen used to mockingly call him "alligator hands".

Uncle spent two years at the boarding school and remembers feeling miserable, angry, and homesick. Coming from a large family of sisters his forced separation from females was unfamiliar and lonely. He was an extremely shy boy and initially had difficulty establishing new friendships among the other children, instead choosing to run "under the radar" by keeping to himself. He eventually made friends his age whom he played with during free time. One-time Uncle and a friend were playing outside poking some old straw brooms in to a fire. The brooms naturally caught fire and were destroyed, but not before the boys were caught by a priest. As punishment the boys were sent "running through the gauntlet" which involved all ages of school boys formed into two long parallel lines with willow switches in their hands. As Uncle and his friend ran through, the lined-up boys thrashed them as hard as they could with their switches. Although he was only six-years-old at the time, he refused to cry in front of the priests and other children, choosing instead to appear indifferent rather then give them the satisfaction of his tears.

As with his previous school, a good performance in the classroom was considered pretentious and white while fighting earned respect. Bullying was common-place and the priests didn't intervene even when the little boys were accosted by groups of bigger boys. Uncle spoke with a quiet intensity when he talked about the bullying and molestation that occurred at the boarding school. When asked to expound as to who was involved, his response was "Are you asking if the priests were doing the molesting? Not that I ever knew. It was the older boys, but the priests knew it was happening and they did nothing to protect us or put a stop to it."

When Uncle returned home after completing his first year of boarding school, life returned to normal. He didn't tell his mother or father the horrors of the school year and they

didn't pursue the conversation. I wondered about this, particularly since Mom had also attended a Catholic Indian boarding school and may have known the possibilities of abuse. When asked, Uncle said that his mother didn't really talk about her boarding school days. He knew she had made some friends but was not happy being away from her parents. A sister of Uncle's gives a more elaborate description:

> "What we learned about the mission school was from hearing other people talking about it. We didn't ask Mom about it, because she got emotional, teary, and refused to talk about it if we asked. We knew she hated it and hated being away from her family. The teachers were cruel, and the children suffered, but they learned to be 'good Catholics'."[100]

Beyond that Uncle gave a rather don't ask/don't tell portrayal of family discussion around complex or uncomfortable matters. He didn't insinuate that his parents didn't care or have concerns for their children, but that it was more some things were simply not discussed with children. Even after her own experience Mom chose to raise her children Catholic. Although Dad was not raised Catholic, he did support this decision and eventually, sometime in his 60's, got baptized in the Church. Uncle felt confident that this decision was not out of any drive to be Catholic but to placate his wife.

In the fall Uncle returned to the boarding school with his closest sibling. The two children lived in separate dormitories, but Uncle took his responsibility as the elder sibling seriously and made "every effort" to "protect" her. When questioned about how this was accomplished Uncle explained that he made sure other kids knew that he was there, and she was not alone. After completing his second year Uncle returned home with his sister for the summer. At that time, rumors were circling within the community about abuse happening at the school

---

[100] Dianne Baumann. 2015. "The Role of the Catholic Church in the Deculturization of the Blackfeet Nation." *Honors Thesis.* Lacey: Saint Martin's University.

and Mom made the decision not to send her children back in the fall. Although they never discussed what occurred at the boarding school, Uncle recalled Mom apologizing repeatedly to the children for ever sending them there. This was a heart-wrenching and jarring disclosure as within Uncle's own family there are now two known generations carrying secrets of boarding school abuse.

The next fall and for the rest of his time on the reservation Uncle attended the local public school in Browning with his siblings. He should have started there in the fourth grade, but he had fallen so far behind that he was put back into the third grade with his sister. He remembered that as being very difficult and an instrument of shaming by the other children. Uncle was a bright child, but for the remainder of his reservation educational experience he did only what he needed to do to pass each year.

One winter when Uncle was in junior high the conditions were unusually harsh even for the northern plains and one-half of all the cattle on the reservation froze to death. That spring the BIA initiated a cattle replacement program, but Uncle's family was repeatedly turned away, which he hypothesized was because "the tribe" decided who received cattle and who didn't, and the head of his family was white. This was the only incident narrated by Uncle implying any organized discrimination against the family related to his father's ethnicity.

**Washington**

The next summer Uncle recollected driving a wagon pulled by Dad's team of horses. Several cousins were with him as they raucously sang songs while traveling through the rolling reservation hills. Dad appeared suddenly in his vehicle and turned the team loose without explanation. The cousins were dropped off at home and Uncle and his family left the reservation for Washington state. The move was a surprise to Uncle who was very much against moving

away from his home and extended family. In hindsight Uncle thinks the combination of not receiving the government cattle and possible relocation assistance were the catalysts for the move, but he can't know for sure as that information was not shared with him. At the end of World War II hundreds of Blackfeet had returned from the war and other defense jobs. The federal government took advantage of the employment crash and encouraged families to emigrate (relocate) off of the reservation with the enticement of moving and training funds. In hindsight it is clear that this was part of the governments on-going failed attempts at termination in order to escape reservation and treaty responsibilities.[101] Beyond possible relocation funds Uncle also believes his parents were attempting to keep him from becoming a casualty of "reservation life" as he had recently been involved in some trouble with his friends.

One of Mom's sisters had earlier relocated to Washington, so the family stayed with her at first. Uncle remembered pulling up to a strange house and finding no one at home. They peered through the windows and upon seeing family photos hanging on the walls were reassured they were in the right place. The next day Dad walked across the street to the 'car shop' and got a job. The family moved onto their own little farm a short time later surrounded by huge trees and shiny faces[102].

That fall the children started school in their new community, with Uncle and his sister beginning their first year of high school. The shock of being the only non-white students was frightening and did nothing to alleviate Uncle's shy personality. On the first day a student tripped Uncle from behind while getting off the school bus sending him sprawling in front of everyone. Uncle responded out of embarrassment and instinct by "whipping" the culprit and

---

[101] Clark Wissler, Alice Beck Kehoe, and Stewart E. Miller. 2012. *Amskapi Pikuni - The Blackfeet People.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

[102] Uncle and his siblings remember feeling claustrophobic due to moving from the plains to the "forest" and how all the people looked so shiny with the abundance of white skin.

getting sent to the principals' office. This rough start turned out to work in his favor however, when the principal found out Uncle had just moved from Montana. The principal was new that year and had previously lived in Montana and considered Uncle a kindred spirit. Unbeknownst to Uncle this interaction may have been a significant point in his education that protected him from the school-to-prison pipeline that has entrapped so many Indigenous youth in North America. School-to-prison pipeline theorists argue that the inequalities in exposure to school discipline experienced by Indigenous children and other children of color enhances the possibility of future legal entanglement and goes so far as to suggest that closing the racial gap in school discipline might close the racial gap in adult incarceration.[103] Fortunately, Uncle and his principal established a friendly relationship that lasted throughout his high school years.

School continued to be challenging for Uncle. Mom and Dad encouraged him to work hard and stressed the importance of an education in their new community. Uncle's school performance did improve, but not without adjustment. He found that he had a knack for algebra but was horribly embarrassed when his teacher praised his ability in front of the entire class. His memories of education being for white people was still too fresh in his mind. It was difficult to make friends in such a foreign community, both because Uncle was shy and because he was brown. The irony of being teased on the reservation for his light skin and then teased in Washington for his dark skin wasn't lost on Uncle and he recalled "never feeling more Indian in my life then I did when we moved off of the reservation."

As difficult as the adjustment was for Uncle it was even more challenging for his sister, for whom he recalls "feeling sad". 'Sister' had been well respected on the reservation and was

[103] JC Barnes, Ryan Motz, and Eric Dubow. 2018. "Reducing Racial Inequalities in Adulthood Arrest by Reducing Inequalities in School Discipline: Evidence from the School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Developmental Psychology* 54 (12): 328-340.

known for her superior riding skills and athletic abilities, particularly on the track team. She'd had a core group of friends there and wasn't questioned or shamed about her "tomboy" ways. "In fact," said Uncle, "she was always a better rider and athlete than me, but when we moved that wasn't recognized." In Washington there was no track team for her to join. The only sport available to girls was tennis, which she had never played, and half-court basketball. Sister quickly learned tennis and played basketball, but athletic success was not really appreciated or valued in girls there.

