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Decolonizing Tribal Histories

by

Winona Lu-Ann Stevenson

B.A. Honors (University of Manitoba) 1986
M.A. (University of British Columbia) 1988

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in

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of the

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Abstract

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Historians of the Native American past are now considering how Indigenous oral histories can broaden our understanding of events in the distant past. Even the most intrepid, however, still grapple with questions concerning the nature and quality of oral history, oral history methodologies, and how oral histories can be textually represented without compromising scholarly or tribal integrity. For most historians, the major prohibiting factor is that Native American oral histories do not neatly conform to modern Western imperatives. Trained in the Western mode, historians are confronted with content and form that often bear little resemblance to what they know and work with. Unfamiliarity breeds suspicion which results in rejection, omission by avoidance, or superficiality. Historians fear what they do not understand and so they 'other' Indigenous voices right out of their own histories.

The present study provides a comprehensive overview of academic debates concerning the nature, value, reliability, and forms of oral histories and how recent intellectual innovations from the New History movement, New Historicism, postcolonial studies and postmodernism have initiated a breakdown of traditional disciplinary barriers which promise inroads for historical traditions outside the conventional mold. This study

demonstrates that long before these internal challenges emerged Native American writers have been writing in the oral tradition and have been consistently calling for a New Indian History based on Indigenous oral traditions. A case study of nêhiyawak, *Plains Cree*, historical traditions, will further demonstrate that relearning history from within a tribal-specific framework not only provides insight on Indigenous philosophies, methodologies, and aesthetic narrative forms, it also provides a foundation for the writing of New Indian Histories.

On the bases that the silencing, marginalization, and patronizing of Indigenous voices, in the writing of Indigenous histories, epitomizes intellectual colonialism, this study asserts that the decolonization of Indigenous histories must begin from within a tribal context. This study further asserts that the transdisciplinary approach of Native American Studies provides the most appropriate and fertile field for the development of an Indigenous oral traditions-based New Indian History.

Chair, Dr. Luana Ross

Dedication

In memory of the gifts bestowed from the generations behind us may the love of story continue on down the line. To Theresa, Cameron, Kaya, John B., Jacob, Fox, Larissa, Yonakwala, and Kâta.

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It would be impossible to name all the individuals who influenced and shared their teachings over the course of my life. Special mention goes to my mother Bernelda Wheeler, Maria Campbell, Harold Cardinal, Stan Cuthand, the late Smith Atimoyoo, and the spirits of my late grandparents, for their teachings, patience, and for believing in me when my own belief faltered.

To colleagues and friends who listened, prodded, engaged, argued, critiqued, edited, did coffee, and fed me—Maria Campbell, Luana Ross, Marlene Davy, Michael Cottrell, Tracey Robinson, Ida Brass, Miriam McNab, Sheldon Krazowski, and Irene (Gonzales) Vernon—I give you my heartfelt thanks.

None of this work would have been possible without my family. I come from a long line of storytellers and grew up hearing old time stories, contemporary Aboriginal

news events, political debates, music, home-grown fiction, and bedtime stories that ranged from Indigenous orature to "The Cremation of Sam McGee." I am who I am because my late grandparents held on to their mixedblood grandchildren. They, along with my mother, instilled a strong sense of Cree pride and a love of learning. My single-parent mother raised two great kids, both of whom are writers in their own worlds. Brother Jordan has always inspired me with his creative abilities, integrity, and tenacity. And Theresa. From the time she was three (she's 21 now), Theresa was dragged through lecture halls and libraries in five university campuses across two countries. Theresa has always been the greatest source of my strength, conviction, and support. In addition to tracking library sources, pulling book reviews, and photocopying, my girl protected me from the world while I hid away to study, and by her nature and teenage antics, kept me grounded and reminded that there is more to life than books and papers. Fox, Jacob, and John B. also deserve special hugs and accolades for accepting a mom they have hardly known any other way except 'upstairs working.'

The final leg of this journey could not have been done without my partner and teacher Tyrone Wilfred Tootoosis. In addition to brilliantly translating Cree into English and engaging in philosophical musings, Tyrone patiently weathered blathering diatribes, tears, sleepless nights, an almost total lack of domestic support, and through it all, unfailingly kept me warm, fed, and intellectually stimulated. Thank you ᓂᐋᑭᒪᒃ ᑭᓯᒃᐧ for being you.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

February 2000

Chapter I

Decolonizing Indigenous Histories: Towards an Oral Traditions-Based New Indian History

She let go of her acreage, sold off the chickens, and gave away the dogs to embark on this PhD program. But she really didn't want to go. Too much work to be done at home—outstanding land claims, watch-dogging federal policy initiatives, the student funding crisis—so many needs and not enough people to do all the work at the best of times. She'd already done two White degrees and really ought to be going back to the bush to pick up her Cree and study more seriously with the Old People. So few of them left. Just couldn't justify the luxury of two years, 2,000 miles south in the land of no winters, for another degree. And for what? Who would really benefit anyway? Done just fine up till now without it. Besides, she was scared. Had never seen so many street people and beggars as she did on her visit to that lush campus town. "It's not worth it," she confided to a close friend and mentor, "I'll either bleed to death or turn into stone."

Harold was middle-aged with an Old Man's temperament and way about him and he always had the knack for knowing just what to say at just the right time. "Did you ever wonder," he started, "why the Old People talk to anthropologists? Have you ever watched them? They really seem to enjoy themselves. It used to make me angry when they did this because our own people need it so much more than those anthropologists. So, one day, I asked this Old Man, 'Why?' And do you know what he told me? He said, 'our young people do not know how to learn anymore. Too much residential school. They don't know how to think for themselves anymore, how to question, how to learn. Those anthropologists, they ask hard questions that make me think. And we talk about these

things at great lengths. They can only go so far, those moniasak, and I don't tell them too much important things. But they like to learn and it cheers me up.'"

"That Old Man shocked me," Harold continued, "but when I thought about it, it made perfect sense. Before we can truly understand the knowledge that the Old Men and Women possess, we need to learn how to learn again. That's why you have to do this final degree. You'll be far from home studying with all kinds of different people, learning new ways of learning. And after you have learned these new ways, when you come home, that's when you will be ready to take up your Cree education. Your formal Cree education will begin then, and the Old People will be waiting for you."

Before she packed up her pick-up truck for Berkeley, he took her to the mountains for ceremony to protect her spirit from the harsh environment she'd be living and learning in. The faith, support, and expectations of family and teachers sent her on this learning journey.

Introduction

Cree teachings, like Cree stories/oral traditions, have no rigid beginnings or endings. Everyone's personal (his)stories interconnect and overlap, all are extensions of the past, and all are grounded in wahkôtowin, *kinship/relations*. According to Nêhiyawi-wîhtamawâkan, *Cree teaching, etymology*, we inherit relationships and obligations to the generations behind, among, and before us, to life on this earth as we know it, and to our homelands. It is to the past and to our homeland that we go to understand our present—Cree histories explain who we are, and to a large degree, shape our aspirations for the future. And so in this way the past is infused in our daily life.

I am a student of Cree history, but history is more than a vocation, it is very much

a part of who I am. Nitâcimowin, *my story*, is as old as the prairie hills and waterways of the Qu'Appelle Valley, and the windswept coastal shores of Ireland. Along the thread that connects me to the past are the stories that shape who I am and what I do. Nitâniskotâpânak, *my great grandparents*, set the course of my life by their own brave deeds. At the tender age of eighteen years Mary Gavin (1889-1971) boarded a steamer at the docks of Dublin harbor for Canada, courageously alone in her desire to make a new life in a distant and foreign land. She was a bold and spirited matriarch and I was her New World child.

Askînôhtow (1816-1888) was six years old when his people sent him to the first formal school in Western Canada at the Red River settlement.[1] He was nehiyawpwat, *Cree/Assiniboine*, of the Young Dogs band, Plains buffalo hunters whose territories ranged from the Missouri River to the lakes of Qu'Appelle. They were known to others as a notoriously independent, "unruly set of curs" because they constantly challenged the Hudson Bay Company, the only colonialist 'authority' in the region at that time.[2] His people sent him to school "on the condition of being returned when he had learned to read and write."[3] Five generations later I was the first of his line to embark on a university career.

Intrepid adventurers, Mary Gavin and Askînôhtow created space for themselves in the borderlands of culture, language, and landscapes, they mediated between the old and the new, and bequeathed a legacy of courage, pride, heritage, and love of learning. They never met but their lives crossed generations later in the births of my brother and I. "I dreamed you would have the best of both worlds," my mother still lovingly coos when I struggle to balance: Nêhiyâwiwin, *Cree identity*/Irish blood; urban/bush lifestyle; English language/Nêhiyawêwin, *Cree language*; written/oral cultures; nêhiyaw-iskwêw,

Cree woman/academic. The multiple parts of my whole often merge free of complications but sometimes they conflict. It was the beauty of convergences and the challenge of conflicts that sent me on this transitionist path, a path my mother says, much like that chosen by Askînôhtow. His niche was to find a way to make the new world work for his people, instead of against them, and he did it the best way he could with the best tools he could muster.

In many ways mine was a privileged childhood. Raised in a family of avid readers, travelers, and storytellers, my education was eclectic yet firmly grounded in place and heritage. Cree pride, history, and connection to territory were instilled from an early age to our migratory and urban generation. But times have changed, the old timers tell us, "education is our buffalo now." Education provides the means to support and challenge ourselves, and one of the many ways barriers will be shattered and spaces created without losing our integrity or autonomy as First Nations people.

I began 'doing' history as an apprentice land claims researcher with the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs in 1979. Armed with little more than a Band Council Resolution and a map, my job was to find out how land was lost or alienated from Indian Reserve status. The place I was trained to begin was in the communities. Through long visits and walks on the land with leaders and elders, usually escorted by a bunch of children, I heard the collective memories of the land through the stories of its people. Every stump, field, stream, fence post, tree bark scratching, rock face, fallen antler, abandoned dry rack, cabin, even old cars, had stories that connected the people to the land. The stories and the walks provided the questions needed to ask of the documents, but even more important, it gave me perspective, context, and drive, and enhanced a unforgettable sense of the physical and metaphysical nature of human/land relations in

Indigenous worlds. Once primed I was sent off to the archives to arm our lawyers with documentary evidence for the gladiatorial process of claims resolution.

My training in historical research came from a strong Sto:llo woman, my boss the late Mary Lou Andrews from Seabird Island, BC, and from learned people in the communities. Since history is about people, places, events, and process, it seemed only natural for research to begin at the place where it all happened and among those who experienced it or carry its memories. With no formal academic skills or experience at that time, this was the only way I knew how to 'do' history. It was not until I entered university that I discovered how "backward" this approach is perceived by professional historians and how so very few have a genuine appreciation of its value.

The Problem[4]

> Irreparable damage has been done by white writers who discredit the Indian. Books have been written of the Native American, so distorting his true nature that he scarcely resembles the real man; his faults have been magnified and his virtues minimized; his wars, and his battles, which, if successful, the white man chooses to call 'massacres', have been told and retold, but little attention has been given to his philosophy and ideals.
>
> Luther Standing Bear (Lakota), Land of the Spotted Eagle (1933)

Native American historians have been highly critical of the treatment their histories have received from mainstream academic and popular historians. The earliest critiques focused on the eurocentric biases, racism, demeaning representations, and neglect inherent in the writing of North American history.[5]

The rise of ethnohistory in the 1950s, and its prodigy the "New Indian History" in the 1980s and 1990s, ushered revisionist trends that enriched and diversified Indian history studies. These interdisciplinary studies strive to place the tribes in the broader

context of US American history, attempt to illustrate Indigenous motives according to their own cultural patterns and choices, analyze Indigenous responses and resiliance, and attempt to provide Indigenous-centered perspectives.[6] However, even the most ardent and prolific practioners of ethnohistory and New Indian History, recognize that it has not gone far enough.[7]

Many Indigenous scholars, like Luther Standing Bear, are primarily concerned that Indigenous points of view—Indigenous voices—are missing, weak, or misrepresented in written histories which results in one-sided, lopsided, or distorted representations of the past.[8] Ethnocentric notions that define 'history' and dictate its methods deny and silence the existance of Other historical traditions and voices.

Clyde Dollar spent a number of years among the Brule Sioux as a federal employee. His two year study of Brule oral history led him to conclude that the Brule had little interest in their history, that stories about the past were merely "a means of entertainment, or a method of keeping alive those cultural traditions collectively thought worthy of being perpetuated." According to Dollar, the Brule have

> little interest in the subject matter of history per se beyond the repeating of its stories, and a deeply searching pursuit of data and facts on which to build veracity in history is frequently considered rather pointless, perhaps ludicrous, decidedly nosy, and an occupation closely associated with eccentric white men.[9]

Dollar's superficial and dismissive interpretation demonstrates the need for historians to transcend their own cultural norms to learn about the past from within the Indigenous societies they are studying. To explain a tribe's history "demands a unique set of terms and references which may not be familiar to non-Indian scholars",[10] and which can only be found in tribal languages and oral traditions.

Luther Standing Bear outbraved the 19th century Indian boarding school system

that diligently sought to eradicate Indigenous languages. Reflecting critically on that policy and his experiences, Standing Bear asserted in 1933 that the "language of a people is part of their history. Today we should be perpetuating history instead of destroying it."[11] Indigenous scholars consistently stress that every culture has its own way of interpreting, recording, transmitting, and contextualizing knowledge about the past and the most powerful insights come from an examination of their languages.[12] Despite outstanding reports by non-Indian anthropologist/linguists on the importance of language study in understanding Indigenous historical traditions, however, few if any historians bother familiarizing themselves or learning the languages of the Indigenous peoples they study.[13] Yamasee scholar Donald Grinde Jr. laments that

> Native Americans are painfully aware that our history is perhaps the only branch of the discipline in which one does not need a thorough knowledge of the language, culture, traditions, and philosophies of the people being studied.[14]

Indigenous scholars are even more critical of 'Indian' historians who base their histories predominantly on written records and neglect, disparage, or abuse Indigenous oral histories. The late Tewa scholar Alfonso Ortiz chastised historians of Indian-White relations for ignoring Indigenous oral history: "The Indian-perceived past is all too often defined as 'tradition', and then dropped, if it is dealt with at all."[15] Indigenous oral histories provide vital data, interpretations, and points of view necessary for well-balanced accounts of the past. 'Forensic history' does not provide the depth of understanding required to do Indigenous history.[16] While historians are slowly acknowledging that the conventional/academic/modernist document-driven approach to studying the Indigenous past is passé at best, and elitist and colonialist at worst, most still presume to represent Indigenous histories without stepping beyond the confines of their

ivory towers to 'hear' the Indigenous side of the story.[17] Dakota historian Angela Cavender-Wilson speaks for many when she states that the

> idea that scholars can 'sift through' the biases of non-Indian written sources to get at the Indian perspective is presumptuous and erroneous....they should discontinue the pretense that what they are writing is American Indian history.[18]

Lacking the insights found in the languages and oral histories of Native American people, mainstream historians often impose Western values, motives, and rationality on historical Indigenous actions—they ethnocentrically judge them by Western/modern standards which results in misrepresentation, distortion, and superficiality.