Uncle struggled through the first few months of his freshman year, often telling Dad that he wanted to drop-out. Dad did not try to talk him out of quitting but kept telling him that he needed to continue until he could "find him a job". Uncle credits his father for his cleverness in "putting him off" until he adjusted to his new life and school. "He wasn't really trying to find me a job," he said. "He was just waiting it out until I made friends and found purpose." Soon enough basketball season began, and Uncle found his niche. He was tall and athletic and not afraid to take it to the older boys. He made the junior varsity team, quite an accomplishment for a freshman, and by midseason was moved up to varsity, which was unheard of at that time. As the high schools up and coming basketball star he became a sought-after friend, from both boys and girls. His sisters teased him about none of them having friends before he made the basketball team and now the other girls wanted to be their friends just so they could be close to him. Athletics smoothed Uncle's transition in the new community while highlighting the settler gender difference. Sister, who was a star athlete in girls' tennis and basketball received no accolades, recognition, or glory for her accomplishments as she had on the reservation. In Washington her athletic accomplishments only served to ostracize her further then her identity as Indian may have done alone.

School became tolerable once Uncle had basketball and friends. He was quite popular now, although for some people his Indian-ness remained a problem. As a tall, dark, handsome kid, and star athlete he was popular dating material. He had a few casual girlfriends his freshman year, but nothing serious due to his youthfulness and ongoing struggle with shyness. By his sophomore year he had gained more confidence, was doing well in school, and had a steady girlfriend. The relationship lasted until the girls' father found out he was Native at which time she was forbidden to continue dating him. The girl told Uncle her fathers' decision and they ended the relationship. When asked how that made him feel he replied, "Didn't bother me much. There were a lot of other girls and that was his [the father] problem, not mine."

As the family settled into their new life, they connected with the areas growing Blackfeet community. Additional family members made the move to Washington, long lost relatives were reconnected with, and new friendships developed. Uncle recalled large gatherings of Blackfeet community members coming to the farm for barbeques and other special occasions. Mom blossomed in a way Uncle hadn't noticed before during these gatherings, which was a relief to he and his siblings. He had observed since moving that his mother was often ignored by the white people she encountered, particularly the women. Uncle noticed that when his mother was in a store or other public establishment waiting for assistance she would be strategically overlooked. He recalled seeing her assume a neutral face without expression when this happened and how her being snubbed invoked anger in him. If his father appeared service would be extended without question. Uncle said his mother never complained (that he heard) of this mistreatment by others and that it was assumed that the children would also remain silent. I was not surprised to learn this information as the narrative of settler colonialism was and continues to be one of

elimination, erasure, and racism. Settler society establishes a distinct identity and sovereignty[104] that welcomes the sameness of white skin and particular ways of being by eliminating or ignoring the fact that they are not the original inhabitants of the land. This has been accomplished in part by the subtle shunning or demonstration of invisibility toward Native peoples by some passive-aggressive settler women.

**Adult Years**

Upon graduating from high school Uncle got a job working as a riveter for Boeing. Some friends also worked there, and Uncle recalled "running around drinking and raising hell all night" and then reporting to work in the morning. While Uncle was riveting the outside of the airplane wing, his drinking buddy was supposed to be riveting inside the wing. Instead, after a night of drinking his friend would curl up inside the wing out of sight and sleep. Uncle got a chuckle recalling that story.

Working for Boeing payed the bills, but what he really wanted to do was find a job working on a ship. To do that he had to have seaman's papers and to get seaman's papers he had to have time at sea. "It was a real catch-22," he said. Nevertheless, he applied for his dream job on a cable ship[105]. At the same time, he applied for a position with the 'Coast and Geodetic Survey'[106] (C&GS) thinking that he could get his seaman papers working there while waiting for a position on a cable ship. He was very quickly offered a position.

---

[104] L. Veracini. 2015. *The Settler Colonial Present.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[105] A deep-sea vessel designed and used to lay underwater cables for electric power transmission and other purposed.

[106] A precursor to NOAA, the Coast and Geodetic Survey (C&GS) was responsible for charting the coastlines and interior of the country. In 1965, the C&GS became a component of the Environmental Sciences Services Administration and then in 1970 it expanded and was reorganized into the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In July of 1958 Uncle reported to Ketchikan, Alaska to begin his new career. He arrived on a small seaplane, landed on the water, and walked directly across the dock to his ship with his suitcase in hand. The first in the family to fly and the first to work as a seaman. For a boy who grew up in inland Montana that first trip was an epic adventure with sightings of whales, octopi, and porpoises. Uncle worked for C&GS for almost ten years with a three-year break when he was drafted into military service.

He received his draft notice in 1960 informing him that he had ten days to report for processing. Halfway through the ten days he was contacted by a cable ship about a job. Sadly, when he informed them of his draft situation, they reneged on the job offer. He reported to his recruiting station, weighed out his options, enlisted in the army, and applied for the Army Security Agency. The recruiter told him it would take a while to get the top-secret clearance necessary for the position. The next day Uncle stopped at the office to sign some paper work and was informed that his clearance had come in and he would be flying to boot camp that afternoon. Uncle didn't even have time to say goodbye to his family. He called Mom from bootcamp and told her that he was in California. She was surprised but reacted with her usual calm demeanor.

Uncle served in the army from 'Valentine's Day' 1961 through February 13, 1964. During that time, he worked as a cryptographer[107], spending a year in Turkey monitoring the Russians. He recalled a time during that year that he and another soldier were assigned to escort a "problem" soldier back to the east coast and deliver him to the military police there. The other escorting soldier knew a woman from New York and arranged for he and Uncle to meet the woman and her friend in New York to explore the city together. He was excited to see New

[107] Coding and decoding messages.

York and readily agreed, but their plans fell through when the soldier decided he "should probably spend their leave time with his wife instead." Uncle still laments the fact that he never got to see New York.

In 1963, Uncle got married while home on leave. 'Aunty' was a friend of one of his sisters from school. She was a white girl born and raised in Washington and had known the family for years. One year later they had a baby girl, followed a few years later by a little boy whom they named after Dad. Auntie's family accepted Uncle, but he was closest with his new father-in-law whom had played minor league professional baseball for years. Uncle recollected that their shared athletic abilities created a bridge between the two of them. During that first year of marriage Aunty spent much of her time with her family as Uncle was still in the military.

Upon discharge from the military in 1964 Uncle returned to his wife and child in Washington. He initially went to work at the "car shop" with Dad, but within a month he returned to C&GS. Although he didn't like being away from his family for the extended periods demanded by his position as bosun's mate[108], the promise of an ultimate promotion to chief quartermaster[109] kept him there.

When the promised promotion was eventually denied Uncle quit the C&GS and went to work for the 'Army Corp of Engineers' as a river and harbors surveyor. His area of assignment was from Canada to Oregon, so once again he was gone from his family for extended periods of time which was not ideal, although he enjoyed the work. One of Uncle's supervisors told him about a position opening up on the crew at Chief Joseph Dam near Bridgeport, Washington. The possibility of a job where he could come home every night, make good money, and have room

[108] A bosun's mate train, direct and supervise personnel in ship's maintenance duties.
[109] The quartermaster is in charge of the watch-to-watch navigation and the maintenance, correction and preparation of nautical charts and publications.

for promotion was very appealing. Uncle recalled that over one-hundred people applied to take an all-day test for six positions. He was called in to interview and was offered a job. The thing that stood out in Uncle's mind the most about that time was the unbelievable noise made by the workings of the dam. "It was incredibly loud," he said, "I couldn't hear anyone talking to me, but it wasn't long before I didn't even notice the noise anymore and it was just normal sounding." His new position was intense with biannual tests for four years to continue and complete his apprenticeship. Several apprentices "washed-out" of the program, but he prevailed with his family at his side for the first time.

Upon completing his apprenticeship Uncle applied for and got a position at the Bonneville Dam. He and his family moved to his new job location, where he worked during the day and attended school at night to increase his promotability. He made very good impressions with his supervisors and within the "dam" community. His work ethic was impressive, and he was creative and ingenious. On his own he designed and implemented blueprint impressions on glass, so that the crew could write and design on it with wax pencil. He continued to promote up and eventually arrived at the McNary Dam as a crew foreman. He worked his way through the ranks, retiring many years later as the dam superintendent.

Working within the U.S. dam system was an enjoyable and solvent career for Uncle, but it was not without conflict. The impact from building of dams throughout North America is either dismissed by the government and contractors or presented in a manner that justifies and takes for granted colonial reasoning while ignoring the devastation experienced by Indigenous peoples.[110] Dams control entire sections of river rapids and river rapids are often important

[110] Carrie Mott. 2018. "Settler Colonialism and Hegemonic Whiteness through Irrigation: The Case of Ahtanum Creek." *American Association of Geographers Annual Conference*.

fishing sites for Native Americans. The resulting flooding of traditional homelands at dam sites literally destroys homes and villages, displacing entire communities.