Indigenous scholars charge that conventional historians do not understand that Indigenous historical traditions are grounded in different philosophical understandings. Indigenous oral histories root action in place, not time, and by missing this reality conventional historians neglect the role this kinship between humans and the natural world played in historical events.[19] Historians also generally fail to understand the religious meanings and motivations Indigenous people brought to their historical encounters with non-Indians and the consequences of those motivations.[20]

In many instances where Indigenous oral traditions are studied, Indigenous scholars express concern about the manner in which they are treated and interpreted. George L. Cornell lambastes modern scholars for labeling "Indian oral traditions with convenient and familiar titles, while imposing the structures and criticism of western culture upon Native oral histories."[21] Cornell stresses that conventional approaches need to "rethought and substantially revised" because

> Indian oral traditions are the respective histories of diverse Native peoples. They are *their* record of what was important, what happened over time, what they believed, what they cherished, what they despised, and what they feared. These histories belong to the people and must be preserved

> and nurtured, but they must not be usurped by literary imperialism. Native peoples cannot allow their traditions to be defined by scholarship which chooses to interpret their oral record out of context. For, if this occurs, they have lost control of their history, and all that was, and have become the products of another culture's imagination.[22]

The imposition of Western binaries between fact and fiction, myth and truth, for example, distorts Indigenous views of the past. In most Indigenous societies there is little distinction between the physical and metaphysical realms, nor is there any fragmentation of knowledge into discipline-like categories. The tendency of conventional historians to 'demythologize' Indigenous oral histories to give it greater validity in the Western sense of history is a clear violation of its principles and practices.[23] While mainstream historians are well aware of the ethnocentrism of fragmenting Indigenous knowledge, they admit the difficulties of transcending their own cultural norms. Richard White omitted significant supernatural events in Winnebago history because "I do not believe that the Winnebagos walked above the earth, nor that the prophet [Tenskwatawa (Shawnee)] turned his belt into a snake." White admits that in "making this narrative decision, I failed to convey a full Winnebago understanding of significant events....[i]t is precisely this kind of narrative conundrum that writing Native American history forces historians to face.[24]

Treating oral histories like archival documents—sifting them for 'facts', discarding the 'mythical' elements and attempting to force them to conform to "Western notions of respectability, truth, narrative format, categories, significance, terminology, sensibility, and so forth" reeks of intellectual colonialism.[25] While there are numerous sites of difference between Indigenous oral history and western historical conventions, Yamasee historian Donald Grinde Jr.'s analysis encapsulates the main of the sites of conflict:

> According to modern historical standards, research historians of American Indian need not know the language, culture, and values of the society they study. Often historians of the American Indian claim that their ignorance makes for objectivity. Some academic historians in positions of power maintain that today's surviving American Indian groups have little or no culture, language, and spirituality left. Moreover, these scholars maintain that what does survive among contemporary American Indians is so distorted that one need not be unduly concerned about communicating with contemporary American Indian groups when studying them![26]

Mainstream ethnohistorians like James Axtell and Francis Paul Prucha rationalize that objectivity requires distancing, and countercharge that Native American scholarship is potentially essentialist and susceptible to the "genetic fallacy" that a "tribe holds exclusive proprietary rights to its history."[27] Grinde retorts that Native people are not concerned with dominating, they are concerned with voice. Besides, "few people worry about the 'genetic threat' of Anglos studying the Founding Fathers or the 'gender threat' to women's history." How far would a graduate student in French history get without French knowledge, language, and an understanding of French life? "do French people pose a genetic threat to their own history?"[28] In The Children of Aataentsic Bruce Trigger claims to present an interpretation from "the Huron perspective" without Huron oral history. "Only the anthropologist's understanding of Indian life can provide the background needed to asses and understand the behavior of Indians as recorded in history" he claims.[29]

Such ironic arrogance proffers fodder for Gerald Vizenor's consistent criticisms against social science narratives "those unsure reins of final vocabularies and incoherent paracolonialism."[30]

> Science, translations, and the discoveries of otherness in tribal cultures are the histories of racialism and the metanarratives of dominance. The foundational theories of the social sciences have denied natural reason,

tribal memories, and the coherence of heard stories.[31]

Jace Weaver concurs that the imposition of foreign structures and constructs on Indigenous knowledge and identity sustains colonialism:

> By treating orature as a dead relic and thus valorizing the written over the oral, one renders the written version normative and a representation of a pure, authentic culture and identity over against current degraded natives.[32]

Charging that mainstream historical literature "imprisons Indian history" through the silencing of Indigenous perspectives and voices, and "by the rhetoric and scholarly inventions of empire" Native American scholars argue for a new articulation of Indigenous scholarship grounded in tribal intellectual traditions. The foundation for this "American Indian intellectualism" can be found in our respective oral traditions which mainstream historians consistently ignore or disparage.[33] Dakota historian Angela Cavender-Wilson asserts that Indigenous oral histories are the "greatest resource upon which the discipline of American Indian history will proceed."[34]

This study strives to answer a number of questions: why it is that many historians have such difficulty accepting, practicing, and utilizing Indigenous oral histories in their studies of the Indigenous past; how this state of affairs is being challenged from within and without; and what Indigenous intellectual traditions offer towards the decolonization of Indigenous histories and the development of an oral traditions-based New Indian History.

The present study asserts that serious study of Indigenous (oral) historical traditions offer exciting opportunities to historians of the Indigenous past. In addition to new sources of information and points of view, it also challenges conventional historical wisdoms and narrative forms. While Indigenous oral traditions can never be adequately

duplicated once transformed into written texts, when treated with integrity they can yield new ways of understanding the nature of history which, in turn, can serve as the foundation for the development of an Indigenous oral traditions-based New Indian History. This study asserts further that the mandate and goals of Native American Studies provide a fertile field for creative experimentation towards this end.

The Scope

This dissertation is predominantly concerned about the relative lack of oral history utilized by historians, the inappropriateness of conventional oral history methods, and the value of engaging in oral historical methods that are grounded in Indigenous oral traditions.

Scholarly literature on Indigenous oral history is rife with debates about its nature, value, and reliability. In order to ascertain why modern history has such difficulty accepting and employing oral history one is required to consult a large body of published materials. Since a comprehensive study of the range of debates concerning the nature, value, reliability, and form of Indigenous oral histories from a Native American Studies perspective, has not yet been done, the literature review in chapter two provides an overview.[35] Taken as a whole, these debates expose a wide range of assumptions which tell a larger story about nature of colonial relations and demonstrate the lengths modern scholars will go to protect their hegemonic hold on their professional standards, tenets, methods, and narrative forms.

Chapter three also takes the form of a literature review. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the hegemony of modern/conventional history is losing ground in its contest with Other histories and that some of its most powerful critiques come from

within the academy itself. It will also demonstrate that these critiques—mostly from adherents of the New History movement, New Historicism, postcolonial studies, and postmodernism—have initiated a breaking down of traditional disciplinary barriers which promises inroads for historical traditions outside the conventional mold.

Chapter four submits that the challenges waged within the academy, while opening doors, have not gone far enough in recognizing and accommodating Native American historical traditions. It will demonstrate a long history of Native American critiques of modern historical conventions and a long history of Native American scholars writing their peoples' histories within tribally-specific oral traditions-based frameworks and forms. Following direction from these intellectual elders, chapter four demonstrates that the NAS mandate requiring the development of Indigenous based intellectual pursuits, holds the most promise and provides the best disciplinary home for further developments. By way of example, this chapter provides a general survey drawn from many tribes to demonstrate that Indigenous intellectual traditions not only exist, they also offer the intellectual foundations and methodologies required for the development of Native American Studies and an Indigenous oral traditions-based New Indian History. This survey is not intended to promote pan-Indian frameworks. Rather, it advocates serious study at the local tribal level and hints that if generalizations are sought, these can only be drawn when enough local or micro studies are available.

This dissertation clearly advocates tribal-specific approaches to understanding the past and so chapter five provides a case study of historical traditions located in nêhiyawîhcikêwin, *Cree ways/culture*. It demonstrates that stepping outside the confines of the academy to relearn history from within a tribal-specific framework not only offers new methodological and theoretical frameworks, it also offers insight on writing Cree

histories in the oral tradition.

Chapter six also takes the form of a case study. Based upon my own experience among the Ochekwi Sipi muskego-wininiwak, *Fisher River Swampy Cree people*, this chapter addresses some of the problems historians face in the process of researching and writing tribal histories in situations where there are multiple gaps in the collective memory. Its inclusion in this study serves to demonstrate that answers to many methodological problems can be found within the communities themselves.

Methodological Notes

No primary or fieldwork research was conducted for the first three chapters following the introduction. All relied on secondary materials and the methods employed consisted of entering into existing debates or engaging in critical analyses. However, because chapter five has a more original quality and is based on oral traditions, it required a different approach and set of methodologies.

The framework and foundation of chapter five is based on nêhiyawi-wîhtamawâkana, *Cree teachings*, which come from many sources—family, friends, teachers, recorded oral history collections, and a handful of Cree writings. Each posed unique methodological challenges in the context of writing this dissertation. The lessons from family, friends, and teachers, along with my own experientially-gained insights, began long before this dissertation was imagined. According to Cree teachings, because they were given, this cumulative knowledge-bundle is now mine to use and transmit in a manner that respects its integrity and protocols. Teachings from relatives accumulate over the course of a lifetime, a process that does not lend itself to footnoting according to academic convention. These teachings have been employed to provide the foundation and

interpretive framework for this study, and where they have been used to exemplify, their sources have been contextualized within the text.

The interviews conducted specifically for this study were done in accordance with the University of California, Berkeley, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (see appendix 1). As will be demonstrated, one of the fundamental differences between doing oral history the Cree way and doing it according to academic conventions is that the former process is as much, if not more, about social relations as it is about acquiring information. In the Cree way, our sources are our teachers and the teachings they impart are intended and taken as lessons to be applied and lived. Cree education, kiskinohamatowin, refers to a reciprocal and interactive teaching relationship between student and teacher, a "community activity."[36] Thus, seeking Cree knowledge requires an entirely different kind of relationship based on long-term commitment, reciprocity, and respect. As Willie Ermine explains, interpersonal relationships facilitate dialogue which is an important "instrument in Aboriginal pedagogy and protocol."[37] For these reasons, treating my teachers as mere 'sources' by relegating them to footnotes in the margins of the text is inappropriate and disrespectful. Furthermore, one of the upshots of being a student of Cree oral histories, where memory training and the spontaneity of instruction are norm, was that a tape recorder was seldom used. Verification consisted of speaking back the lessons and/or reading back my use and application of them.

As a student of Cree oral histories I am accountable to my teachers, as a PhD candidate I am accountable to the standards set by the university. My choice in dealing with the 'referencing problem' was to adhere to the oral tradition form of building my teachers into the text rather than footnoting them in the margins. Who they are and my relationship to them is as much a part of the story as is their teachings. By building my

teachers into their stories I hope to avoid that most callous anthropologism which "relegates to obscurity" Indigenous peoples who provided first-rate information "while non-Indians who simply recorded what they were told became literary celebrities, even though they did little in the way of interpreting Native oral traditions."[38] In this instance I also took direction from Gerald Vizenor's criticism against base translations of tribal literatures: "The inclusion of translations in anthologies of native literature, without critical mention of context, texture, and the oral nuances of performance, contributes to literary dominance."[39]

This study also relied on a number of interviews conducted and recorded by others. Most came from private collections recorded in the 1970s and many were done in the Cree language. All the translations were done by Tyrone Tootoosis, a noted oral historian from the Poundmaker Cree/Assiniboine First Nation. In some instances Tyrone translated and transcribed recordings on his own. In other cases he gave simultaneously translations while we listened to the tapes and I transcribed. The process was long and arduous especially when we came upon words or phrases in Cree that had no English correspondence or old (archaic) Cree words that are no longer used, and because of the descriptive rather than categorical nature of the Cree language.

The problems of Cree-English translation occurred during the interviews, oral history sessions, and during the process of transcribing earlier recordings. Many times we sat around the kitchen table well into the night deconstructing words in search of their fullest meanings and origins. Through this process the philosophical/spiritual origins, concepts, teachings, and their transformation over time, emerged. Iskwêw, *woman*, derives from iskotêw, *fire*, a metaphor for *life*. The taxonomical genealogy of iskwêw goes back to the sacred stories of the first woman which explain that women's bodies are

links between the spirit and human worlds through which life emerges. The image iskwêw elicits is that of a brightly burning fire that nourishes and protects life on its journey to earth. How sad it is that this most beautiful word has been bastardized by ignorance and racism to represent the colonialist construction of the ugly and pathetic 'squaw' drudge.[40] The late Alex Bonais (Cree) explained that today young people are called oskâysisak, *single youths*, when long ago they were called oskinîkis, *a young man who has not had sex yet*, or oskinîsqwêw, *a young virgin woman*: "when you say 'oskâysis', *single youth*," he explained, "this means that this child knows nothing. He runs into obstacles wherever he turns, because he is not receiving guidance." "This is why the elders have modified the language in regards to oskinîkis because the name does not fit the behavior. This is what the white man's influence has resulted in."[41] In Cree every word contains a bundle of teachings.

As a non-Cree speaker I relied heavily on the expertise of translators but as an insider not an outsider. Even those whose 'traditional' upbringing was interrupted by language loss and/or geographical displacement, have the kinship links necessary to reintegrate and learn, and to varying degrees have internalized cultural communication patterns. Edward S. and Mary Black Rogers explain that despite considerable outward signs of culture-change, overall, change is surprisingly superficial. Memory resides not only in explicit knowledge "but also in patterned ways of thinking and reacting, for the most part, unselfconsciously."[42] Even those Indigenous people who use only English "do so in a distinctly Indian way, so that some knowledge of cultural communication patterns is requisite to an understanding of conversations."[43]

Textually representing Cree words and phrases and their English translations poses a dilemma.[44] According to The Chicago Manual of Style any language other than

English is foreign. While not a rigid rule, the Manual suggests that "[i]solated words and phrases in a foreign language may be set in italics if they are likely to be unfamiliar to readers."[45] It also suggests that in ethnological studies where words are drawn from the languages of the societies being studied, the words "are usually italicized only on first occurrence."[46] While almost all the published ethnographic and linguistic studies set Cree words and phrases in italics and their English translations in single quotation marks[47] I disagree with the premise underlying this approach, namely, that Cree is a "foreign" language. It is absurd that a Cree person writing in the middle of Cree territory is expected to treat Cree as a foreign language. To make the point that English is the foreign language in this instance, yet refrain from taxing readers by presenting the entire English text in italics, when Cree is used I have inverted the relationship by setting the Cree words and phrases in roman type and their English translations in italics.[48]

A number of problems were encountered over the course of this study resulting from philosophical conflicts between Cree and modern approaches to learning. One major tenet of Western erudition holds that a PhD degree represents expertise in a specialized area. By university standards, the fact that I am an Associate Professor and PhD candidate signifies that I am a specialist in my area of expertise and can, therefore, speak and write of it with authority. But in the Cree world I am a child just learning the basics, and as such, have no authority to speak as if I know. In the Cree world 'expertise' comes after a lifetime of committed learning which entails far more than anything the academy demands. It requires hearing, watching, experiencing rather than reading, speaking rather than writing, and it requires subjectively living it rather than objectively studying it. However, even near the end of life's journeys the oldest of our elders stress that they "do not know anything." Seldom do you hear a Cree elder profess "I know."

What is heard is "I believe" or "I believe it to be true." There is only One that is all-knowing, the rest of us have belief.

This conflict between modernist authority, instilled by academic training, and the humility inherent in Cree oral traditions, surfaces throughout the writing of this text, and is its greatest weakness. The authority voice comes through loud and clear in the chapters dealing exclusively with the literature and also slips into chapter five "Nêhiyawîhcikêwin and History." Clearly, this novice had difficulty entering into debates in the literature writing in the oral tradition and struggled to remain in the text and avoid 'objective' distancing.

Thus, problems of authority and translation occurred at multiple levels in this study. Most scholars agree that oral traditions can "never be fully expressed in the written, that experience cannot be duplicated in the text. Context, Native language, and Native culture ultimately cannot be translated."[49] Gerald Vizenor explains that "stories that are heard are not the same as the silence of the written word." So much is lost in translation—the communal context of performance, gesture, intonation—"even the best translations are scriptural reductions of the rich oral nuances." [50] However, many like Gerald Vizenor, believe in the importance of "the attempt and in the possibilities for vivifying the text."[51] The challenge is to re-imagine and re-express the oral into the written.

One of the primary differences between writing and speaking is that speaking takes place in a social, interactive environment while writing is a lonely, detached activity. In general, writers are spatially and temporally isolated from their audiences, which causes written language to have "a detached quality that contrasts with the involvement of spoken language."[52] For many Indigenous peoples, social science training

and the solitude of writing, can be alienating.

Hau'ofa Epeli, a Native Papua New Guinean, was raised in an intensely social environment where the spoken word "in the form of stories, was central to social and cultural life."[53] After spending fifteen years "immersed almost entirely in the world of books and silent story-telling" he returned home to do anthropological fieldwork and found that he had became "appropriately silenced":

> I had become a reader, a listener to stories told silently by invisible tellers, Even when, much later, I did fieldwork as a trainee anthropologist in remote villages of the world of the spoken word, I was largely a listener, observer, chronicler and analyst, a role alien to Pacific cultures.[54]

Epeli's social science training was so effectively distancing and objective that he accepted, as inevitable, peripheral status among his own community:

> Solitude and detachment, the *sine qua non* of the writer, are alien to such societies. To be a writer in the Pacific one has to place oneself on the periphery of one's community, or remove oneself altogether to an ivory tower....The tongue that had spun out words so easily was silenced in an alien environment of books and scholarly discourse....Writing was inevitable, for by then it was the only way I could tell my stories with a measure of confidence.[55]

Epeli observed his own descent into the folds of internal colonialism by becoming lost in anthropology, the discipline which Johannes Fabian asserts "contributed above all to the intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise" and which even Lévi-Strauss called the "handmaiden of colonialism."[56] Like other Indigenous peoples who take up the academic challenge, he fell into the practice and language of dominance, but he did not reemerge in his story. Epeli imagined himself, in Gerald Vizenor's terms, a "hostage of an education."[57] Vizenor warns that, "[t]he simulations of academic remorse and substitutional victimization serve the literature of dominance."[58] Writing about voices speaking was at times a lonely venture but only when there was no one around to talk it

through with. And when I found myself alone, meditation and prayer filled the void.

Decolonizing Indigenous histories is also about decolonizing ourselves which entails moving beyond victimry. A guiding post can be found in Vizenor's conception of survivance:

> survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence....native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry.[59]

The challenge for Native American scholars in the social sciences then, is to transcend the influences of "structuralism, modernism, and the dualism of subject, object or otherness" and to deny "paracolonial discoveries and representations of tribal literatures."[60] The challenge for Native American historians is to create space for innovative articulations of the Indigenous past that bridge the old and the new.

Endnotes

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[1] Present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba. The author has published on various aspects of the life and times of Askînôtow: "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askeenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884," pp. 304-329 in Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996); "'Our Man in the Field': The Status and Role of a CMS Native Catechist in Rupert's Land," Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society 33, 1 (1991): 65-78; "The Red River Indian Mission School and John West's 'Little Charges,' 1820-1833," Native Studies Review 4, 1 & 2 (1988): 129-165; "The Church Missionary Society Red River Mission and the Emergence of a Native Ministry, 1820-1869, With a Case Study of Charles Pratt of Touchwood Hills," (MA thesis: University of British Columbia, 1988).

[2] John Rae "A Visit to the Red River and the Saskatchewan, 1861," edited by Irene M. Spry, The Geographical Journal 140, part 2 (February 1974), p. 11 cited in Winona Stevenson, "Education is Our Buffalo: An Outline History of Aboriginal People and Post-Secondary Education in Canada (paper presented to the Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 19 February 1993).

[3] National Archives of Canada, Church Missionary Society Archives, Reel A88, George Harbidge to Josiah Pratt, 1 July 1824 cited in Stevenson, "The Red River Indian Mission School," p. 139.

[4] **Note on nomenclature:** Throughout this study 'Indigenous' is applied as a general term to encompass all peoples of indigenous ancestry in the Americas. It is used interchangeably with 'Native', 'Aboriginal', and 'Native American'. In Canada legal classifications exist which sometimes cause confusion. The Canadian Constitution (1982) refers to all people of Indigenous ancestry as "Aboriginal Peoples" and then breaks them down into three legal categories: Indian, Inuit, and Metis. The term 'First Nation(s)' has been adopted by 'status Indians' to stress their historical relationship to the land and in rejection of the 'status Indian' designation imposed by the federal Indian Act. 'Indian' is used in this text when contextually appropriate.

[5] Jack D. Forbes, "The Historian and the Indian: Racial Bias in American History," The Americas 19, 4 (1963): 349-362; Ron Caselli, "Historical Repression and the Native American," The Indian Historian 3, 4 (1970): 44-45; Alfonso Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations: A View from the Other Side of the Frontier," pp. 1-16 in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., Indians in American History: An Introduction (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1988); Steve Crum, "Making Indians Disappear: A Native American Historian's Views Regarding the Treatment of Indians in American History," Tribal College (Winter 1993): 28-32.

[6] R. David Edmunds, "Coming of Age: Some Thoughts Upon American Indian History," Indiana Magazine of History lxxxv (December 1989), p. 316.

[7] See for example, Frederick Hoxie, "The Problems of Indian History," pp. 33-43 in Albert L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson, eds., Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1994); Calvin Martin, ed., The American Indian and the Problem of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Melissa L. Meyer and Kerwin Lee Klein, "Native American Studies and the End of Ethnohistory," pp. 182-216 in Russell Thornton, ed., Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Richard White, "Using the Past: History and Native American Studies," pp. 217-143 in Thornton, ed., Studying Native America.

[8] Joseph Marshall III, On Behalf of the Wolf and First Peoples (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995), pp. 69-72.

[9] Clyde Dollar, "Through the Looking Glass: History and the Modern Brule Sioux," in Daniel Tyler, ed., Western American History in the Seventies (Fort Collins: Robinson Press, Inc., 1973), p. 40.

[10] Daniel Tyler, "The Indian Weltanschauung: A Summary of Views Expressed by Indians at the 'Viewpoint in History' Conference," in Red Men and Hat-Wearers: Viewpoints in Indian History (Papers from the Colorado State University Conference on Indian History, August 1974), p. 135.

[11] Luther Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle (1933. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978 reprint), p. 234.

[12] Angela Cavender-Wilson, "Ehanna Woyakapi: History and the Language of Dakota Narration," (paper presented at the Western History Association Conference, Sacramento, CA, 15 October 1998), p. 3.

[13] See for example, Keith H. Basso, Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990); and J. Randolph Valentine, "Linguistics and Languages in Native American Studies," pp. 152-181 in Thornton, ed., Studying Native America.

[14] Donald A. Grinde Jr., "Teaching American Indian History: A Native American Voice," Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter 32, 6 (1994), p. 11.

[15] Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," p. 10.

[16] Lawrence M. Hauptman, Tribes and Tribulations: Misconceptions about American Indians and Their Histories (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), p. xv.

[17] Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," in The American Indian and the Problem of History, pp. 6, 9; Winona Stevenson, "Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories Part I: The Othering of Indigenous History," Saskatchewan History

50, 2 (1998), p. 24.

[18] Angela Cavender-Wilson, "American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?" American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996), p. 5.

[19] Peter Nabokov, "Present Memories, Past History," in Martin, ed., The American Indian and the Problem of History, p. 145; Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," p. 11.

[20] ibid., p. 12.

[21] George L. Cornell, "The Imposition of Western Definitions of Literature on Indian Oral Traditions," in Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy, eds., The Native in Literature: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives (Oakville, ON: ECW Press, 1987), pp. 175-76.

[22] ibid., p. 176.

[23] Harvey Knight, "Preface," in Alexander Wolfe, Earth Elder Stories: The Pinayzitt Path (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988), p. ix.

[24] White, "Using the Past," pp. 227, 228.

[25] Angela Cavender-Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word: Native Oral Traditions in American Indian History," pp. 101-116 in Donald L. Fixico, ed., Rethinking American Indian History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 104, 110, 112.

[26] Donald A. Grinde Jr., "Historical Narratives of Nationhood and the Semiotic Construction of Social Identity: A Native American Perspective," in Michael K. Green, ed., Issues in Native American Cultural Identity (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 203.

[27] Francis Paul Prucha argues, that the belief that a person cannot legitimately study the history of an ethnic group without being a member of that group, is a fallacy: "this ethnic or racial criteria" of the validity of historical research is unacceptable because it is anti-intellectual. Francis Paul Prucha, "Doing Indian History," in Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka, eds., Indian White Relations: A Persistent Paradox (Washington: Howard University Press, 1981), p. 7; James Axtell supports Francis Jennings' denouncement of all forms of censorship: "He rejected as insidious the fallacy that a tribe holds exclusive proprietary rights to its history, with full control over access to information and ultimate disposition of, even proceeds from, the final product." James Axtell, "The Scholar's Obligations to Native Peoples," in After Columbus: Essay in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 245-46; Grinde, "Teaching American Indian History," pp. 1, 11.

[28] ibid..

[29] Bruce G. Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic I: A History of the Huron People to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), pp. 5, 12.

[30] Gerald Vizenor, Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), pp. 68-69.

[31] ibid., p. 67.

[32] Jace Weaver, That the People Might Live: Native American Literature and Native American Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 20, 21.

[33] Grinde, "Teaching American Indian History," p. 11; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996), p. 57; Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," p. 15; Wolfe, Earth Elder Stories, p. viii; Marshall, On Behalf of the Wolf, p. 39; Devon A. Mihesuah, "Epilogue: Voices, Interpretations, and the 'New Indian History': a Comment on the AIQ Special Issue on Writing About American Indians," American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996), p. 91; Cavender-Wilson, "American Indian History," p. 3; Robert Allen Warrior, Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 118.

[34] Cavender-Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word."

[35] A study done by Alexander von Gernet for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada, is a comprehensive review of literature dealing with almost all the contentious aspects of Indigenous oral history. However, his questions, interpretations, and conclusions exhibit strong bias in favor his employer's (the federal government) self-interest and agenda. Von Gernet, Alexander. "Oral Narratives and Aboriginal Pasts: An Interdisciplinary Review of the Literature on Oral Traditions and Oral Histories," (unpublished report submitted to Canada, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, April,1996).

[36] Professor Solomon Ratt Testimony, OTC Mock Trial: A Special Presentation to the Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan (Regina: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 14 September 1992), video.

[37] Willie Ermine, "Pedagogy from the Ethos: An Interview with Elder Ermine on Language," in Lenore A. Stiffarm, ed., As We See...Aboriginal Pedagogy (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, 1998), p. 10.

[38] Cornell, "The Imposition of Western Definitions," p. 175.

[39] Gerald Vizenor, "Introduction," Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995), p. 8.

[40] For analyses of the image of the "squaw drudge" see David D. Smits, "The 'Squaw Drudge': A Prime Index of Savagism," Ethnohistory 29, 4 (1982): 281-306, and Rayna Green, "The Pocahontis Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in Ellen Carol Dubois and V. I. Ruiz, eds., Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in Women's History (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[41] Alex Bonais, interviewed by Wilfred Tootoosis, c. 1974, original and transcripts in possession of Tyrone Tootoosis. Tyrone Tootoosis translator (audio).

[42] Edward S. Rogers and Mary Black Rogers, "Who Were the Cranes? Groups and Group Identity Names in Northern Ontario," in Margaret G. Hanna and Brian Kooyman, eds., Approaches to Algonquian Archaeology. Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference of the Archaeological Association of the University of Calgary (Calgary: University of Calgary Archaeology Association, 1982), p. 168.

[43] ibid., pp. 168-69.

[44] The Plains Cree dialect utilized in this study follows the roman orthography system described in Cree Language Structures by Freda Ahenakew. Cree words are written according to the rule of "one sound, one letter." The only exception to this rule is that long vowels are marked with a circumflex: â, ê, î, ô. Freda Ahenakew, Cree Language Structures: A Cree Approach (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 1987); Freda Ahenakew, ed., wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina Stories of the House People (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1987), p. 113.

[45] The Chicago Manual of Style, Thirteenth Edition, Revised and Expanded (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 169.

[46] ibid. p. 170.

[47] See for example, David G. Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979 reprint); Freda Ahenakew, a renown and well published Cree linguist also abides by this formula. See for example, wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina.

[48] I took this same approach in the writing of my master's thesis in the history department at the University of British Columbia and my grounds were accepted by my supervisor, Dr. Arthur Ray, and the Department. However, when I went to file my thesis with the Special Collections department, the clerk rejected it on the grounds that the foreign words (Cree) were not italicized. After considerable haranguing the intervention of the Department finally persuaded the clerk that it was "ok" to accept it in its submitted form. See, Stevenson, "The Church Missionary Society Red River Mission."

[49] Kimberly M. Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), p. 15.

[50] Vizenor, "Introduction," p. 6.

[51] Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor, p. 15.

[52] Wallace L. Chafe, "Linguistic Differences Produced Between Speaking and Writing," in David R. Olsen, Nancy Torrance, and Angela Hildyard, eds., Language, Literacy and Learning: The Nature and Consequences of Reading and Writing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 105, 116.

[53] Hau'ofa Epeli, "Oral Traditions and Writing," Landfall: A New Zealand Quarterly 44, 4 (1990), p. 403.

[54] ibid., p. 409.

[55] ibid., p. 411.

[56] Cited in Weaver, That the People Might Live, p. 19.

[57] Vizenor, "Introduction," p. 11.

[58] ibid..

[59] Gerald Vizenor, Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p. 15.