While working at McNary, Uncle was asked to pose for photos in front of the dam for a McNary Dam 'equal employment opportunity' campaign. He was told it would look good to have the only "Indian" employed at the dam appear in the pamphlet as it was built on Indian land. He appeared in the publication without qualm as it didn't occur to him at the time that his identity was being appropriated for profit or in the furthering of the settler colonial agenda. After release of the publication, employees "jokingly" referred to him as Chief, going so far as to paint Chief on the cart assigned to him to move around the dam. When this occurred, Uncle was not consciously bothered by the photos or the nickname, but now when he looks back he feels some anger. "I'm surprised when I think back that that crap didn't bother me then but defending or protecting my Indian-ness wasn't something I thought about really. I just was." This statement seems representative of the time period as Native identity was still shrouded in erasure. The 'American Indian Movement' was up and running but was not very visible to 'mainstream' Americans and at that time Uncle considered himself a very mainstream American Indian.

**Family and Retirement**

Uncle raised his children to embrace their Blackfeet heritage. He told them Old Man Napi stories and he brought them to the reservation to know their family, particularly Nephew, and see where he had spent his childhood. As a family they explored the reservation territory and talked about various areas of historical and cultural significance. Burial grounds were visited, and family histories were discussed. Uncle's daughter developed such an interest in her Blackfeet ancestry that she continues to this day to research and investigate the family lineage in

great detail. That connection to family and reservation life continues to be shared today by Uncle's grandchildren.

Upon retirement and a subsequent divorce Uncle found himself alone for the first time in his life. "Not alone in a bad way," he said, "but alone to do what I wanted to do." With his children grown and no permanent partner Uncle traveled and spent more time on the reservation with Nephew. He discovered a deep desire to focus on his identity as a Blackfeet man. "I spent some time trying to learn our language and found out it was really difficult. I should have learned as a child but when I was growing up everyone had already forgotten it." Uncle elaborated on this by explaining that the government schools had not allowed Mom's generation to speak Blackfoot, so he grew up seldom hearing the language. He added "I can't imagine that our loss of language hasn't impacted our traditional ways negatively. The institutions and government wanted us to be white men and wiping out our language was just another way to do that." Uncle's theory of cultural interruption is supported by Blackfeet professor and linguist Darryl Kipp who spent five years developing ways to teach the language. "If our language dies, if our culture dies," he said, "we die as a people to the world…. We cannot let that happen."[111] The Blackfeet, like many other American Indian nations are heavily invested in immersion programs to bring Blackfoot language and practices back from the edge of extinction. The federally funded 'Headstart' program in Browning teaches 3-to-5-year-old children in Blackfoot. Uncle supports immersion curricula whole-heartedly as the most effective way to learn.

After giving up on learning any more then a few Blackfeet words Uncle turned his attention to other pursuits. A cousin offered to sponsor him for a "naming ceremony"[112] which

---

[111] B.E. Johansen. 2004. "Back from the (nearly) dead: Reviving Indigenous languages across North America." *American Indian Quarterly* 28 (3): 566-582.

[112] Naming Ceremony – "A ritual for the giving of a name to an individual. An elder usually confers a name on the child or person in a short ceremony involving prayer and oration. Gift giving, and sometimes a feed, takes place. In

Uncle remembers as "probably the most important thing of my life." His children and sisters traveled to the reservation to watch the ceremony and celebrate with him. He recalled fondly being "pushed out into the world"[113] as "truly significant" to his identity as a Blackfeet citizen. "I've always been Indian," said Uncle, "but this was the first time I felt completely Blackfeet." Remarkably, the little boy born and raised on the reservation, who spent the last sixty years of his life living in the settler world, has returned home. Today, after spending his life insentiently fighting against assimilation efforts from boarding school through careers Uncle continues his travels and explorations firmly centered in his Blackfeet identity.

**Chapter Summary**

When asked about the state of the reservation and life there today Uncle said, "The best thing my parents ever did for me was get me off the reservation while I was still young." He went on to explain that the reservation was like a swamp with little opportunity that left people mired down. Although this statement may sound defeatist in nature Uncle elaborated by explaining what he believed to be institutional roots to the chemical dependency, violence, and poverty problems on the reservation. He explains:

> "I'm not sure how it was before the white man took over, but now too many of us are defeated people that drink or use drugs rather than face the world or plan for a future. Religion and government brought us here. They classified us as a race when there really is no such thing. They used that idea to separate the Indian from the white man. When you add in the white religions it's easy to see how negative those ideas were to our ancestors understanding of the world. Our language was taken, our way of life was taken, and everything was replaced with white culture. Indian children were made to feel ashamed of who they were, and they started turning against their families. On the reservation it's too easy to hide from the world. I love Montana, but I think people need to get off the reservation, see more of the

former times, there may have been other activities such as a sweat associated with the name giving." – 'Blackfoot Ceremony: A Qualitative Study of Learning'

[113] The part of the naming ceremony when the orator physically pushes the newly named person on the back to signify his entrance into the Blackfeet spiritual realm.

> world, and see the differences and similarities before they can come back home and appreciate our traditional ways in the way it was meant to be."

Alcohol and drugs are too often a means of "hiding from the world" and coping with the anger and stress associated with poverty and oppression. Reservations and inner-city ghettos share high rates of substance abuse. They also share poverty, unemployment, a lack of social services, and high rates of all types of violence – organizational, structural, and interpersonal.[114] Uncle's comment that it is "easy to hide from the world" works in reverse also: It is easy to hide the world from reservations. The world may hear about the negatives associated with reservation life, but they are "protected" from examining why these issues exist with the 'plight of the Indian' spin reinforced from settler media.

Except for the occasional documentary, most people in the United States and Canada never see the daily conditions experienced by Indigenous peoples living on reservations and reserves throughout North America. When they are exposed to reservation poverty and violence it is perceived as an 'Indian problem' and the culpability of colonialism is missing from the narrative. This not only serves to present the settler experience as palatable, but plants responsibility for the suffering and oppression of Native peoples directly on their own shoulders culminating in the internalized shame of forced assimilation. Sharing stories of thrivance through life histories challenges these colonial processes by focusing on the on-going ability of Native peoples to maneuver through difficulty with determination and success. Uncle's life history is decolonizing in the way it emphasizes the ability of an Indigenous man to move with-in the settler world while maintaining a strong Blackfeet identity. He personifies thrivance despite the institutions of settler colonialism by demonstrating his ability to maneuver among the

---

[114] Barbara Chasin. 2004. *Inequality & Violence in the United States - Casualties of Capitalism.* Amherst: Humanity Books.

oppressors while maintaining his identity and community. He is able to return to the Blackfeet community because he never really left it behind; he always remained connected to the identity gifted him from his parents and ancestors.

In the next chapter the life histories of two Blackfeet men are combined together to tell a story of the next generation in a way that honors the anonymity of each participant and their families. 'Old Man' told the stories of the early Blackfeet peoples, our ways, and our territories; while 'Uncle' told the story of a Blackfeet elder living on and off the reservation in the 20th century. 'Cousin' moves into the 21st century with the story of a 40-something Blackfeet man finding decolonizing methods and identity while developing a life of thrivance on the reservation.

## With Cousin

Cousin was born in the mid-1970's on the Blackfeet reservation. His parents were both enrolled citizens of the Blackfeet Nation, but Cousin didn't know his father as he was the result of a brief and tumultuous relationship. His mother never even told his father about his birth. Cousin was the youngest of four children, two boys and two girls. The children had various fathers popping in and out of their lives with little consistency. Cousin's mother was an active drinker and restless, moving off and on the reservation with different husbands and boyfriends. Her behavior was not surprising or unexpected, particularly as she carried a family history of substance abuse and domestic violence. Her family, like many Indigenous peoples, were deeply affected by cultural losses and colonial injustices leading to a significant hike in alcohol and/or drug dependency.[115] Social isolation, poverty, and poor health care services on reservation lands are surely contributors, as are negative cultural stereotypes and racial discrimination. When she left the reservation on a drinking binge or with a new man she sometimes took her children, but more often she left them in the care of family members. The children went extended periods of time without seeing their mother, particularly when she was living out of state and ensconced in her addictions.

When just a toddler Cousin was left permanently in the care of his maternal grandmother. 'Gramma'[116] was a hardworking, hard drinking Blackfeet woman, known on the reservation for her good food and good work ethic. She was also known for her terrible temper when drunk, but she had a soft spot for her little grandson that she hadn't displayed with her own children.