[60] Vizenor, Manifest Manners, p. 77.

Chapter II

The Academic (Modern) Treatment of Voice: A Literature Review

> I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any condition whatsoever.
>
> Robert Lowie, "Oral Tradition and History," (1915)

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.
>
> Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (1968)

Within the context of Native American criticism the primary objective of the following literature review is to determine how Indigenous oral histories have been defined, understood, analyzed, and utilized in academic circles—what it is about the treatment of Indigenous oral histories by many academicians that Indigenous scholars so vehemently object to. It will be demonstrated that the academic treatment of the oral histories of non-literate or semi-literate peoples is replete with debates on it's nature, credibility as source, value as cultural signifier, and poetic forms. It will also be demonstrated that the academic discourse on Indigenous knowledge, especially oral history, is not mere academic exercise. Rather, it has very real repercussions in Indian country. This is best illustrated by how oral history has been treated in courts of law because the manner in which the courts have understood and interpreted oral history has had, and will continue to have, serious impacts on federal Indian policy.

The "Lowie Debate" (1914-1917)

Current discussions and debates concerning oral history have a relatively long history. Back in 1915 anthropologist Robert Lowie wrote a scathing critique against what he considered the uncritical use of oral testimony by fellow anthropologists John R. Swanton and Ronald B. Dixon.[1] Lowie's critique culminated in a lively debate on a range of oral history issues which exemplify positivist reactions to Indigenous oral history. Thus, the 'Lowie Debate' is a useful starting point because many of the significant questions currently debated about oral history were raised by Lowie over eighty years ago.

Swanton and Dixon studied pre-contact origins and migrations of linguistic stocks north of Mexico and in 1914 published some of their results in an article entitled "Primitive American History." They demonstrated that the use of oral history field research among living Native American descendents yielded valuable data. Based on their experience they promoted the use of oral history, albeit with some caveats; namely, that oral traditions were sometimes "noncommittal or misleading" and needed to be weighed against testimonies collected by several different persons and in connection with archaeological and other ethnological investigations, "especially physical characteristics, language or general culture."[2]

Lowie's primary objection was that Swanton and Dixon did not address the relations between oral tradition and history to which he posed the methodological question of "whether tradition as such supplies historically valuable data." After some discussion Lowie concluded that oral traditions have no historical value "whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever."[3] His reasoning was that the truth of oral traditions

cannot be gauged without extraneous evidence—linguistic, ethnological or archaeological—which, if available, make oral traditions superfluous. Besides, he asserted, even when tribal memory of historical events is accurate the events are not significant, "the assumed native 'history' is not history in our sense." The only value in oral traditions is that they "furnish a starting point for linguistic, archaeology or other investigations."[4]

Lowie's critique prompted replies from Swanton, Dixon and a number of other ethnologists of the time who argued that oral traditions are sometimes "extraordinarily accurate" and even where it cannot be confirmed by other sources there is a "preponderance of probability that the tradition of origin has a historical basis."[5] A. A. Goldenweiser stressed:

> We grant, without hesitation, that in the presence of linguistic, ethnological and archaeological evidence, traditional accounts, obviously of less evidential value, lost their significance, as unnecessary corroboration... [However] the agreement of tradition with other evidence of greater intrinsic merit, is of importance, for on the accumulated experience of such agreement rests the greater or less right of tradition to form part of the ethnological method.[6]

Goldenweiser was appalled by Lowie's blanket rejection of all oral tradition accounts:

> should <u>all</u> traditional evidence be discarded, as methodologically valueless, or do traditions, notwithstanding their unreliability, represent a heuristic tool of some value? The case of tradition thus stands and falls with the case of all doubtful, or imperfect, or tainted evidence.[7]

By way of analogy Goldenweiser stressed that the use of oral tradition likens to the diagnosis of disease or the examination of a murder case and, therefore, should not be summarily rejected. The ethnologist, like the physician or crime detective, follow vague

or doubtful symptoms, or illusive and contradictory clues, in pursuit of truth.

Lowie's come-back more clearly articulated his previous position. He did concede that "even the wildest and manifestly impossible tales" may be valuable as insights into culture, but they were not 'history'.[8] His assessment of the value of oral history was based entirely on the standards of western (modern) notions of history. He stressed that "primitive history" does not adhere to western historical consciousness: "[P]rimitive man" is not "endowed with historical sense or perspective; the picture he is able to give of events is like the picture of the European war as it is mirrored in the mind of an illiterate peasant reduced solely to his direct observation." Furthermore, the "facts of what we call history are as a rule, not facts which fall under primitive observation at all, but transcend it by the complexity and the great spans of time involved"[9]

> nothing is more striking than the extraordinary importance assigned to trivial incidents. Such things may be absolutely true, but from none of them is the fabric of history made. On the other hand, if we turn to occurrences of tremendous cultural and historical significance, the natives ignore them or present us with a wholly misleading picture of them.[10]

He concludes that "Indian tradition is historically worthless, because the occurrences, possibly real, which it retains, are of no historical significance; and because it fails to record, or to record accurately, the most momentous happenings."[11] In other words, because Indigenous oral accounts of past events do not conform to western sensibilities, they are 'tradition' not 'history.' Even in cases where oral traditions provide accurate historical data, Lowie asserted that,

> it is purely superfluous information, for I arrive at this result with absolute certainty from a linguistic comparison. In history, as everywhere else, our duty is to determine the facts objectively; if primitive notions tally with ours, so much the better for them, not for ours.[12]

Lowie then critically attacked his colleagues for defending oral traditions:

> I have a strong suspicion that lurking behind the readiness to accept primitive for real history is the naïve unconscious assumption that somehow it is no more than fair to suppose that people know best about themselves. This assumption, of course, need only to be brought up into consciousness to stand revealed in its monstrous nakedness....How can the historian beguile himself into the belief that he need only question the natives of a tribe to get at its history?[13]

By presentist scholarly standards, Lowie's remarks are unquestionably eurocentric and myopic, but his honesty clarifies the foundations underlying contemporary discussions. The main questions currently raised in academic circles about the value and use of oral histories were raised by Robert Lowie more than eighty years ago. The questions he raised fall into three critical themes: (1) the relations between oral tradition and history, (2) oral history and conventional historical standards, and (3) the value of oral history as cultural signifyer. Since current debates surrounding the nature, value, and use of oral history fall into these three critical themes, they serve as the framework for the following literature review.

Critical Themes

Taxonomy—Relations Between Oral Tradition and History

Content and Form. Lowie's primary criticism against Swanton and Dixon was that they did not address the "relations of oral traditions to history."[14] Discussions and debates concerning the relationship of oral tradition and history 'proper' have become increasingly sophisticated since Lowie's time but always tend to centre on problems of definition or taxonomy. Scholars find the term 'oral history' problematic; first, because there is no universal agreement on the distinctions between oral history and oral tradition;

second, because oral history is both a method and a body of information resulting from that method, and third, because as a method, it is used in the service of many disciplines, each of which has its own theoretical vision, goals, and standards for internal criticism.

To a large degree, the perceived difference between oral history and oral traditions are determined by how scholars interpret and classify their content and forms, and by the methods utilized in acquiring and recording them. The generally held middle ground differentiates oral traditions from oral history on the basis that the former are "narratives transmitted by word of mouth over at least a generation" and the latter "recollections of individuals who were eyewitnesses or had personal experience with events occurring within their lifetime."[15] At each end of the spectrum, however, some scholars "reject any and all formal definitions, while others have constructed elaborate taxonomies with dozens of sub-divisions."[16]

Earlier and current mainstream anthropologists, concerned as they are with acquiring cultural insights, seldom differentiate oral history from oral tradition. In support of their stance they demonstrate that a single oral narrative often includes a variety of distinct narratives and that "narrators may conflate various pasts or a past with a present."[17] Elizabeth Tonkin is among the strongest proponents of this approach: "I make no distinction here between 'traditionalists' and 'eye-witnesses'....A single oral historian's narrative may bring together 'tradition', 'eye-witness account' and other types of testimony."[18]

The most recent anthropology textbooks also do not articulate a difference between oral history and oral traditions. Serena Nand contends that oral traditions are synonymous with folklore and include myths and folktales. Myths are "sacred narratives

that function as social charters, validating the beliefs and social structure of society" and folktales are told primarily for entertainment though they also "serve to educate, to release tension and act as a channel for social protest, and to integrate society by displaying cultural themes and a dramatic setting."[19] In the anthropological framework, folklore includes "stories about supernatural characters and events; legends which concern historical persons and events; and other kinds of oral traditions, such as riddles, proverbs, epic poems, and word play."[20] Thus, Indigenous histories are categorized as 'legends' which anthropologists acknowledge as deriving from local stories about real people, places and events but which they assert are "embroidered, embellished" and often blended with "folk beliefs and superstitions."[21] Nand concludes that folklore, and the historical 'legends' it includes, is a category of art.[22] Julie Cruikshank explains further that "[a]nthropologists and classicists tend to divide traditional narratives into two genres, myth and legend. 'Myth' tells of a time different from historical time as we know it, and describes origins and transformations of the world as it now appears. 'Legend' may be highly embellished but it can usually be traced to an historical event."[23]

Leading oral historians distinguish clearly between oral tradition and oral history. According to Jan Vansina, "'oral tradition' applies both to a process and to its product. The products are oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least a generation old. The process is the transmission of such messages by word of mouth over time."[24] Vansina distinguishes four classes of oral tradition based on form: Poetry (including songs and lists), epic (formal speech), formulaic (names, proverbs, prayer), and narrative (every day language). David Henige adds that oral traditions eventually "become more or less the common property of society."[25] However, he argues that since oral traditions

specifically recount the past, or past events, they do not include "poetry, heroic recitations, folktales, and like forms of oral art" because these "are not essentially concerned with duration and space."[26] Henige also tells us that "there are distinctions to be made between traditions and testimonies, between official and unofficial traditions, and between individual and consensual accounts."[27]

Ethnohistorian James Axtell takes a different approach. He claims that there are "three kinds of second-best evidence" available in non-literate societies: enduring native languages, enduring customs, and oral traditions which he divides into three classes—myths (spiritual beings), histories (important events), and stories (moral adventures).[28]

Most oral historians agree that the difference between oral tradition and oral history is that "oral traditions are not normally the direct, immediate, personal experiences of those who hold them in memory but rather the experience of a whole ethos of previous generations, acquired from the last immediate one, and retold in the present as they are understood by the present generation."[29] Conversely, oral history is "the study of the recent past by means of life histories or personal recollections, where informants speak about their own experiences."[30] Jan Vansina, however, does not ascribe to the term 'oral history', rather he prefers the categorical term 'personal reminiscences' to describe the sources oral historians rely on, namely "reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants."[31] Bernard Fontana suggests that Vansina avoids classifying personal reminiscences 'history' because it is a heavily value-laden word for conventional historians.[32]

The earliest academic discussions on the relationship between oral history and

history 'proper' demonstrate that historians engaged in oral history mine oral narratives for historical facts for the sole purpose of historical reconstruction. The First National Colloquium on Oral History at Arrowhead in 1966 attracted a wide circle of scholars engaged in oral history research and writing. The primary objective of the colloquium was to define what is was they all did and to establish a set of evaluative standards.[33] In the end, they agreed that oral history must be kept firmly within the grasp and standards of academic history. Oral history is the "recollections of persons whom we talk to about past events" in other words, personal reminiscences. Furthermore, it should be history, which implies "that what we should be dealing with is some interpretation, some account, some sort of representation of past periods, presumably of historical significance." Since oral history "should be done according to the traditional tenets of historical scholarship" it should involve objectivity, accuracy, thoroughness, and "a number of other things which we were supposed to have learned in graduate school—primarily objectivity."[34] Amelia Fry, an oral historian with the Regional Oral History Program in the University of California at Berkeley, added that "oral history should be oral and it should be significant history, and because of our budget limitations, it should be done with significant figures."[35]

David Henige is one of the few oral historians who distinguishes life history from oral history. According to Henige, although

> the terms 'oral history' and 'life history' are often used interchangeably, it is best to make a distinction between them.... life history is essentially a spoken autobiography in which the informant is asked to relate at some length those parts of his life that seem to *him* most interesting and important.[36]

Life histories provide more information about the informant than the larger world which

"may be just what the historian is after but more often is likely to be an ineffective way to learn about the recent past."[37]

Henige's distinctions are useful but are disregarded by most oral historians who continue to adhere to Western distinctions between tradition (mythology or legend) and personal reminiscences (recent historical facts) for their classification schemes. William Moss asserts: "If documentary history is based on discrete transactions or, more precisely, on their records; and if oral traditions are based on cultural dynamics, oral history may be seen as based on immediate life experiences of discrete individuals."[38]

The uniqueness of Indigenous life histories is recognized by a handful of anthropologists. They challenge conventional oral historians by demonstrating that Indigenous life histories consist of more than mere historical facts or reminiscences, hearsay, and eyewitness accounts.[39] Julie Cruikshank's work among Yukon Native women Elders concludes that personal reminiscences often include multiple overlapping genres. The women she worked with responded to interview questions by telling traditional stories which they explained also had a major part of their lives. Their narrative accounts were, "framed by genealogies" and included detailed mythological narratives, songs, personal and place name lists, and legends, and emphasized "landscape, mythology, everyday events, and continuity between the generations."[40]

According to Cruikshank, the elderly women she worked with used traditional narratives to explain their life experiences, thus, their life histories "may be more closely associated with the conventions of oral narrative than with positivistic evidence about the past."[41] Flora Beardy's work among her own people, the maskêgôwiniwak, *Swampy Cree peoples,* of Hudson Bay concurs:

> Embedded in the autobiographical themes of daily life and religion and mythological narrative are descriptions of community experiences which reflect reconstructions of the past that are both personal and dynamic.[42]

Nellie Cournoyea's work among the Gwich'in, Northern Slavey and Inuvialiut also demonstrates the degree to which localized personal and community experience are uniquely reflected in oral narratives:

> personal narratives, and the stories and legends, are tied together by one central, common and dominating fact and theme: the control the environment had over the people forced the intimate relationship the Inuvialiut have had and still have with the land.[43]

These three scholars demonstrate that often there is very little in Indigenous oral accounts that conform to "strict notions of Western narrative biography."[44] Neither do Indigenous oral accounts conform to historians' notions of personal reminiscences or positivist truth.

Debates in the literature concerning taxonomy reveal that there are at least three oral narrative genres that contain historical material; oral tradition, oral history, and life history. In their attempts to distinguish factual from fictional accounts of the past, historians choose to limit oral history to personal reminiscences which provide facts that can be corroborated by existing documentary evidence, and relegate all other oral narratives to oral tradition which is generally perceived as fictive. Anthropologists study narrative forms and knowledge in pursuit of cultural insights rather than raw historical facts. Since anthropologists are more apt to consider all oral narratives as cultural constructs, and are aware of the overlapping nature of traditional oral narratives, they are less compelled to rigidly categorize by content.

Folklorists add another dimension to the taxonomy question. Folklore studies

overlaps cultural anthropology and, in most respects, follows the anthropological stream. However, folklore studies are more limited and specific[45] because folklorists focus on the "oral traditions and culture of a people, expressed in legends, riddles, songs, tales, and proverbs." Some folklorists refer to their field as the "science of oral tradition"[46]

Folklorists articulate the differences between oral tradition, folklore and oral history according to form because the object of their studies are "the creative expressions of ordinary people in their everyday lives." Oral history, they assert, is a body of elicited memories, and oral historians differ from folklorists because they are primarily concerned with "the reality, the actualities of experiences." Folklorists charge that oral historians look to oral narratives as sources, "mines of raw data from which historical evidence can be extracted."[47]

According to folklorists "a good deal of folklore is not historical" and "oral history is not always folkloric"[48] because the defining quality of folklore is form, the texture of experience, or how people characterize or react to experience, while the key characteristic of oral history is content, the structure of experience, or what actually happened.[49] According to folklorist Barbara Allen, this distinction is useful because

> it makes clear that the content and form are two separate components of the material, and that historical content—memories of and knowledge about the past—becomes folkloric in form when people draw upon traditional forms of expression, such as narratives, to express themselves. This, then, is the real point of connection between oral history and folklore: the casting of historical experience into creative form.[50]

Thus, folklorists who study the oral histories of non- or semi-literate peoples, study them as one aspect of a broader dimension, oral tradition or "folk mythologies", and they study them comparatively in search of universal forms.[51] Subjects of fascinating study, no

doubt, but folklore studies do little to advance the value of Indigenous oral histories as history.

Many historians, on the other hand, have little interest in form or poetics, or in issues of translation (oral to written). Rather, they treat Indigenous oral histories as they would any other documentary source. Most oral historians agree that oral history "is a primary source obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving."[52] William Moss explains that once captured on tape, oral history becomes a document:

> In a sense it is no longer alive but rather like a slice of tissue on a slide under the microscope of history. Like other documents, it is but a representation of a moment in time, an abstraction from the continuum of human experience, a suggestive benchmark.[53]

Historians are most comfortable working in isolation with paper sources:

> Historians are literate people, *par excellence*, and for them the written word is paramount. It sets their standards and methods. It downgrades spoken words which are rendered utilitarian and flat compared to the concentrated meaning of text. The nuances and types of oral data are not seen.[54]

From a mainstream academic approach, it is most often the case that once a story is shared and recorded, 'facts' are extracted and the remaining 'superfluous' data set aside. Often the story bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and when refitted into conventional or modern historical narrative prose the story dies. The original forms are rarely recognizable, except for the odd metaphor which historians sometimes toss in for color.

A great number of historians regard any data arising in oral histories that read like

'myth' or religion as inconsequential. Facts are identifiable in narratives spoken or written in historical realism form. The unique styles or genres of oral narrative form are usually considered irrelevant in the modernist's pursuit of his or her truth. As a result, most historians have paid little, if any, attention to the narrative forms of oral history.

Outside of folklorists, scholars studying Indigenous oral narrative forms have predominantly focused on autobiography, biography, mythology and music which more readily lend themselves to literary, linguistic and musicology analyses.[55] The historical contents of oral narratives studied in these fields are useful only insofar as they provide background for specific kinds of structural analyses. More recently, studies of oral narrative genres have focused on the various problematics of translation, especially those inherent in language translation and oral to written form.

Except for a handful of ethnohistorians, scholars of the past have not paid any serious attention to oral history forms. Two recent studies, however, demonstrate the value and potential of studying oral history forms. Alexander Vaschenko's "Oral Historical Epic Narratives" presents an overview of Indigenous narrative epics dealing with the mythological and historical past, and Jonathan D. Hill's Rethinking Myth and History offers a collection of essays that explore "indigenous South American narrative, ritual, and oratory as ways of formulating and interpreting the history of Indian-white contact."[56]

Methodologies. Within the prevailing conception that oral history consists exclusively of personal reminiscences, scholars generally agree that it is both a method and a body of material resulting from that method.[57] Most oral historians also agree that

oral history is an elicited narrative in which the historian guides the informant by means of directed questions. Some go so far as to assert that oral history, unlike autobiography and oral traditions, "would not exist without the active intervention of the historian. It is a document created as a result of the interests, questions, values, ambitions, ideas and desire of the historian."[58]

There is also a general agreement that oral history is "highly individualistic. It assumes that the life experience of a single human being, or even only a segment of a total life experience, is in itself significant, or that it is sufficiently representative of a significant larger phenomenon to warrant inclusion in a data base for historical research."[59] Because oral history, in this sense, focuses on direct life experiences of individuals, "the collector of oral history participates directly in a joint and cooperative effort with the narrator to examine and record" the data.[60] Oral history methods are, therefore, understood to be clearly different from those used in oral tradition research because oral traditions are "formally handed down and authorized by the society."[61]

According to oral historians, the social or interactive relations between the orator and listener in the transmission of oral histories differs considerably from relations extant in the transmission of oral traditions. In the latter case, there is a distinct separation between the narrator and the listener. Once the narration begins, the listener strives to be as unobtrusive and as unintrusive as possible so as not disturb or influence the oral traditions "being studied." Oral history, on the other hand, does not "depend solely on one individual memory but on two and their interaction:

> the interviewer searches out memories and provokes reflections and evaluations of significance, even proposes hypothesis to be tested against persons experiences, and challenges respondents to further examine and

reflect on assumptions and assertions made in the first instance.[62]

In the oral history encounter, the historian is not passive. Linda Shopes explains that oral history is "a social exchange in which one person requests another to articulate his/her memories of an aspect of the past."[63] It is a process whereby a historian seeks to create historical evidence through conversation:

> In the broadest sense, oral history is another term for conversation, the generic function of which is to communicate by word of mouth....oral history is a conversation which is best defined by its purpose or function, its primary objective the recording of oral data to supplement the historian's more conventional work with written sources.[64]

Given this conception of its nature, oral historians are cautioned that oral history data is highly subjective, more specifically, "particularly subject to current preoccupations and conflicts, the status and attitude to the inquirer, the present political situation and so on."[65] Shopes stresses that because oral history is both a process and a product

> a recovery of information—accounts—as well as interpretations of the past...it necessarily involves subjective issues of meaning—what's significant and to whom—and of memory—who remembers what.[66]

Thus, oral historians are urged to subject their research data to rigorous evaluation.[67]

According to William W. Moss, "oral history is a technique that services many disciplines but fits neatly into none."[68] While many scholars now employ interdisciplinary research methods to varying degrees, the taxonomy of the term is still discipline-specific. Jan Vansina, a leading oral historian, concurs that definitions serve disciplinary needs. A historian's definition, he stresses,

> is a working definition for the use of historians. Sociologists, linguists, or scholars of the verbal art propose their own, which in the first case (sociology) might well stress common knowledge, in the second features

> that distinguish the language from common dialogue (linguistics), and in the last features of form and content that define art (folklorists).[69]

Because the research objectives differ according to discipline, research methodologies differ. For example, "the aim of ethnohistory is to reconstruct, using all available materials, what 'really happened' in terms that agree with our sense of credibility and our sense of relevance." Folklorists, on the other hand, "attempt to find what people in another society believe 'really happened,' as judged by their sense of credibility and relevance...Thus, the methodology of ethnohistory is essentially 'etic,' while the methodology of folk history is essentially 'emic.'"[70]

William Moss concludes that oral history is not a "discipline, a profession or even a movement." Despite a methodology and professional organizations "it remains a technique in the service of many disciplines. Bereft of a parent discipline, whether history or anthropology, political science or pedagogy or whatever, it is nothing but undisciplined, random, aimless recording."[71]

In summary, scholarly discussions on taxonomy generally concur that 'oral history' consists of four main characteristics: it is a historical method and a source; as such it belongs in the clutches of modern academic history; it does not exist without the intervention of the historian; and, it consists of personal reminiscences or life history materials of living generations.

However, very few of the definitions discussed above are actually based on Indigenous knowledge systems and categories. Since Robert Lowie's time, historians have variously demonstrated an awareness that modern notions of historical consciousness are not universal and that Indigenous peoples organize knowledge

differently. However, most continue to apply their own categories and definitions which are based on their own (modern) cultural standards and sensibilities. Renato Rosaldo explains this tendency among anthropologists as follows:

> Received anthropological wisdom warns against using statements that people make about their past lives in reconstructing their histories. Even genealogies, we are told, can be manipulated, distorted, and blatantly invented as suit the needs of political disputes of the moment.[72]

For two millennia, historians have tried following the dictum of Tacitus to remain 'objective' in their writings. In their pursuit of objectivity, historians frequently distance themselves from what people say and believed about their own pasts. This positivist and elitist approach blinds scholars to other ways of knowing.

Clio's Standards—The Modern Historical Paradigm

The Lowie Debate, described above, highlights the primary criticisms some scholars have levied against Indigenous oral histories since the turn of the century. Whether historians view oral history as a sub-field of social history, or whether historians view it only as a method, it is first and foremost history. [73] Regardless of whether historians are sympathetic or skeptical, they view and critique Indigenous oral histories according to the basic standards of modern historiography.[74] Modern (Western, conventional) historiography, at times also referred to as 'Rankean history' after the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), is firmly grounded on a number of prescribed tenets.[75] Ranke pioneered empirical research and the analysis of sources, and his "ideas were often regarded as the beginning of 'modern' history."[76] A brief look how the scholarly literature evaluates Indigenous oral histories within the nineteenth century

Rankean paradigm helps explain why they are so little understood and utilized.

The primary tenets of Rankean history that most immediately impact academic attitudes towards Indigenous oral histories can be summarized as follows:

- **Official Documents**: Historical writing should be based on documents, preferably official records generated by governments and preserved in archives, because they are fixed and stable and can be tested.
- **Testability**: All sources should undergo evaluation to determine their validity which is usually done by way of comparing them to other sources.
- **Objectivity**: The historian's task is to provide the 'facts' as objectively as possible, or as Ranke put it in a much quoted phrase, to tell an event 'how it actually happened'.
- **Causation**: Historians strive to explain change over time.
- **Precision in chronology**: Serial time measured in linear dimensions and chronological sequence are vital in determining cause and effect—historians strive to provide an unfolding story that adheres to strict timelines.
- Historical writings presume and reinforce certain **culturally determined values and canons** like 'truth', 'fact', objectivity' and 'time'.
- **Precision in form**: historical writings incorporate narrative and analyses, have a beginning, middle and end, and are well-documented.[77]

Oral histories and other oral traditions seldom adhere to these conventions. While some or all may be present, they are usually not in the same mix, nor are they conceptualized and applied in the same manner.

Document-Driven Search for 'Truth'. According to E. H. Carr, the 19th century "was a great age for facts." Historians rebelled against the moralizing writings of their predecessors by asserting that "the task of the historian was 'simply to show how it really was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)'."[78] Positivist historians in Ranke's wake pushed for "history as science" and believed their task was first and foremost to ascertain the facts, then to interpret and draw conclusions from those facts. Later historians asserted that meaning in history "was implicit and self-evident" and so the "culture of facts" reigned supreme in 19th and early 20th century historiography.[79]

Francis Paul Prucha, a leading scholar of Indian-White Relations history explains the objectives of his calling within this conventional paradigm: "History is a legitimate scholarly discipline, whose purpose is to reconstruct the past as accurately as the intelligence of the historian and the fullness of the historical sources permit."[80] The purpose behind reconstructing the past, he asserts, is to supply enlightenment, understanding, and perspective, and to provide sound information on which balanced judgements can be based. Historians, he concludes,

> seek the truth in the story we are telling, and in the history of Indian-White relations especially we must be alert to the pitfalls of having too much sympathy either for our preconceived ideas or for one side or the other of a controversy. To be a good judge, we must not care what the truth is we are seeking. We must be concerned only with finding it.[81]

Firmly grounded in the Rankean aspiration to 'show how it really was' Prucha's approach to Indian-White relations history epitomizes modern historiography. Positivist 'truth' postulates the "quality of being in accordance with experience, facts or reality."[82] This variety of truth is "*what is so* about something, the reality of the matter, as distinguished from what people wish were so, believe to be so, or assert to be so."[83] Thus,

positivist truth, like positivist or "genuine" knowledge, rejects anything metaphysical or beyond the bounds of everyday science, common-sense, and observation.[84]

More recently, historians like Robert Berkhofer acknowledge that they can never fully produce "past reality as it really was." However, their work still conveys the illusion of realism.[85] As a textual form, historical realism embraces and presumes its own set of principles which serve as the basis of normal historical practice. Berkhofer explains that realism, as represented in historical texts, depends on the generally agreed upon worldview of Western society as "to what is real and what is mythical." The real world that many historians represent is that of the historian's own society—the text cannot produce reality, but conveys the illusion of realism according to shared assumptions, or what Berkhofer refers to as a "social contract" between historians and their readers.[86] The 'truths' of Indigenous oral histories are thus determined, to varying degrees, within this framework. Their veracity is evaluated against a set of culturally determined—usually eurocentric—standards. When academics approach Indigenous oral histories in their search for 'truth' they often confront realities that do not tally with their own. As a result, discussions and debates on the veracity of Indigenous oral histories are rife in the literature.

Robert Lowie's 1915 fatuous dictum against Indigenous oral histories exemplifies the extreme negative position:

> I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever. We cannot know them to be true except on the basis of extraneous evidence, and in that case they are superfluous since the linguistic, ethnological, or archaeological data suffice to establish the conclusion in question....Where 'other data' are lacking, the use of oral traditions for historical reconstruction must be discounted as a matter of obvious methodological caution.[87]

Indian-White relations historian Francis Paul Prucha carries Lowie's oppositional stance into the 1980s with his critique of Jeff Riddle's The History of the Modoc Wars (1914). Prucha argues that it is,

> not enough to write a history of the Modoc War with heavy and uncritical reliance on a story of the war told by a man who was the son of the interpreter in the conflict but who was only 10 years old at the time and who never had a formal education.[88]

Lowie, and Prucha some 65 years later, clearly have little use for, or appreciation for the value of, oral histories. Lowie rejects them outright as superfluous and Prucha's denigrating skepticism minimizes their potential value. Both evaluations derive from a heavy eurocentric bias. Prucha asserts that oral histories need to undergo rigorous testing according to conventional standards before their use can be ascertained. However, even "if one can be sure of the authenticity, the question of what weight to put on the contents of [Indian] speeches still remains."[89] Even a cursory overview of the texts written in the past twenty years in the field of Indian-White Relations, or in Indian history generally, exemplify Prucha's 'hands-off' approach to Indigenous oral histories.[90] Very few historians step beyond the confines of archive and library to consult the oral histories of the peoples they write about.[91]

A handful of scholars of Indigenous history, mostly ethnohistorians or historical anthropologists, however, increasingly accept oral histories as useful supplemental sources. David Woodman explains that during the last century there has been a great deal of research into the mechanics of oral history or "saga and its transmission through folktales" which,

> has led to a reevaluation of narrative as a valid historical source. Although historians, like the police, are reluctant to place undue emphasis on the

> uncorroborated statements of witnesses, they are becoming more aware that even imperfect memories are often a valuable supplement in cases where physical evidence is lacking or contradictory.[92]

To demonstrate his point he cites the often forgotten episode from the far north when an expensive decade-long search for the English arctic explorer Sir John Franklin and his crew was abandoned soon after an Inuit person "casually told the explorers where to look."[93]

While many scholars agree that "traditions have a basis in historical fact," there is disagreement as to the relative weight that can be afforded to Indigenous oral histories as sources to supplement written records.[94] Bruce G. Trigger explains that there is more emphasis on oral history among some tribes than others but among his subjects, the Iroquois-speaking peoples, he found that oral traditions do not provide an independent source: "It is of interest when oral traditions confirm other sources of information about the past, but, except when they do, they should not be used even to supplement such sources."[95] Despite his minimizing of Iroquoian oral history Trigger claims that his work provides an interpretation "from the Huron perspective." Trigger states that his "Huron perspective" derives from anthropological insights[96] because only the anthropologist's understanding of Indian life can provide the background needed to assess and understand the behavior of Indians as recorded in historical records.[97]

As early as 1962 historian Gordon M. Day chastised historians for their "singularly flat picture of Indian and White relations" resulting from stories being told almost exclusively by Whites. It is necessary, he stressed, to "use more testimony from the Indian's side to deepen our perspective." Written records of historical events do not provide the Indian version of early history "simply because the emotional climate of the

time was not favorable to the sympathetic study of the Indian's institutions."[98] Day compared a number of Abenaki oral accounts to the written accounts left by missionaries and soldiers, in his own study of Major Robert Rogers' raid against the village of St. Francis in the mid-1700s. In the end he concluded that the Indian attitudes, motivations, and versions not only add a point of view that escaped the records, but filled in gaps and corrected discrepancies in the historical record.