---

[115] Shelly Wiechelt A., Jan Gryczynski, Jeannette L. Johnson, and Diana Caldwell. 2012. "Historical Trauma Among Urban American Indians: Impact on Substance Abuse and Family Cohesion." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 17 (4): 319-36.

[116] Cousin's grandmother will be referred to throughout his story as 'Gramma' as that is how he refers to her in his narrative.

Cousin loved the attention garnered him by his grandmother and she loved the affection she got from her little grandson. Together they lived on Gramma's property with the occasional company of other cousins and grandchildren.

When Cousin was five Gramma sent him to the reservation public school. He was a mischievous boy with little interest in school, but he enjoyed recess and sports. Cousin recalled getting in trouble in the second grade for fighting and Gramma getting called to come and pick him up. "Gramma was mad as hell when she got to the school," he said, "I thought she was mad at me, but she unleashed on that white teacher instead. She cussed at her and told her she shouldn't be allowed to work with Indian kids because she didn't understand them."[117] Cousin went on to explain how he felt so proud that Gramma took his side against the teacher, but when they got back home she "whipped his ass" and told him to never embarrass her in front of a white person again. "It was so confusing," he confessed, "because she was one way in front of the white lady and another way at home. I learned you should stick up for Indian's against white people, but you could whip on them in private." Despite the occasional whipping Cousin was happy with his grandmother and appreciated the stability living with her offered. Gramma typically had a few horses and it was soon Cousin's responsibility to care for them. "I loved those horses," he said, "They were nothing fancy, but we had a connection. Blackfeet are known for their connection with horses and I had that in spades. I think Gramma saw that and encouraged it. Maybe horses took the place of no dad."

Cousin continued to have disciplinary problems throughout middle school and into high school. He enjoyed attending to see his friends and relatives, but he rebelled against "being told what to do"; often reacting with violent outbursts and cursing. He quit going altogether halfway

[117] All quoted responses in this chapter taken from: 'Cousin'. Conversations with Cousin(s). (2014-2018).

through his tenth-grade year. "I didn't tell Gramma I dropped-out. I just left the house every morning as usual," he recalled, "and then I'd meet up with the other losers and we'd party." Cousin realized Gramma knew he was not in school any longer when she told him he needed to quit drinking and get a job. "I laughed at her thinking a fifteen-year-old kid was going to be able to get a job on the rez, when most of the grown men didn't have jobs," he said, "but then my girlfriend got pregnant and I knew I had to step up and be a dad." Cousin was not wrong in his assessment of reservation employment as a 2010' government committee on Indian Affairs measured the unemployment rate on U.S. reservations to be near or above the fifty-percent mark.[118] He was fortunate to get occasional construction and mechanic work with his older cousins and uncles, but his drinking escalated into drug use and his relationship with the mother of his child fell apart. He would quit drinking for a little while but fall back off the wagon fairly quickly. "I didn't have any control over my life, but I didn't realize that at the time. I wasted a lot of years," he lamented.

**Adult Years**

Over the next ten years Cousin would work at odd jobs for a while and then get fired for failing to show up or arriving at work under the influence. He had periods of sobriety up to six months at a time, but he always seemed to return to his vices. Three more children were born with three more Blackfeet women, none of whom stayed with him for long. He was arrested numerous times for drunkenness, domestic violence, and drug possession. During one of his periods of sobriety Cousin got a good job fighting forest fires. "I was real proud of that job," he said, "and my family was real proud of me too. Us Blackfeet are known for our bravery and nothing takes as much guts as jumping right into the middle of a forest fire." Then Gramma had

[118] Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. 2010. *Reservation Employment.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Congress.

a heart attack and died unexpectedly. In his grief for the one person who had loved him through all his troubled times he went back to drinking and drugs. It was not long before he lost his fire-fighting job. He explained, "I fell apart when Gramma died. I wasn't prepared for that. There I was being a dad to my kids, giving their mom's money to help take care of them, working every day, and I threw it all away when Gramma left me."

By the beginning of the twenty-first century Cousin had been abusing drugs and alcohol consistently for over a decade. An uncle convinced him to go to rehab, but he left after three days. A year later his mother convinced him to give rehab another try. Sadly, the two of them got drunk together the night before his assigned date, overslept, missed his check-in time, and was turned away when he finally showed up. "I can't say that I really cared about not getting in that time to tell you the truth. I wasn't ready" he said. During the next five years Cousin was in and out of rehab facilities, but it just did not seem to stick. It is significant to note that the success of rehabilitation by American Indian communities is significantly lower then non-Indian communities when the treatment program does not "integrate core cultural constructs that validate and incorporate American Indian experiences" into their services (Legha and Novins 2012). Cousin was never given the opportunity to attend rehabilitation in his own or similar community as none were available to him at that time. Today the Blackfeet reservation has a drug and alcohol program overseen by the tribe that incorporates our own values and practices.

One night at a party Cousin ran into a Blackfeet woman he had known as a child. She was ten years younger than him, had never been married or had children, and she was an alcoholic. Cousin and 'Lady'[119] moved in together and spent the next six months drinking, drugging, and fighting. Then Lady got pregnant. Her family pushed her to go to rehab and stay

[119] In respect of anonymity I will refer to this person as 'Lady' throughout this dissertation.

until the baby was born. She did and delivered a healthy child. She returned to the reservation and told Cousin if he wanted to be a family he had to get sober. Again, Cousin went to rehab. Upon completion he returned home, married Lady, and began drinking again. The cycle continued. Cousin would drink, go to rehab, return home, make another baby, and start drinking again. "It's not that I didn't want to be sober and take care of my wife and kids. I just couldn't seem to do it no matter how many times I went to rehab or quit drinking on my own," he said, "Then I got involved in Indian relay and things started turning around."

**Indian Relay**

According to the 'Professional Indian Horse Racing Association'[120] (PIHRA) Indian relay can be traced back over 400 years to the introduction of horses to North America. Tasks that had been accomplished with the help of dogs, such as travel, hunting, war, and recreation were made easier with the horse. Horses, like dogs before them, are seen as a gift from Creator.[121] As Cousin said, "the Blackfeet are known for their connection with horses." Indian relay celebrates and exemplifies that connection.

Indian Relay Race on Blackfeet Nation Reservation in Browning, Montana.
**Photo Credit - Author**

[120] www.professionalindianrelayassociation.com
[121] Hunter Old Elk. 2017. "Indian Relay: America's First Extreme Sport." *Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, July 6. https://centerofthewest.org.

There are numerous theories as to the inception of relay, but it is generally accepted that it developed as an activity among the Plains nations as training for war, hunting, stealing other horses, and competition at gatherings.[122] Indian relay today is organized, with governing organizations like the PIHRA and the 'Horse Nations Indian Relay Council' (HNIRC). Relay is held on reservations and at gatherings such as pow-wow and Indian rodeo. Occasionally relay is featured at non-Indigenous happenings like professional horse racing events and rodeo. Prize money is always awarded and valued for both the honor of winning and as a means of supporting care of the horses and supplementing travel costs.

Relay Exchange 1 of 5
**Photo Credit - Author**

Indian relay rules are fairly universal and consistent, with the only variation being whether the event requires a mounted or standing start. Both starts are exciting to watch, with the mounted start consisting of riders attempting to maintain some semblance of control over mounts that are excited and pushing to run, while the standing start involves more participants and confusion. Either way, with Indian relay there is always the possibility of collision, injury, and drama. Teams consist of five members and four horses. Team members must be Federally recognized Indians, all horses must be Indian owned, and no team members may compete under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Members include two

Relay Exchange 2 of 5
**Photo Credit - Author**

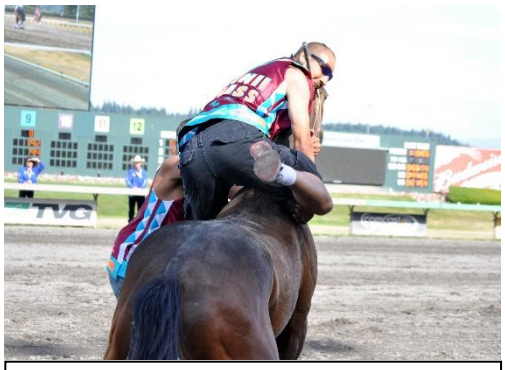
[122] Ibid.