The veracity debate derives from the academic assumption that oral histories are inherently suspect and, therefore, must undergo rigorous comparative evaluation before they can be considered useful sources. Thus, the veracity debate hinges on a number of critical factors or 'problems' found in Indigenous oral histories: testability, acculturation, contamination, presentism, subjectivity/objectivity, variation, and the fallibility of memory.

Testability. Although Gordon Day and a few other scholars believe that Indigenous oral histories provide valuable insights, he urges that they undergo serious critical evaluation before they can be utilized.[99] In this sense, he shares a similar concern with document-driven historians looking for precision in form, testability, and precision in chronology in their sources.[100] Documents are easy to work with because they are fixed and can be tested against other sources, and because they provide chronological frameworks which support cause-effect analyses and argument.[101] According to conventional standards oral histories do not stand up to these requisite tenets—oral history forms are not fixed, serial time is seldom adhered to, and oral accounts infrequently have supporting documentary corroboration.[102] According to the Rankean

hierarchy of sources oral data is second best, or less, and when relied upon "facilitate second-best histories about communities with poor sources."[103]

Scholars who support the supplemental use of Indigenous oral histories require their sources to stand up under modern critical evaluation. However, while there exists elaborate criteria for evaluating documents there is no formally adhered to set of criterion for evaluating oral historical accounts.[104] Thirty-seven years ago Gordon Day provided some helpful guidelines. First, he asserted, historians must begin by eliminating those statements of literate informants which have no known provenance, and which could have had their origin in the literature of the subject. Then historians need to distinguishes between "common property" knowledge which practically everyone has heard, and the more detailed narratives which he considers more trustworthy because they are obtained from conservative, tradition-conscious Indians who in turn obtained them from known and named sources.[105] In addition to checking the spoken word against the written, Vansina and Fontana urge scholars to look within the traditions themselves for verification. Von Gernet explains that testing consists of two types—external tests that compare the narrative to other evidence, and internal tests which "evaluate a narrative in terms of its own self-consistency."[106] Vansina explains that 'free form' oral traditions like personal reminiscences are difficult to test except against external sources. However, the more formal narratives are more reliable because; (a) they are less amenable to change due to their structural/form requirements, (b) they are often accompanied by mnemonic devices, and (c) they are generally publicly transmitted to a "critical audience ready to criticize mistakes."[107]

Despite the range of testability problems, Fontana adamantly believes that tools

do exist to "wring truth out" of oral traditions.[108] Gordon Day agrees that "when Indian traditions are evaluated with the same degree of care which would be used for a document and the dubious ones set aside, the remainder may be genuine and valuable contribution to our knowledge of the past....the validity of the oral tradition is enhanced by its goodness of fit with the historical data."[109] Referring to his own study, Day reiterates how Indian accounts helped clear up discrepancies in the written accounts:[110]

> when traditions show good internal coherence and congruence with such historical data that we have, it seems to be a fair presumption that (1) the traditions are trustworthy, and (2) they should be taken into account in our reconstructions of the past.[111]

Even when gauged against eurocentric notions of 'truth', many scholars give Indigenous oral histories the benefit of the doubt because numerous independent studies have demonstrated that most oral histories have a basis in historical fact.[112]

Oral historians also argue that the accuracy and authenticity of any given source must be established as firmly as possible.[113] Vansina explains:

> Questions of authenticity, authorship, locality, and dating are at the heart of the external critique concerning written documents because they allow us to establish the context for a critique of their content.[114]

Vansina and Paul Thompson explain, however, that when oral traditions are put through the same tests as documents, they often yield different kinds of answers.[115] Oral history differs from documents because they are 'performances' and unlike documents "original compositions do not exist" in many oral tradition genres.[116] Thus, the question of authenticity is posed to oral traditions differently: "We can only ask whether a given performance that claimed to be part of a tradition is indeed part of a tradition or not."[117] Original authorship can be sought by tracing the line of performance/transmission backwards but it is not often located. Thus, Vansina concludes that the "only place and

date that can be given about a tradition is that of the recording of the performance."[118]

Paul Thompson takes a more positive stand on the authenticity question. In his view many of the questions asked of documents regarding their authenticity "can be much more confidently answered for oral evidence" through fieldwork and by drawing on methods and sources from other disciplines.[119]

Despite the growing methodological and theoretical discussions regarding the evaluation of oral evidence, historians of the Indigenous past have been chastised for being slipshod. Rebecca Kugel's review essay of five Ojibway Studies texts demonstrates the degree to which the uncritical use of oral histories can compromise otherwise good scholarship. Accuracy and authenticity, she asserts, must be established as firmly as possible to ascertain "the aboriginality of the narratives" and the degree to which they have been influenced by non-Aboriginal themes, motifs, and values.[120]

"Contamination". Historians and anthropologists debate the degree to which European influences have affected or 'contaminated' Indigenous oral traditions. Historians have criticized anthropologists for ignoring the "enormous changes which have transpired over the past three to four centuries emanating from Euro-Canadian influences" in their search for how societies view their own pasts.[121] Charles Bishop and Arthur Ray claim that while anthropological methods and theory provide the cultural matrix vital for evaluating its meaning and its reliability as a historical source, "the validity of oral tradition as historical 'truth' must be carefully cross-checked against other categories of data" especially historical documents.[122] They assert that,

Unless these canons are rigorously adhered to, particularly with reference

> to 'memory ethnography,' ethnographic details from different time periods may be jumbled together, fostering the illusion of cultural stability. Such illusions are often manifest in chronologies which include a seemingly timeless 'traditional era' preceding one of rapid modern change.[123]

Ethnohistorian James Axtell flippantly rejects Indigenous oral histories of people he considers 'acculturated':

> Although personal experience is usually superior to vicarious experience, historians need not feel unduly sensitive about their lack of personal research among contemporary tribal cultures. Often the descendants of their historical subjects no longer survive, or, if they do, have lost much of their historical cultural character.[124]

This prejudice clearly originates in early 20th century anthropology which focused on "salvage ethnography", the purpose of which was to capture 'traditional' Indigenous societies before they disappeared. However, other anthropologists criticize their peers for ignoring those communities perceived to be 'acculturated'. In his study of Rogers' raid against the Abenaki of St. Francis in 1759, Gordon M. Day argues that despite external signs of acculturation, the Abenaki

> retained their language and a substantial body of tradition, material culture, and a memory of the 'old way' into this decade, and intensive work with them has produced a record of their culture equal or superior to that obtained from numerous 'wilder' tribes by the usual summer field season approach.[125]

Rogers and Rogers argue that Indian cultures did not change so rapidly and radically on contact that little can be learned about them from 20th century Indians. Their experience with Ojibway-Cree peoples

> shows the change to be surprisingly superficial, and 'memory' to reside not only in explicit knowledge but also in patterned ways of thinking and reacting, for the most part, unselfconsciously. Our experience also belies the notion that their memories are found wanting in accuracy; over a period of twenty years we are struck with the self-consistency of repeated recountings of factual information, as well as notable accordance with the

written documents.[126]

Presentism. Scholars guard against presentism in Indigenous oral histories. They are critical of "explanatory interpolation" which is "a modern explanation thrown in by the speaker when events spoken of refer to customs which no longer exist."[127] They also argue about the relative impact current moral and political concerns have on oral histories. Ruth Finnegan warns that because oral histories are elicited personal reminiscences rather than collective oral traditions they "are particularly subject to current preoccupations and conflicts, the status of and attitude to the inquirer, the present political situation and so on."[128] She concludes that this "is not to say that such narrations are useless. But they are clearly of a different kind of account from one formally handed down and authorized by the society of a dominant group in it."[129] Jan Vansina admits that,

> Yes, oral traditions are documents *of the present*, because they are told in the present. Yet they also embody a message *from the past* at the same time. One cannot deny either the present or the past in them.[130]

Another form of presentism is the 'feedback effect' resulting from the impact of literacy on predominantly oral societies. David Henige defines the feedback effect "as the co-opting of extraneous printed or written information into previously oral accounts"[131] and warns that 'feedback' is the "principal mechanism by which the contents of oral traditional accounts were adapted to form new coalesced traditions."[132]

David Henige concludes that "uncontaminated oral tradition simply does not exist any more, except possibly in the most remote areas of Amazonia, the Philippines or New Guinea."[133] To a certain degree Henige's appraisal is supported by Gwyn Prins. Prins describes three modes of communication: (1) oral cultures where language takes purely

oral forms, which are today relatively rare, (2) written cultures where the oral form died out and writing predominates (classical languages), and (3) composite cultures where language takes oral and written form for all or most of the population. Composite cultures are further broken down into universal literate cultures, and restrictedly literate cultures where most of the population live on the fringes, but under the sway, of the literate record.[134] According to Prin's framework, 20th century Indigenous Peoples comprise composite cultures since only a small handful of our current Elders are non-literate.

There is little doubt that literacy has variously impacted the content, form and transmission of Indigenous oral histories. A number of scholars have demonstrated that when newly introduced to oral societies the written word has a tremendous force.[135] Walter Ong describes the shifts in consciousness when oral cultures meet and adapt literacy and others have described how readily oral cultures develop and adopt alphabet systems to their own languages.[136] Societies adjust and adapt to changing conditions and readily adopt new innovations. To expect or demand that Indigenous societies remain 'uncontaminated' as a prerequisite to their knowledge being taken seriously, is a hypocrisy.

Variation. Collective or social oral traditions and oral histories often vary in content and emphasis which prompts historians to tackle this 'variation problem' with the same critical discernment they approach other sources. From mainstream history's point of view, the main advantage of written records is their stability—their fixed form. While many oral histories are formalized and relatively stable they sometimes vary when transmitted among individuals in any given community. More often they vary when

adopted by communities in different regions. The primary consequence of this "information flow" is another form of feedback—"the alterations brought about in one message by information acquired from others."[137]

Folklorists and anthropologists have long known that stories can spread over enormous distances and have developed their own critical approaches and explanations based on the objectives and scope of their disciplines.[138] Folklorist Barbara Allen explains that "floating stories" often get attached to persons or places familiar to the narrator when they have significant meaning. She describes this phenomenon as "localization", "the tendency for folkloric materials in general circulation to become localized."[139] From a folklorists perspective

> the significance of these variations, which might give oral historians fits, is not that some of the versions are 'true' and others 'false' but rather that they revolve around a core of truth and that variation on details—even embellishment of details—helps dramatize that core.[140]

Since folklorists are most interested in aesthetics and anthropologists seek to discern how people view themselves through their stories, rather than seeking evidence for historical reconstruction, 'truth' and 'facts' as western conventions dictate are not major concerns for them.

Oral historian Jan Vansina, on the other hand, engages the problem of variation from a historian's perspective:

> Feedback and contamination are the norm. The further one goes away from the present the more this rule holds. It holds already for most renderings purporting to deal with the past beyond the lives of the living elders in a community.[141]

Vansina explains that conventional historians drown themselves in a wide range of documents to cross-check for confirmation or contradictions. In this sense, documents are

independent sources that can be judged against each other with enough surety that no further rules of evidence are needed. However, this approach does not work for oral histories because two or more narrative accounts are seldom independent:

> The pool of information kept in memory and its relatively free flow mean that we cannot assume that the testimony of two different informants from the same community or even society is really independent. . . .This becomes true to such a degree that when one does find converging evidence in such traditions one must assume that they are dependent on each other, that they are renderings of a single tradition.[142]

Thus, the internal and external tests available for oral accounts are not enough for Vansina to discern their independence.

Personal reminiscences, the oral histories most historians prefer to use, are free form performances that routinely change from telling to telling. Oral historian William Moss warns that documents "may decay with time, but they do not very often change before your very eyes. Interviews, on the other hand, are capable of rapid and startling changes."[143] He explains this phenomenon further:

> Memory is not merely a passive reservoir of data, the contents of which can be pored over and scrutinized at leisure. It is engaged and integrated with the present—with the continuously changing attitudes, perspectives and understandings—working and reworking the data of experience into new formulations, opinions and perhaps even new creations.[144]

Allesandro Portelli adds that "life history is a living thing. It is always a work in progress, in which the narrator revises the image of his own past as he goes along." Thus the story is always "open-ended, provisional, and partial."[145] Presentism is often the cause of variation because people "regularly reevaluate and reexplain their past decisions and actions":

> Just as historians rewrite history to incorporate new evidence and fit different theories, individuals use the insights gained from current events

> to help them make sense out of past experiences. There is nothing invalidating about this reflexivity, so long as interviewers and researchers understand what is occurring and take it into account.[146]

Some oral historians tackle the problem of variation by developing elaborate testing and evaluation methods. Vansina proscribes a range of methods to weed "contaminants" out in order to locate the origins and palimpsests—the "older surviving portion[s]"—of a given story. In the case of composite or 'contaminated' oral traditions and personal reminiscences, Vansina suggests that historians need to be aware of how widely known a story is, and they need to know the life history of the narrator as best they can:

> Historians should gather the extent of the contacts of such persons [narrators] from their life history and in this way establish the real scope of information which they controlled. One should then handle an account given by such persons as any other traditional account, keeping the social and geographical span of the information base in mind as well as the special interests which lead these persons to reconstruct histories which do not only reflect the social needs of the present, but tend to grapple with what is thought to be the reality of the past.[147]

Historians ought to be aware that within a given community or region, information-flows vary "by the frequency and the type of relationship that exists among people living in them. Kinship groupings, social status, technical specialty, marriage relationships, trade patterns, ritual geography—all explain variation in this flow."[148] Paul Thompson adds that oral accounts may also differ depending on environment:

> An interview at home will increase the pressure of 'respectable' home-centred ideals; an interview in the pub is more likely to emphasize dare-devilry and fun; and an interview in the workplace will introduce the influence of work conventions and attitudes. Linked with these changes in emphasis will be changes in language.[149]

Following the internal testing process, Vansina urges historians to "complete"

their oral sources "by outside sources that can be checked and certified as independent. This means that oral tradition is to be used in conjunction with writings, archaeology, linguistics or even ethnographic evidence, etc.."[150] In his final analysis Vansina states that "[a]s long as traditions are not independently confirmed the evidence they present can best be described as 'on probation'."[151]

However, not all oral historians take such a positivist approach. Winifred Galloway challenges historians to reevaluate their rigid stand on the variation issue by posing the following analogy: If a literate scholar loses a complete and only copy of his/her manuscript and was forced to write it all over again, he would be in roughly the same position as the oral historian who is asked to give an account of the same thing over again from the beginning. The first account would not have reflected everything s/he knew of the subject and would have been written/narrated in an order considered appropriate at that particular moment. The second account, on the other hand, might tackle the subject from a different angle—adding previously absent data, leaving previous data out, and it might be relayed in a different order.[152]

Causation and Temporality. The major complaint historians have about Indigenous oral histories, and the oral histories of other non-literate peoples, is that "oral data cannot explain change" because "change is what historians mainly study."[153] For historians, causal analyses requires the precise dating of events. As G. J. Whitrow explains:

> We regard it as one of the first duties of the historian to date events precisely, the date being regarded by us not as an accidental property of an event but as an essential feature.[154]

Oral histories and traditions do not hold up against this standard because the sequence and time depths historians require—precision in chronology—are seldom met. Indigenous oral histories seldom adhere to conventional notions of serial time.[155]

The temporal problems associated with oral history have been well documented by Jan Vansina and others. Vansina explains that each "culture has its own notions of time, and calendars do not exist in oral society."[156]

> Absolute measurements of time on a uniform scale exist nowhere in oral society. Time was measured by the return of natural phenomena, by the occurrence of extraordinary events, by reference to human lifespan and reproduction, and by reference to the return of recurrent social events.[157]

Vansina concludes:

> Given the precariousness of measurements of time, the lack of importance attached to time, and the variability of intervals used to establish epochs in oral cultures, we can only arrive at a relative chronology. Only for the last century or so can better results be achieved. We must therefore date traditions by others means.[158]

In addition to cultural temporal constructions there are also a number of time distortions found in oral histories: telescoping, foreshortening or flattening time, and floating bits. Telescoping occurs where events and/or people collapse in and onto one another. Foreshortening or flattening time occurs when stories of people and events become pushed to the extreme past because they played such a major role that events and people who came in between are obscured. Finally, floating names and stories are like broken pot shards "lying jumbled together on the surface with other objects from other periods."[159] According to Galloway, historians tend to reject the content along with the unfamiliar temporality because they do not know how to interpret one without the other.[160] However, that while problems of time are troublesome, she stresses, they do not

invalidate oral traditions, they merely complicate the interpretations of them.

Historians need reminding that time, as we presently know it, is a modern innovation bound up in the 19th century belief of the inevitability of human progress. As John Bender and David E. Wellbery explain, the temporalization of experience,

> the notion of time as the framework within which life forms are embedded and carry on their existence—is the defining quality of the modern world. Only where such a framework is presupposed can something like history as the collective unity of all individual event sequences be conceived."[161]

Jacques LeGoff adds that the "basic material of history is time" and the main tool of chronology is the calendar, "the product and expression of history" which "shows the effort made by human societies to domesticate 'natural' time, the natural movement of the moon and sun."[162] 19th century ideas of time as a linear advancement has since become a universal notion, despite the fact that ways the Other reckons time are well known.[163]

In response to conventional historians' drive to explain change, Gwyn Prins stresses that in many "non- or quasi-literate societies, continuity is much more interesting, and more difficult to explain than change."[164] Galloway stresses that from the perspective of the owners of oral traditions "the drama of the events of history and their didactic value are what really matter."[165]

The Fallibility of Human Memory. Concerns regarding truth, 'contamination,' presentism, variation and temporality are compounded by concerns regarding the reliability of human memory. Document-driven historians who "turn up their noses at oral sources" generally believe that oral sources are so distant from events that they

"undergo the distortion of faulty memory."[166] Personal reminiscences, or individual memories, are only problematic in this context when no other available records to compare them to exist. However, studies on human memory demonstrate that long-term memories of events are much stronger than short-term memories.[167] This is especially true in the case of elderly people who are in the 'life review' phase because their long-term memories are "the end product of a lifetime of reminiscences."[168]

Then again, personal reminiscences are vulnerable to changes over time primarily because they are "the image of oneself one cares to transmit to others." Vansina explains that events and situations "are forgotten when irrelevant or inconvenient. Others are retained and reorderd, reshaped or correctly remembered according to the part they play in the creation of this mental self-portrait."[169] Paul Thompson adds that accurate memory is "much more likely when it meets a social interest and need."[170]

Memories of distant events transmitted across generational lines are even more problematic for historians. However, studies of oral traditions—the category under which accounts of distant historical events are classified—demonstrate that they are in many ways no less malleable than personal reminiscences. Oral traditions are distinguished from personal reminiscences because the "transmission of large amounts and special shapes of oral data from generation to generation requires time and considerable mental effort."[171] They are collective or social memories of events from the distant past and have been classified in a number of different ways. Connerton's definition of collective memories include informally told narratives, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices.[172] Others refer to collective memories as popular memories which they claim consist of private and public memories.[173]

Citing Vansina, Gwyn Prins explains that the retention and transmission of oral traditions are governed by various structural forms and/or rules which determine their degree of accuracy over time. While the "genres of oral tradition in oral society are as diverse as those of documents in a literate one"[174] they can be systematically studied and classified for the purposes of utilizing them. Some are frozen (rote-learned and memorized), others are free-form.[175] Vansina explains that among memorized traditions, those regarded as factual accounts are transmitted "with more regard to faithful reproduction of content" than fictional tales. But again, the criterion depends upon notions of truth "which varies from one culture to another and which must be studied."[176]

Studies of oral traditions demonstrate that they have considerable fortitude. Citing Marc Bloch's studies of preliterate rural societies, Paul Connerton claims that social or common remembrances memories were maintained through the education of the youngest living generation by the oldest living generation. Since parents worked all day, children were brought up by their grandparents:

> with the molding of each new mind there is at the same time a backward step, joining the most malleable to the most inflexible mentality, while skipping the generation which might be the sponsor of change. And this way of transmitting memory, Bloch suggests, must surely have contributed to a very substantial extent to the traditionalism inherent in so many societies.[177]

However, Peter Nabokov cautions that the

> paradox of memorized history that is spoken and heard is that while it can preserve intimacy and locality over astonishing time depths, it seems to be only one generation away from extinction....For it to endure someone somewhere must continue to bear witness, must intuitively resist the demands of media and archive in favor of the interactive, oral narrative.[178]

As dynamic as oral traditions are, they are also vulnerable to loss.

Oral traditions like cultures, societies, and historical interpretations of the past, are not static. "Traditions are memories of memories" and remembering "is an activity, a recreation of what once was."[179] Thus, memories change over time, "even when dormant, because of the constant input of new items in memory which must coexist with older material and forces its reappraisal, its disappearance."[180] The charge that memory is untrustworthy and unreliable compared to documents has been countered by Prins who asserts that the upshot of the contemporary process of archival preservation selection, for example, is that "documentary sources are not as unintentionally, unselfconsciously bequeathed to us as one might think."[181]

While oral histories and oral traditions rank poorly by conventional/modern historical standards, oral historians stress that these grounds are not sufficient to dismiss them. The oral history movement rejects conventional history's criticisms claiming that there are tests other than Rankean ones to be applied, and these can be found within the traditions themselves.[182] Oral historians stress that the benefits far outweigh the obstacles. As Gwyn Prins explains, "oral history—tradition and reminiscences, past and present—with its detail, its humanity, frequently its emotion and always its well developed scepticism about the entire historiographic undertaking" is vital:

> Without access to such resources, historians in modern, mass-literate, industrial societies, that is, most professional historians, will languish in a pool of understanding circumscribed by their own culture, like abandoned lovers standing in the flickering circle of light under a single lamp-post in dark and wind-swept streets.[183]

The Legal Treatment of Voice

Academic discourse on Indigenous knowledge generally, oral history specifically,

is not mere academic exercise confined to ivory towers and classrooms. Whether conscious or oblivious, the manner in which scholars treat and interpret Indigenous oral histories have very real repercussions in contemporary Indian life. This is most evident where current Indigenous concerns are addressed in legal frameworks—Federal Indian policy-making and courts of law. In both instances strict adherence to 19th century historical standards still prevails as the standard which undermines Indigenous claims based on oral history.

Eleven Treaties between the Crown in Right of Canada and First Nations were negotiated in Western Canada between 1871 and 1921. Unlike the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, however, the Treaty texts in Canada were written in legalize English only.[184] Given that both the Crown and the First Nations came into the Treaty negotiation process with different worldviews, understandings, languages and historical traditions, it was inevitable that both parties came away with different views over the content and meaning of the Treaties. Canada relies on the written text of the treaties as the embodiment of the Crown's obligations, Treaty First Nations rely on their oral histories which recorded the verbal promises of both parties.[185] As a result, Federal Indian policies based on Treaty Rights adhere to strict literal interpretations which ignore or repudiate many First Nations Treaty Rights claims and provides an incomplete and one-sided understanding of the Treaty relationship. The current debate concerning the Treaty Rights to post-secondary education is a case in point.[186]

Since the late 1950s the federal government has provided many First Nation students with financial assistance to attend post-secondary education institutions and since 1977 has had a post-secondary education assistance program in place. However, the

federal government has consistently held the position that the post-secondary education program is a matter of social policy not a Treaty obligation.[187] Therefore, since policy derives from benevolent legislation Parliament can terminate or vary the program at will.[188]

The federal position is based on a literal interpretation of the education provisions of the Treaties. While the texts of the Western Canadian Treaties vary, the substances are pretty well the same. Treaty No. 6, for example, states "Her Majesty agrees to maintain schools for the instruction in such reserves hereby made, as to her Government of the Dominion of Canada may seem advisable, whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it."[189] Thus, Canada posits that it made good on its Treaty obligations by providing elementary education, and that by providing post-secondary education funding, it has "gone beyond the spirit and intent in an attempt to compensate for access difficulties encountered by Native students in ways which are not available to comparably disadvantaged non-Indians."[190] Furthermore, Canada stresses that "it is not a reasonable construction to hold that a 'school on reserve' in 1889 means a 'university' in 1989."[191]

Treaty First Nations claim that Treaty Rights were not exhausted once schools were built on reserves. Rather, the federal government has a Treaty obligation to provide comprehensive education from elementary to post-secondary and they base this position on a large body of Treaty oral histories.

Sewepiton was a young man in 1874 when he attended Treaty No. 4 negotiations at Fort Qu'Appelle. As an old man he relayed his Treaty knowledge to Gordon Oakes, a child at the time and later Chief of the Nikaneet First Nation of Maple Creek. Sewepiton recited several of the discussions and promises made at Treaty time, most of which were

never included in the Treaty documents. According to Sewepiton the Crown's representative—the Treaty Commissioner Alexander Morris—told the people that Canada could never repay them for the land but that immigrants from Europe who were coming to farm would pay taxes and those taxes would be used to pay for the Treaty Rights. Elder Oakes's full recitation of Sewepiton's account of the interpreter's translation of the Treaty Commissioner's promises includes the following reference to post-secondary education: "I'm going to give you the right of education just like this man, a lawyer that time, so that was promised....I'll educate you. You can live in the white world if you choose."[192] There were at least three members of the Treaty Commission who were lawyers and the Treaty Commissioner could have pointed at any one of them.

Many of the Treaty stories make reference to 'the lawyer' as an example of the quality of education First Nations people could expect. Many more Treaty stories make reference to the Treaty Commissioner's promise that "The Queen wishes her red children to learn the cunning of the white man"[193] which again, was understood to mean more than rudimentary education.

Chief Barry Ahenakew grew up hearing Treaty stories. His old people told him that at Treaty time the buffalo were fast disappearing, it was a time of hardship and the people knew they needed another way to make a living: "Our old people at the time looked at that as what was going to be a future, education. Education was now going to be the buffalo of the future."

> Anybody today I guess getting their degree, in those old peoples' eyes is getting their buffalo. Buffalo was livelihood, buffalo was food, shelter, clothing, tools, utensils, you name it...What does a degree today give you?

> It gives you all of those things. And it was their understanding of education. That [it] was all encompassing, because in our peoples' eyes from birth...the teachings of how to pray for life, how to pray for your brother, how to pray for your sister, as life went on your teachings went on. As they grew older, the white haireds wapitikwaniwak, their education still continued, 'til the day a person died his education was not complete.[194]

The federal government finds its historical truths in its own documentary records of the Treaty negotiation process. Treaty First Nations base their truth on a very different set of standards grounded on religious beliefs and practices. The promises were made with the Creator/God as witness, the spoken word was sacrosanct, and their oral records were preserved through ceremony, song and religious instruments that also serve as mnemonic devises.

Clearly the primary conflict over interpretation stems from the fact that the Treaty provisions were recorded and represented in two separate and culturally-distinct manners—each party had different historical methods, forms and culturally-based understandings.[195] However, given the unbalanced and colonialist nature of Government-Indian relations, the Government's historical interpretation of the Treaty Right to education prevails.

The bulwark of Western 'civilizations' are their judicial systems. Rigorous standards and tests have been developed by the judiciary over the course of centuries for determining truth but Indigenous truths in the form of oral traditions have not fared well against those tests. In some ways the courts have been open-minded by allowing unconventional evidence into the court rooms. However, the treatment of Indigenous oral traditions as legal evidence in Canadian courts of law is governed by anachronistic 19th century historical standards.

The most explicatory examples of the legal treatment of Indigenous histories can be found in the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Aboriginal Title cases heard as Delgamuukw v. B.C. in the British Columbia Supreme Court (1991) and the Supreme Court of Canada (1997).[196] In May of 1987 fifty-one hereditary chiefs of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en First Nations, representing 6,000 people organized into 133 traditional Houses, launched their case against the province of British Columbia. At stake was a massive territory covering 54,000 square kilometers of 'crown' land along the Skeena River in Northern British Columbia. Through their legal council, the chiefs claimed ownership and jurisdiction over their territory and they made this claim under the authority of their traditional House and clan system.[197] Based on their oral histories they argued that "their traditional law remains in effect in their territories unless changed with their consent." After 374 days in court and 141 days taking evidence out of court Judge McEachern rendered his 394 page Reason for Judgement which rejected their Aboriginal Title claim.[198]

While Delgamuukw (1991) and (1997) are notable for a number of Aboriginal Rights and Title issues they address, their significance for the present study lies in the nature of the Indigenous oral traditions that were brought to court and the manner in which the court dealt with them.