Relay Exchange 3 of 5
**Photo Credit - Author**

holders, one mugger, one rider, and an alternate in case of illness or injury. The holders hold and calm the horses between laps, while the mugger is responsible for catching each dismounted horse during exchanges. The alternate may substitute for any team member, but substitutions may not occur during an active race. All members must wear ribbon shirts identifying them as a team during competition. Only three horses per team compete per race. The fourth horse is an alternate in case of illness or injury, but substitutions may not occur during an active race.

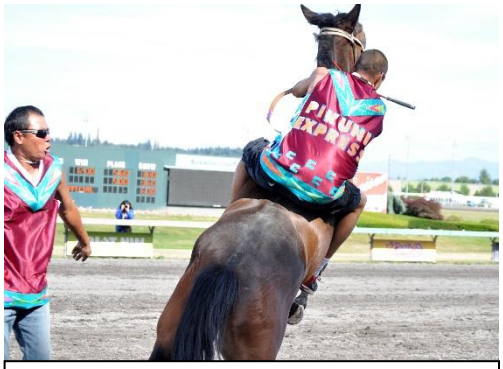
Races are run with four to six teams per heat on an oval approximate half-mile dirt track. Depending on the number of teams competing each exchange may contain sixteen to twenty-four people and twelve to eighteen horses culminating in an intense amount of activity and danger. Starting positions are in the middle of the track with the riders mounted or standing near their holder held horse. No person, including team members, may touch the rider when mounting horses during standing starts or any exchange. All horses are ridden bareback with only bridles and neck ropes allowed.

From the flash of the gun to begin the race to crossing the finish line Indian relay is unbelievably exhilarating to observe. Horses and riders run around the track at full speed galloping into their assigned exchange areas where the riders jump off their horses and run to their next mount. Both of the rider's feet must hit the ground before he leaps unassisted onto the



Relay Exchange 4 of 5
**Photo Credit - Author**

next horse. Meanwhile the mugger throws himself in front of the still moving dismounted horse in order to capture the horse and keep him from returning to the racing area. Loose horses on the track, either from a rider falling off or a mugger failing to catch the dismounted horse, are grounds for disqualification. Three laps are completed with two exchanges occurring in between laps. The first horse and rider to cross the finish line cleanly is the heat winner. Teams are funneled into championship and consolation brackets based on their heat performances. Competitions are typically held over two-to-four days to allow all members and horses to race and recover.



Relay Exchange 5 of 5
**Photo Credit - Author**

The following description of Indian relay, taken from the HNIRC website gives a reasonable description of relay in process, but to really understand one must experience it in person:

> "Imagine if you will watching five determined teams consisting of three horses, one rider, one mugger and two holders, entering the track, each taking their designated box in preparation to the start of the race. All of the teams have spent months practicing for the start of the race, ready to leap into action, confident that they will bring home the honors. Each of the fifteen horses are primed ready to leap into action, anticipating the glory of the race. The holders and mugger ready to do their job, despite the risk of personal injury to themselves, as the horses come in for their exchanges. "Add to this the unsuccessful transfers – riders sprawled face down in the dirt of the track, or a rider clinging to the side of his horse in a struggle to stay aboard – and it's easy to see why Indian relay is helping to fill the stands across the West" says American Cowboy "Indian Relay Racing" by Jack McNeel 2009. They are all working together to keep their team safe and be the first to cross the finish line. The thrill of the race is tangible and addictive to everyone attending."[123]

[123] HNIRC. n.d. *Horse Nations Relay.* Accessed 2019. http://www.horsenationsrelay.com.

Another important aspect of the Indian relay experience is the positive impact relay has on the partners and children of participants. Relay is very family oriented - traveling together, eating together, sharing responsibilities for the care of the horses, and rejoicing or lamenting race results together perpetuate the "relational accountability"[124] necessary for families to experience transformative change and flourish. When Blackfeet men engage in Indian relay they participate in the renewal and celebration of ancestral practices and training thus simultaneously navigating and resisting settler colonial processes. Relay embraces the ideal of thrivance by celebrating our men as they refute victimhood and reclaim their Indigenous identity within the relationships of family and community. Jeff Corntassel, Director of Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria and citizen of the Cherokee Nation, when writing on the influence his participation in ceremony has on his family said, "When [they] saw the behavior we modeled, they wanted to get more involved in ceremony and began to emulate our actions. Through observation and example another amazing thing happened – our kids began to teach themselves and others about what they experienced."[125] Indian relay is ceremony and ceremony nurtures and heals family and community through practice.

**Something Bigger than Himself**

Cousin's introduction to Indian relay participation began by a chance encounter with an old basketball buddy:

> "I ran into him at the Indian Days pow-wow celebration honoring relay participants. I was drunk and when he walked by me I made some smartass remark. He stopped and looked at me. I'd been on a long bender and was looking pretty pathetic at the time. Instead of shaming me, he told me "You've always been good with the horses.

[124] "…based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)." (S. Wilson 2008)

[125] Jeff Corntassel and Mick Scow. 2017. "Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to Everydayness in Fatherhood." *New Diversities* 19 (2): 55-68.

> Why don't you sober up and meet me at the barn in the morning? Our team is down a guy right now." Now I tell you that was a big surprise. The next morning, I showed up at the barn sober, and that was the start for me."

On that first day Buddy[126] looked Cousin over, presumably to assess sobriety, and put him to work feeding and walking the horses. He explained to Cousin that relay was sacred to the participants and anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol could not be involved; if it was ever suspected that someone was under the influence they would be told to leave the relay grounds. "It was more than just a rule," said Cousin "it would have been disrespectful to the team and the ancestors to dishonor participation in that way. The guys were very supportive, but they made sure I understood that it was an honor to participate as a representative of the Blackfeet Nation." Cousin discussed his initial battle with sobriety after becoming involved with relay. "I struggled for sure. During the first month or so I got drunk and missed some races, but I never showed up drunk and they kept taking me back and encouraging me. My wife was so proud of me and it was the first time in a long time she had any hope in me being a good man. Relay surely saved my life and my family and gave me something to be proud of besides fighting."

Cousin started on the team as an extra, a helper with the horses and gear. "I'd forgotten how much horses calmed me," he said, "Just being with them made me concentrate on something other than myself." Eventually, after showing consistent sobriety Cousin was moved up to holder, but it wasn't long before he started mugging. His way with horses and athletic agility made him great for the position. The team was young, but winning races consistently, and Cousin was finally a part of something bigger then himself. "I was surrounded by Indian men in a positive environment for the first time," he said, "Some of them were fathers and most

[126] In order to protect anonymity Cousin's friend and mentor will from hereon be referred to as 'Buddy'.

of them had at one time or another struggled with the same demons as me. When I'd start thinking about drinking or drugging I'd just remind myself that I was a Blackfeet man, just like my teammates and if they could stay sober then I could stay sober and I did."

Cousin's job situation improved with his sobriety and he was able for the first time in years to keep a job. Having a regular paycheck improved his family's situation; they were able to move into a larger house, which was long overdue as he and Lady now had four children of their own. Cousin was spending more time with his children and often had them with him at relay practice. The family traveled to all away relay events together, sometimes sleeping in a tent on the rodeo grounds and sometimes staying in a motel. "The kids loved it." he said, "They had never stayed in a motel before and now they got to do it several times each relay season. Swimming in the motel pool and watching dad race. They were having fun and they were proud of me." He credits this continuous involvement in relay as central to his identity as a strong Blackfeet man and father.

> "Before relay I would say I was proud of being Blackfeet, but I really wasn't because I wasn't doing anything to be proud of. I was playing every white man idea of Natives. I was drunk and unemployed with baby mammas scattered all over. Drunk or sober I was always up for a fight. I fought everyone, man or woman, it didn't matter. I hated everyone, but most of all I hated myself. At relay races the teams are announced along with their tribal affiliation and it makes me stand up straight with pride when they say [team name] of the Blackfeet Nation. I hear my kids tell people at races that they're Blackfeet too and I never heard them talk about it before."

Cousin's repeated mentioning of pride throughout his narrative is significant. Native Hawai'ian scholar Ty P. Kāwika Tengan speaks of pride as intermingled with shame for Indigenous men within the colonialized system. "What is healthy pride, right? There's a lot of ways in which pride can take you to the other extreme in which it becomes chauvinism and leads

people to be overly assertive and aggressive."[127] I understand this to affirm my assertion that much of the violence exhibited by Native men is the result of colonial idioms like the bloodthirsty warrior or the noble savage creating a sense of false pride acted out through displays of violence. Our men want to be proud yet the confusion of being inundated with colonial stereotypes through media and education disguises shameful behavior as power and pride displayed through violence. Constant inundation with the stereotype of the scary brown man creates a self-fulfilling prophecy and violence becomes entangled with the masculine identity of Native men. Fight or flight is no longer an option when manhood is so closely intertwined with the expectation of violence and fight becomes the only option. For Cousin, participation in Indian relay created a sense of shared identity with his team members, the horses, the Blackfeet Nation, and most importantly with his family. Through the practice of relay, he was developing a healthy pride; making emotional, personal and collective connections, thus solidifying a sense of community identity and purpose.

**Chapter Summary**

Cousin continues to remain involved in relay. His focus now inclines more toward coaching and mentoring his own sons and nephews in the ways of Indian Relay. He has put together a junior team and they compete whenever possible. Junior participation for boys six-years and up is new to Indian relay over the past several years, but it is growing in popularity. The youngsters use ponies and compete under the same rules as the adults. "I know what relay has done for me and I want to make sure my kids have that too. I don't want them to get to the point that I was at before." he explains, "Raising them up in the ways of the ancestors instills goodness in them." He may be right, as Cousin's four youngest children are the students he

[127] Ty P. Kawika Tengan. 2014. "Talking Story, Remaking Community." In *MasculIndians*, by Sam McKegney, 109-117. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

never was, receiving awards at school for performance and attendance. He predicts, "My boys are going to be good, strong, proud Blackfeet men and fathers." I believe him. Cousin has filled the gaps in his own life with the healing power of Indian relay, family, friends, and community support. His own healing will encourage his children live a life of thrivance.

## Conclusion: With My Sons and Grandsons

This dissertation draws together stories that are well known to the Blackfeet people and life histories lived by some Blackfeet men. Finding ways to live rewarding lives is a challenge, particularly since the inception of government education and the attempted decimation of our life ways, yet we continue to thrive and share our stories.

The Niitsitapi have always told stories. We sat around fires telling and listening; sometimes to entertain or lift us from our daily struggles, and at other times to pass on lessons to the community. Today, our stories can be found electronically on Facebook, YouTube, and numerous other sources. Stories teach acceptable behavior and define taboo. Stories carry our history and teach us how to thrive. Stories give identity to everyone; some are heroes, others are mentors, and some are villain's or tricksters. They can be fact or fiction or an unknown combination of both. In this dissertation I have told stories from before and during the reservation days. These stories and histories are about how some men negotiate the changing world. Some on the reservation and some off the reservation. On and off our territory, throughout their lives. I would like to offer one final story about Star-Boy and how he negotiates through life with the help of community and family to my sons and grandsons.

### 'The Story of Star-Boy'

> *Once during the summer in the earliest times, when it was too hot to sleep indoors, an attractive girl named Feather-Woman slept outside in the tall prairie grass. She opened her eyes just as the Morning Star appeared and she immediately fell in love with its beauty. When her sisters got up and came outside she told them that she was in love with Morning Star. The sisters laughed at her and told everyone in the village about their foolish sister. Feather-Woman became the object of ridicule among the people.*

*A few days later she left the village to get water from the creek and ran into the most handsome person she had ever seen. At first she thought he was a young man from her own tribe, but he told her he was Morning Star.*

*He said, "I know you were watching me and fell in love. When you were looking up at me I was looking down at you. I watched you lying in the prairie grass and I knew that you and I would be together. Come with me to my home in the sky and be my wife."*

*Feather-Woman was awe stricken and a little fearful for she knew that Morning Star was a god. She told him that she needed time to tell her family good-bye, but he told her there was not time. He gave her a yellow feather in one hand and a juniper branch in the other, then told her to close her eyes. When she opened them again she was in the Sky-Country.*

*Feather-Woman and Morning Star were married in front of his parents Sun and Moon. Father Sun worked during the day and Mother Moon worked during the night. Moon liked Feather-Woman and spent all her time with her during the day. She gave her beautiful clothes and robes to wear.*

*Feather-Woman was very happy with her husband and his parents and in a short time she gave birth to a baby boy. The family was delighted and named him Star Boy. With her own child now Feather-Woman felt the need to contribute to family meals. Moon gave her a root-digging stick, but warned her to never dig up the great turnip that grew by the home of the Spider Man. If she disobeyed, he warned, terrible ills would follow.*

*Feather-Woman stayed away from the great turnip for a little while, but she was a nosey girl and couldn't resist a closer look. She crept up to the great turnip with Star Boy fastened to her back and wondered why it was feared. It looked like any other turnip only much larger. After a short time, Feather-Woman took Star Boy off of her back, laid him near her on the ground, and began digging. It was hard work. Two cranes flew overhead, and she cried out to them to help. The cranes came down singing a secret magic song while they dug. With a loud plop they pulled the great turnip out of the soil. Where the great turnip had been was now a huge*

Feather-Woman looking down at her village through the great turnip hole. **Photo Credit – NewBerry Library Collection**

*hole. Feather-Woman could see through the hole down to her village far below. She was overcome with homesickness. With shame and sadness, she roll ed the great turnip back into the hole and returned with her son back to their lodge without dinner.*

*Soon Morning Star returned home. Feather-Woman could see at once that he was very sad. Moon and Son arrived and asked, "Why did you disobey and dig up the great turnip?"*

*At first Feather-Woman pretended she didn't know what they were asking, but eventually she broke down and told the truth. She begged forgiveness. Morning Star, Moon, and Son wanted to forgive but knew that because Feather-Woman had disobeyed she must be banished and sent falling from Sky-Country.*

*When Feather-Woman and Star Boy arrived in the village they were welcomed by their family with great joy. But Feather-Woman was never to be happy again. Every morning she looked up at the sky and spoke to Morning Star, but he never answered her. After many months he finally spoke, saying "You can never return to Sky-Country. You disobeyed Sun and Moon and brought unhappiness into our world." This was too much for Feather-Woman to bare. She soon died of unhappiness.*

*Now Star Boy had no parent. His elder grandparents took care of him until they died. He had a large scar on his face that shamed him and made him shy. The people took to calling him Scar Boy and made cruel jokes about his face and his claim to be the son of Morning Star. They said he was foolish like his mother.*

*Already mistreated Star Boy was further heartbroken when he was rejected and ridiculed by the chief's daughter, who he loved. An old medicine woman told*

*him his scar could be removed but only by Sun. This was bad news to Star Boy for he knew his mother had been banished from the Sky-Country and he was afraid of return there. The medicine woman told him to be brave and gave him food for his travels.*

*Star Boy walked for days and days and days, over the mountains, through forests, through snow, and across deserts, until he reached the Great Water that the white man calls the Pacific Ocean, for this was where Sun went to rest at night. Star Boy prayed and fasted. On the third day he saw sun rays reflecting on the Great Water forming a path to Sun. Star Boy followed the path and came to the home of his grandparents, Sun and Moon.*

*When his grandparents found Star Boy asleep in their lodge Sun was angry and went to kill him as no earth-dweller was supposed to be in Sky-Country. Moon stopped him because she recognized that he was their grandson. Moon and Sun called for Morning Star and they all celebrated Star Boys return. At his grandson's request Sun removed the scar from Star Boys face. He also taught him great magic and the truths of the world. Sun told his grandson that he must tell the people to honor him once a year by performing the Sun Dunce and all of their sick would be healed.*

*Star Boy learned the Sun Dance and his grandfather grew to love him very very much, but because of his mother's disobedience he could not stay with them in Sky-Country. Before returning to earth the grandparents gave Star Boy a magic flute and the knowledge to lead his people in the ways of the ancestors. He took his flute and walked down the Milky Way to earth.*

*When Star Boy arrived at the village the people honored him and understood that he truly was the son of Morning Star and the grandson of Sun and Moon. He shared the wisdom given by his grandfather and taught them how to do the Sun Dance. All the sick were healed. Because Star Boy was obedient and taught the people the right ways Sun and Moon allowed him to return to Sky-Country with his new wife, the chief's daughter who had once rejected him. They remained there forever and now Star Boy himself rises with Morning Star.*[128]

[128] https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TheStoryofPoia

The stories of Old Man helped us imagine the Blackfeet of the past and some continuing values of today. Uncle's life story (or history) gives insight into the struggles and successes of a contemporary Blackfeet man living on and off the reservation in the twentieth century. Cousin's story of life, loss, and healing on the reservation captured the difficulties some Indigenous people overcome. It is a story of hope. The story of Star Boy captures a little from each of the other stories from the perspective of a child. From the oldest to the youngest, from myth to humanity, the common lesson remains the importance of doing what is right for community.

At the core of all these stories and life histories is that no person learns to thrive on their own. Old Man Napi and his men sought out the company of the women to have a better life. Although Old Man didn't find success, his fate teaches a valuable lesson about humility, pride, and how to approach relationships with others. When Creator assigns Old Man the task of creating the lands, Old Man quickly engages the animals to help him. In contemporary times those same lands are protected by Blackfeet people by banding together as a community, demanding their rights and enforcing environmental protections. Uncle experiences the loss of his home but learns to navigate his new home with the help of his family and larger urban community. With the compassion of a white principal and the encouragement of his employers and children, he maneuvers through the settler world while maintaining the ties to his home territory and his identity as a Blackfeet man. At the end of his life he, like Star Boy, returns home and learns from his community so as to share that knowledge with others.

Raised by his grandmother because of the hardships and decisions of his parents, Cousin struggled to find his way in the world. Like Star Boy though, Cousin found healing through the practices and mentorship of other Blackfeet men. With their support and his immersion in a Blackfeet practice he quit self-punishing with substances and became the father he never had.

While his scars were internal, he too found healing by learning and sharing the ways of his ancestors.

For all of the participants whom shared their stories, struggles, and successes it is through contact with family, community, territory, and Blackfeet practices that they are able to thrive despite the despots of settler colonialism. This is what I hope for my sons and grandsons, but I also see what they are up against.

Many Indigenous men learn about their identity through the unfortunate lens of settler colonialism and all it offers: residential schools, racism, jail, prison, addiction and violence. I believe that if we, their community, walk with them instead of away from them, we can help them to reclaim their role, whatever that may be, within the community.

As I write and shared these stories I am struggling to help one of my sons with his own demons. Struggles are not confined to the reservation, nor is community. These stories of thrivance give me courage, as I hope they do for others. As Indigenous peoples we have a great responsibility to ourselves and others. We must be diligent about protecting and nurturing our children and communities, including our men, if we want to thrive.

I watch Indian relay now and I see Blackfeet men competing as strong, resilient, powerful, loving family men. The men travel the relay season with their wives and children. It is a family event that creates a sense of unity and pride. I see relay and I see thrivance. I forget the "plight of the Indian" and the other lies that weigh our men down. There are other practices that encourage healing and wholeness for our men: language revitalization, education in tribal culture and practice, and the sharing of our stories. All this needs to be encouraged and explored. What else can we do to enhance our healing? For Native men to effectively reconstruct their own

identity they must be supported by their peers, communities, families, and partners. We must work together, heal together, and thrive together.

**For Matthew**

This dissertation would not be complete without returning to Matthew's story. Sadly, there has been no resolution to his murder. Many people on the reservation feel confident that they know who was involved, but there has been little response from the FBI investigators. The family continues to seek justice. We have lived with his death for nearly three years now. Since Matthew's murder several other Blackfeet have disappeared or been found murdered. Matthew's aunt is leading a push to include men and boys in the 'National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls'. In her own words she says, "When our Matthew was found murdered, I promised him that auntie would continue seeking justice!!! And I will not rest until then."[129]

[129] https://www.facebook.com/FindMatthewRattlesnakeGrant

# SEEKING INFORMATION

# MATTHEW LEROY GRANT

**Murder Victim**
**Browning, Montana**
**December 2016**

Photograph taken in 2016

Photograph taken in 2016

## DESCRIPTION

| | |
|---|---|
| **Aliases:** Matthew Grant, Matthew R. Grant, Matthew Rattlesnake, Matthew Leroy Lee Ray Rattlesnake, Matthew Leroy Lee Ray Grant Rattlesnake | |
| **Date(s) of Birth Used:** October 31, 1995, December 31, 1995 | **Place of Birth:** Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada |
| **Hair:** Brown | **Eyes:** Brown |
| **Height:** 5'9" | **Weight:** 150 pounds |
| **Sex:** Male | **Race:** Native American |
| **Scars and Marks:** Grant had a tattoo on his left forearm of praying hands and the words "Ray Grant." He also had a tattoo of a tribal design on his left shoulder. | |

## REWARD

**The FBI is offering a reward of up to $10,000 for information that leads to an arrest in the investigation of the murder of Matthew Leroy Grant.**

## DETAILS

The FBI's Salt Lake City Division, Shelby Resident Agency, and the Blackfeet Law Enforcement Services are asking for the public's assistance in identifying the individual(s) responsible for the murder of Matthew Leroy Grant.

Grant's body was found the evening of December 31, 2016, in an alley between the College Homes and South Glacier Homes neighborhoods in Browning, Montana.

**If you have any information concerning this case, please contact the FBI's Salt Lake City Field Office at (833) 345-7872. You may also contact your local FBI office, or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.**

**Field Office:** Salt Lake City

## References

Adams, David Wallace. 1995. *Education for Extinction - American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Alexie, Sherman. 2007. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown.

Alfred, T. 2005. *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Ontario: Broadview Press.

Allen, Chadwick. 2011. "(Review) Survivance: Narative of Native Presence." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23 (4): 120-124.

Anderson, Kristin L. 2013. "Why Do We Fail to Ask "Why" About Gender and Intimate Partner Violence?" *Journal of Marriage and Family 75* 314-18.

Ashby, C.S. 1985. *The Blackfeet Agreement of 1895 and Glacier National Park: A Case History*. MS thesis, Missoula: University of Montana.

Ball, J, and K Daly. 2012. *Father Involvement in Canada: Diversity, Renewal, and Transformation*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Barnes, JC, Ryan Motz, and Eric Dubow. 2018. "Reducing Racial Inequalities in Adulthood Arrest by Reducing Inequalities in School Discipline: Evidence from the School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Developmental Psychology* 54 (12): 328-340.

Baumann, Dianne. 2015. "The Role of the Catholic Church in the Deculturization of the Blackfeet Nation." *Honors Thesis*. Lacey: Saint Martin's University.

Baumgartner, Holly L. 2006. "De-Assimilation as the Need to Tell - Native American Writers, Bakhtin, and Autobiography." In *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*, edited by Ernest Stromberg. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Bender, M. 2005. "Glimpses of Local Masculinities: Learning from Interviews with Kiowa, Comanche, Apache and Chickasaw Men." *Southern Anthropologist* 31 (1/2): 1-17.

Blackfeet Heritage Program. 1979. *Napi Stories*. Browning: Browning Public Schools.

Bullchild, Percy. 1985. *The Sun Came Down - The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Calderon, Dolores. 2016. "Moving from Damage-Centered Research through Unsettling Reflexivity." *Anthropology & Education, 47(1), March* 5-24.

Chasin, Barbara H. 2004. *Inequality & Violence in the United States - Casualties of Capitalism*. Amherst: Humanity Books.

Child, Brenda J. 2016. "Indian Boarding Schools." *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 0 (0): 1-3.

Connell, R.W., and James Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 829-859.

contributors, Wikipedia. 2019. "Indian Relocation Act." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, January 21. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indian_Relocation_Act.

Corntassel, Jeff, and Mick Scow. 2017. "Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to Everydayness in Fatherhood." *New Diversities* 19 (2): 55-68.

Coulthard, G. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

'Cousin', interview by D. Baumann. 2014-2018. *Conversations with Cousin(s)*

Craig, David R., Laurie Yung, and William T. Borrie. 1904. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties.* government, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Craig, David R., Luane Yung, and William T. Borrie. 2012. ""Blackfeet Belong to the Mountains": Hope, Loss, and Blackfeet Claims to Glacier National Park, Montana." *Conservation and Society* 10 (3): 232-242.

Daniels, Britni. 2014. *Native Americans Want You to Know They're More Than Mascots.* November 27. www.takepart.com/article/2014/11/27/not-your-mascot-movement.

Deloria, Jr., Vine. 1988. *Custer Died for Your Sins - An Indian Manifesto.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

—. 1973. *God is Red.* New York: Dell Publishing Company.

Deloria, Vine. 1995. *Red Earth, White Lies - Native Americans and the Myths of Scientific Fact.* New York: Scribner.

Dempsey, L. James. 2007. *Blackfoot War Art: Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 1880-2000.* University of Oklahoma Press.

dictionary.com. n.d. *Cryptographer.* Accessed 2019. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/cryptographer.

Dye, Kelly. 2010. "Gendering." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J Mills, Gabrielle Durepos and Elden Wiebe, 414-419. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ewers, John C. 1958. *The Blackfeet - Raiders on the Northwestern Plains.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

First Nations Development Institute. 2018. "reclaimingnativetruth.com." *Reclaiming Native Truth Project.* June. Accessed February 2019. https://www.firstnations.org/publications/compilation-of-all-research-from-the-reclaiming-native-truth-project/.

First Peoples. n.d. *American Indian Legends.* Accessed 2019. https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TheStoryofPoia-Blackfoot.html.

Fiss, Andrea. 2014. "Who Are You? On Being Half Indian and Half White." *LEARNing Landscapes* 7 (2).

Gahman, L. 2016. "White Settler Society as Monster: Rural Southeast Kansas, Ancestral Osage (Wah-Zha-Zhi) Territories, and the Violence of Forgetting." *Antipode* 14-335.

Goeman, Mishuana. 2015. "Land as Life." In *Native Studies Key Words*, edited by Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith and Michelle Raheja, 71-89. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Goeman, Mishuana R. 2008. "From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous Nation-Building." *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 1 (1): 23-34.

Grinnell, G.B. 1892. "Early Blackfeet History." *American Anthropologist, 5(2)* 153-164.

Grinnell, George Bird. 1913. *Blackfeet Indian Stories.* Scribner.

—. 2003. *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The story of a prairie people.* University of Nebraska Press.

Hammill, J. 2001. "The Culture of Masculinity." *Development* 21-24.

Harrod, H.L. 1971. *Mission Among the Blackfeet*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

HNIRC. n.d. *Horse Nations Relay.* Accessed 2019. http://www.horsenationsrelay.com.

Innes, Robert Alexander, and Kim Anderson, . 2015. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities.* Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Jackson, John C. 2000. *The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege.* Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company.

Johansen, B.E. 2004. "Back from the (nearly) dead: Reviving Indigenous languages across North America." *American Indian Quarterly* 28 (3): 566-582.

Kawika Tengan, Ty P. 2014. "Talking Story, Remaking Community." In *MasculIndians*, by Sam McKegney, 109-117. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Kehoe, Alice Beck. 2001. "Real Speak - Language Revival Among the Montana Blackfeet." *World and I.*

Kendall, Francis. 2002. *Understanding White Privilege.* California. www.cpt.org.

King, Thomas. 2003. *The Truth About Stories - A Native Narrative.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

1991. *Transitions: Destruction of a Mother Tongue.* Produced by D. Hart. Performed by D. Kipp and J. Fisher. Montana Public Television.

Kipp, Jim. n.d. *trailtribes.org*. Accessed March 2019. https://trailtribes.org/greatfalls/homeland-of-the-blackfeet.

Legha, Rupinder Kaur, and Douglas Novins. 2012. "The Role of Culture in Substance Abuse Treatment Programs for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities." *Psychiatric Services* 63 (7): 686-92.

Males, Mike. 2014. *Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice*. August 26. Accessed February 2017. http://www.cjcj.org/news/8113.

Marcotte, Amanda. 2017. *Here's How Toxic Masculinity is Killing Us in so Many Ways*. October. https://theestablishment.co/heres-how-toxic-masculinity-is-killing-us-in-so-many-ways-b2fc9bf2b0ce.

McClintock, Walter. 1910. *The Old North Trail - Life Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians*. London: Macmillan and Co.

McFee, Malcolm. 1972. *Modern Blackfeet - Montanans on a Reservation*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

McGranahan, Carole. 2015. "Anthropology as Theoretical Storytelling." *Savage Minds*. October 19. https://savageminds.org.

Million, Dian. 2013. *Therapeutic Nations - Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Mills, Sara. 2010. "Gender and Colonial Space." *Gender, Place & Culture* 125-148.

Milne, Pamela. 1989. "Genesis from Eve's Point of View." *The Washington Post*. March 26.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2012. "Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2-22.

Mott, Carrie. 2018. "Settler Colonialism and Hegemonic Whiteness through Irrigation: The Case of Ahtanum Creek." *American* .

—. 2018. "Settler Colonialism and Hegemonic Whiteness through Irrigation: The Case of Ahtanum Creek." *American Association of Geographers Annual Conference*.

Norris, Tina, Paula Vines, and Elizabeth Hoeffel. 2012. "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010." U.S. Government, Washington D.C. https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf.

Old Elk, Hunter. 2017. "Indian Relay: America's First Extreme Sport." *Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, July 6. https://centerofthewest.org.

Peacock, Andrea. 2011. *Alternet*. May 5. Accessed 2017. http://www.alternet.org/story/150852.

Pepion, Donald Duane. 1999. "Blackfoot Ceremony: A Qualitative Study of Learning." *Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education.* Montana State University.

Perry, Steven. 2004. *American Indians and Crime*. Government, Washington D.C.: United States Department of Justice - Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Posadas, Jeremy. 2017. "Teching the Cause of Rape Culture: Toxic Masculinity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 177-179.

Russo, N.F., and A. Pirlott. 2006. "Gender-Based Violence." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 178-205.

Scoyen, E. T. 1933. *Report of the Superintendent of the Glacier National Park to the Secretary of the Interior*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Seager, James. 2005. "Violent Men." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 26-49.

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. 2010. *Reservation Employment*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Congress.

Simpson, L. 2011. *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Smith, Andrea. 2010. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (1-2): 42-68.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spence, Mark David. 1996. "Crown of the Continent, Backbone of the World: The American Wilderness Ideal and Blackfeet Exclusion from Glacier National Park." *Environmental History* 1 (3): 29-49.

staff. 2017. *Trailtribes.org*. Accessed 2017. https//trailtribes.org/greatfalls/shrinking-reservation.

Stark, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik. 2013. "Federal Law Encounters Anishinaabe Diplomacy." In *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, edited by Jill Doerfler, James Niigaanwewidam Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, 259-278. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Stirrup, David. 2013. "Stories as Process and Principle in Painting." In *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies - Undetstanding the World through Stories*, edited by Jill Doerfler, Niigaawewidam James Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, 297-316. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Taylor, Michael. 2015. "Indian-Styled Mascots, Masculinity, and the Manipulated Indian Body: Chief Illiniwek and the Embodiment of Tradition." *Ethnohistory, 62(1)* 119-143.

Thomas, R. 2015. "Honouring the Oral Traditions of the Ta't Mustimuxw (Ancestors) through Storytelling." In *Research as Resistance; Revisiting Critical, Indigenous and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, edited by Susan Strega and Leslie Brown, 177-198. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Thompson, Sally, Kootenai Culture Committee, and Pikunni Traditional Association. 2015. *People Before the Park: The Kootenai and Blackfeet Before Glacier National Park*. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press.

Tuck, Eve, and R. Wayne Yang. 2018. "R-Words: Refusing Research." In *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, 223-228. SAGE Publications, Inc.

'Uncle', interview by Dianne Baumann. 2018-2019. *Conversations with Uncle*

University of Minnisota - Dept. of History. 2015. *The Pacific Railroad Surveys; 1853-1854*. Accessed 2019. https://sites.google,com/a/umn.edu/the-pacific-railroad-surveys-1853---1854.

Veracini, L. 2015. *The Settler Colonial Present*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vizenor, Gerald. 2010. "American Indian Art and Literature Today: Survivance and Tragic Wisdom." *Museaum International* 62 (3): 41-51.

Vizenor, Gerald Robert. 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Vizenor, Gerald. 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Indigenous Education*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1 (2): 125-151.

Wiechelt, Shelly A., Jan Gryczynski, Jeannette L. Johnson, and Diana Caldwell. 2012. "Historical Trauma Among Urban American Indians: Impact on Substance Abuse and Family Cohesion." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 17 (4): 319-36.

Williams, Timothy. 2012. *Higher Crime, Fewer Charges on Indian Land*. February 20. Accessed 2019. https://www.nytimes.com.

Wilson, S. 2008. *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Black Point: Fernwood Publishers.

Wilson, Sam, and Kordenbrock. 2019. "Native American Homicide Rates are Soaring but Causes aren't Clear Due to Inconsistent Data." *missoulian.com*. April 14. Accessed 2019. https://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/mmiw/native-american-homicide-rates-are-soaring-but-causes-aren-t/article_246215c7-524a-5184-aa0a-e9b7f8af4168.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=user-share&fbclid=IwAR0qAPiphcd8sTr4IG_pt.

Wissler, Clark, Alice Beck Kehoe, and Stewart E. Miller. 2012. *Amskapi Pikuni - The Blackfeet People*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 387-409.

Zapotichna, Maria. 2015. 'Traditional Education of Aboriginal People in Canada: Principles, Methods and Characteristic Features." *Comparative Professional Pedagogy* 5 (4): 98-103.

*Thank you to my amazing committee and chair. Without your continued support and encouragement, I would have been lost. Forever in my heart.*

*Dianne*