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en asserted that their oral tradition "was a declaration of their title" and they demonstrated this by bringing two kinds of oral history—the Gitksan adaawk and the Wet'suwet'en kungax—into the court. The adaawk and kungax are the oral histories that "document House ownership of land and resources and their performance at feasts publicly validates those claims." The former are a collection of

sacred stories about ancestors, historical events and territories, the latter are a collection of songs about trails between territories that link them to the land and impress the importance of place.[199] These accounts are held by Chiefs and designated Elders who "represent an indigenous aristocracy, gerontocracy and intelligentsia" and "have been publicly told and retold, witnessed, paid for, disputed, and confirmed over and over again for centuries."[200] In addition to living memories the Gitksan plaintiffs had the benefit of an extensive record of oral histories collected between 1915 and 1955 by a Tsimshian named William Benton. Among this oral data were statements of Chiefs and Elders of ancient histories going back 10,000 years to the end of the last ice age.[201]

Initially the Crown lawyer tried to have the oral traditions designated as "hearsay" evidence and tossed-out, but in a landmark ruling during the course of the trial, Judge McEachern exempted some of the oral tradition from the hearsay rule—namely "evidence of origin and territory, historical evidence based upon declarations by deceased persons, evidence of more recent events to which there may be witnesses still living, and evidence of spiritual beliefs and values"—and allowed the testimony of the Elders to proceed.[202]

Ultimately Judge McEachern dismissed the oral traditions he heard from the hereditary chiefs on the following grounds:

> 'much evidence must be discarded or discounted not because the witnesses are not decent, truthful persons but because their evidence fails to meet certain standards prescribed by law....if I do not accept [the plaintiff's] evidence it will seldom be because I think they are untruthful, but rather because I have a different view of what is a fact and what is a belief.'[203]

Later he specified, "'I am unable to accept the adaawk, kungax and oral traditions as reliable bases for detailed history but they could confirm findings based on admissible evidence.'"[204] McEachern also dismissed most of the evidence presented by

anthropologists who he charged were unreliable witnesses because their fieldwork methods brought them too close to their subjects.

In contrast to his treatment of oral traditions and anthropological evidence McEachern embraced the documentary evidence presented by historians: "'Generally I accept just about everything they put before me because they were largely collections of archival, historical documents....Their marvelous collections largely spoke for themselves.'"[205]

Shortly following the public release of McEachern's Reasons for Judgement a plethora of critiques against McEachern's eurocentric, anachronistic, and positivist conclusions were published by offended scholars.[206] Anthropologists chastised him for his eurocentric dismissal of oral testimonies because they were too imbued with cultural values when he never addressed "the hegemony of the cultural values operating so starkly in the courtroom"[207] Historians chastised him for his "xerox, scissors, and paste" approach to history, his lack of understanding about historical methodologies and interpretation, his ahistorical presentism, and his anachronistic "exclusive reliance on written documents to interpret history [which] confirms the hegemony of the colonizers." Historian Robin Fisher charged:

> McEachern's view of Native history is still firmly entrenched in the nineteenth century as interpreted by the historians of the 1930s. Since his method of determining the past is very different from that used by today's historians, it is hardly surprising that his conclusions would be also outdated.[208]

Arthur Ray, one of the expert ethnohistorian witnesses for the plaintiffs, charged that "lawyers are not historians." Having little familiarity with historical methodologies they risk taking documents out of their archival and historical context in "the mistaken

notion that the record can speak for itself, particularly if it speaks to a point they are trying to make."[209] Noel Fortune agrees that one reason for the outcome of the case was the Court's reliance "on an unexamined and overly simplistic conception of history." Despite the range of debates currently alive among philosophers of history—problems of knowledge, representation, interpretation and narration—the court accepted the idea that "the content and study of history is largely unproblematic."[210] It is important, Fortune contends, that the courts critically examine the assumptions that underlie this unproblematic conception of history, because these inform the law.

Fortune explains further that "in changing the human source of history from experts to Native people themselves, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en also changed the form in which history is normally brought before the courts." But to "rationalistic, causation-inspired historical thinking" the kungax and adaawk do not appear suitably historic. Rather, they are "classified as 'mythical' since they purport to describe events that, to speak in simplified terms, are not scientifically explicable."[211]

The impact of eurocentric denigration of Indigenous knowledge and laws to the more passive category of 'myth' or 'tradition' for the purposes of denying their validity, has been addressed in a study of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal legal relations in Northern British Columbia by Jo-Anne Fiske. Fiske's study demonstrates that Indigenous customary law, which was "embedded in the protocol and privileges of the potlatch," were upheld and applied in late 19th century and early 20th century courts in instances where Indigenous peoples sought to assert or protect their rights against each other. A legal pluralism existed. However, as settler incursions increased inter-cultural conflicts over access to land and resources, British law superceded to protect settler interests. This

was accomplished by a discursive transformation of Indigenous customary law into oral tradition, a process which downgraded its intrinsic value and function "so that, in the twentieth century, it would become hearsay evidence in the eyes of the court."[212] Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Fiske asserts that "political struggles reveals the way in which law, a powerful and privileged discourse, subjugates other discourses and, in the process, subordinates the colonial subject."[213] She concludes by describing the impact this process had on 1991 Delgamuukw decision:

> When Indian law again appeared before the bench it had been radically transformed in legal discourse into oral tradition; its veracity was doubted and its legal powers were dismissed....Thus in a colonial discourse reminiscent of frontier magistrates, McEachern fashioned a narrative imbued with explicit and implicit assumptions of the superiority of colonial and constitutional laws—assumptions that would sustain the superordination of judicial authority while distancing alternative discourses and subordinating them to positivist truth.[214]

Following McEachern's decision the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en took their case to the Supreme Court of Canada which, in a landmark decision, found the trial judge in error for rejecting oral histories and ordered a new trial. The court even went so far as to suggest that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en could prove their Aboriginal Title if the oral histories were considered:

> [The oral histories were used] in an attempt to establish their occupation and use of the disputed territory, an essential requirement for aboriginal title. The trial judge, after refusing to admit, or giving no independent weight to these oral histories, reached the conclusion that the appellants had not demonstrated the requisite degree of occupation for 'ownership'. Had the trial judge assessed the oral histories correctly, his conclusions on these issues of fact might have been very different.[215]

While the Supreme Court of Canada demonstrated remarkable liberalism and respect for oral tradition as history, the fact that the judgement did not risk establishing

'tests' belies its liberality. Without 'tests' lower courts can still do whatever they want. They could determine that "the principles in Delgamuuk are important, but the facts here show that I cannot use oral evidence." In other words, a judge could rule that the facts of the case before him/her are different than Delgamuuk, which would disallow the successful use of the Supreme Court decision.[216] For example, Judges could assert that oral evidence can only be used in regions where Treaties have not been signed which disallows the application of Delgamuuk's principles for the majority of the country.[217] So far, however, the decision is having positive impacts. In a recent case the federal and provincial government of Saskatchewan sought to overturn a 1998 decision which acquitted two Dene men of illegally trespassing and hunting on the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range (occupied Crown land). The trial Judge Jeremy Nightingale ruled that the charges against the two men infringed on their Treaty Right to hunt on Crown land which was guaranteed in Treaty No. 10 according to oral history. Citing Delgamuukw (1997) Judge Nightingale placed Aboriginal oral history on the same footing as documentary evidence. Claiming that Nightingale "relied too heavily on oral history in his decision," the appeal lawyers for the province and federal government are seeking to overturn the decision on the grounds that "if Indians have the right to hunt in the air weapons range, they would have the right to hunt in national parks, provincial parks and wildlife sanctuaries."[218] The case is still pending.

The federal government of the United States and Canada have not been naïve about the potential threat and impact that an acceptance of Indigenous oral histories would have on Indian claims cases against them. Two major research reports were commissioned by the USA and Canadian governments respectively in 1961 and 1996, to

explore the nature of oral history, in light of Indian lands and Treaty claims.[219] Both reports dismissed oral histories as valid historical sources.

Each of these instances demonstrates that the federal government has a vested interest in denigrating and de-legitimizing Indigenous oral histories. It also demonstrates that at least until very recently, Canadian courts of law have supported it. However, so far, the directive given by the Supreme Court in Delgamuukw (1997) that oral histories be treated on equal footing as other forms of evidence, has not in any way impacted Federal Indian policies. The dominant colonial discourse, heavily imbued with political self-interest, still prevails.

The Colonization of Indigenous Histories

Just as governments are slow to change when faced with threats to their authority, so, too, historians and other academics resist change when their authority is challenged. Paul Thompson charges that old Professors simply do not like learning new tricks and resist anything they think might erode the special status of 19th century methods. Older generations of historians, he claims further, also fear losing command over the techniques of their discipline. However, Gwyn Prins suspects that the deeper, less strident reason is that historians "unthinkingly tend to hold the spoken word in contempt." This contempt for the spoken word, he claims, is a corollary of our pride in writing and respect for the written word. After all, he stresses, "communication through symbolic, written language is a quite stupendous achievement."[220]

The difficulty most historians have with Indigenous oral histories is that many Indigenous societies do not adhere to the Western fact/fiction or truth/myth binary

classifications. As Beardy among the Cree, Cruikshank among the Tlingit, and the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en demonstrate above, Indigenous life histories are infused with mystical stories because these impact individual lives and are as much alive to them as mundane affairs.

Among the Dakota all oral narratives, including oral history, are considered oral tradition, which in their context refers to the method of transmission rather than the content or time frame. Thus an event can become an oral tradition at the moment it happens or the moment it is told. While there is a clear sense of difference between 'myth' and 'true stories' among the Dakota, there is no categorical boundary—oral tradition is a "kind of a web in which each strand is a part of the whole." To get at the layers of meaning one needs a larger context than mere 'facts'.[221]

What is clearly demonstrated above, is that Indigenous knowledge systems are treated as subjects of study rather than as systems of knowledge in their own right or as methodological and structural guides. Even among scholars who demonstrate an appreciation for Indigenous knowledge systems, very few actually respect or abide by them in their writings, and among those that attempt to, some even create and impose new 'Indigenous' categories when faced with Indigenous models that prove 'unsatisfactory' or do not subscribe to their own sensibilities. Edward Rogers and Mary Black-Rogers reported that the Crane Ojibway-Cree peoples of Northern Ontario did not clearly distinguish myth from historical fact. Though the people had their own knowledge categories which separated tales of legendary time (a.tiso.hkan) from accounts of events personally experience (a.cimowin) the Rogers' determined that there existed a large repertoire of stories about the past that fit into neither Indigenous category. So they

created a new one:

> In the absence of a category for 'true historical fact' such as we profess to employ, there seems in the Algonquian world to be events whose recounting could be described as 'history in the process of becoming legend.' In this unnamed category are the stories of *'kihki Ocica.hk'* (Old Crane), and *'Ocica.hkonss'* the first man of our people...In its evolution over a number of generations, this story-that-is-not-quite-a-legend can be seen to encapsulate Crane history.[222]

Clearly, Indigenous oral histories do not abide by conventional disciplinary boundaries, they are about relationships and generational continuity, and the package is holistic—they include religious teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and Indigenous 'truths'. However, the very nature of the academic enterprise encourages dissection and decontextualization. Academics tend to take Indigenous oral histories out of their contexts and dissect them according to Western disciplinary objectives and foci (see figure 1). It often is the case in mainstream scholarship, that once a story is shared and recorded, 'facts' are extracted and the remaining 'superfluous' data set aside. The bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and the story dies. In the process, the teachings and responsibilities deriving from the social relations inherent in student-teacher relations are forgotten.

The imposition of eurocentric categories on Indigenous knowledge of the past amounts to intellectual colonialism. As Gerald Vizenor explains:

> The cultural and political histories of the Anishinaabeg were written in a colonial language by those who invented the Indian, renamed the tribes, allotted the land, divided ancestries by geometric degrees of blood, and categorized identities on federal reservations.[223]

Thus, Indigenous (oral) histories do not fair well when judged by conventional Rankean

standards.

The denigration of Indigenous historical knowledge is the result of more than mere academic elitism. The deprecation of Indigenous intellectual traditions, whether overt, covert, or unconscious, is part and parcel of the larger colonial process. Thus, to a large degree, the challenges confronting conventional history by Indigenous oral histories are grounded in anti-colonialist criticism.

Classical colonialism is distinguished by economic exploitation, forced entry, and by cultural imperialism through the imposition of foreign institutions and ways of thought. Intellectual colonialism, specifically the colonization of Indigenous histories, is part of the colonialist package. Franz Fanon describes the process by which Indigenous historical knowledge is colonized as follows:

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the natives brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.[224]

Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains further that the

> negation of Indigenous views of history was a crucial part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization.[225]

A major thrust of the colonial enterprise is to strip the colonized of his humanity in order to rationalize his displacement and subjugation. Dehumanization occurs both at the socio-economic and political levels, and at the levels of ideology and imagination. The colonized and every aspect of his world is negated so the new order can be imposed. The Other is created out of these negations and pervades colonial discourse.

Academics play a vital role in the colonial process. Edward Said explains that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident."[226] Academics play a vital role in the construction of the Other which serves to maintain colonialist hegemony. According to Said:

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientialism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.[227]

Academics collect knowledge about Indigenous peoples, classify it, represent it in various ways to themselves, then through their own eyes represent it back to the colonized. Edward Said refers to this process as a "Western discourse about the Other which is supported by 'institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.'" Drawing on Edward Said's work, Linda Tuhawai Smith explains that one of the reasons this process works is due to the "constant interchange between scholarly and the imaginative construction of the Other."[228]

Naming our histories 'tradition' as demonstrated above is an act of intellectual colonialism because undermines its validity and strips "it of its significance as authentic historical documentation."[229] Jo-Anne Fiske explains that the early 20th century anthropological enterprise played a significant role in delegitimizing customary laws located in potlatch protocols by classifying them as 'oral tradition':

> The disappearance of Indian law from courts and public discourse was not associated with a lack of scholarly or even public interest in Aboriginal society. Rather, collectors and ethnologists appeared on the scene and a new discourse materialized—one more anthropological than legal. The shift was to a scholarly scrutiny of oral tradition—categorized variously as

> 'legends,' 'myths,' 'texts,' 'folktales,' stories,' and 'tales'—and to a popular fascination with what were held to be primitive or exotic customs.[230]

The actions of Franz Boaz, Fiske explains, is "exemplary in this regard." In the midst of colonialist struggles over land rights and the colonialist anti-potlatch movement in the late 1880s, Boaz responded to the criminalization of the potlatch by defending its economic functions but he totally neglected or ignored the Indigenous legal order it embedded. Diamond Jenness among the Bulkly Carrier likewise focused on the socio-economic aspects of the potlatch and failed to recognize that it also embodied a legal system. According to Fiske:

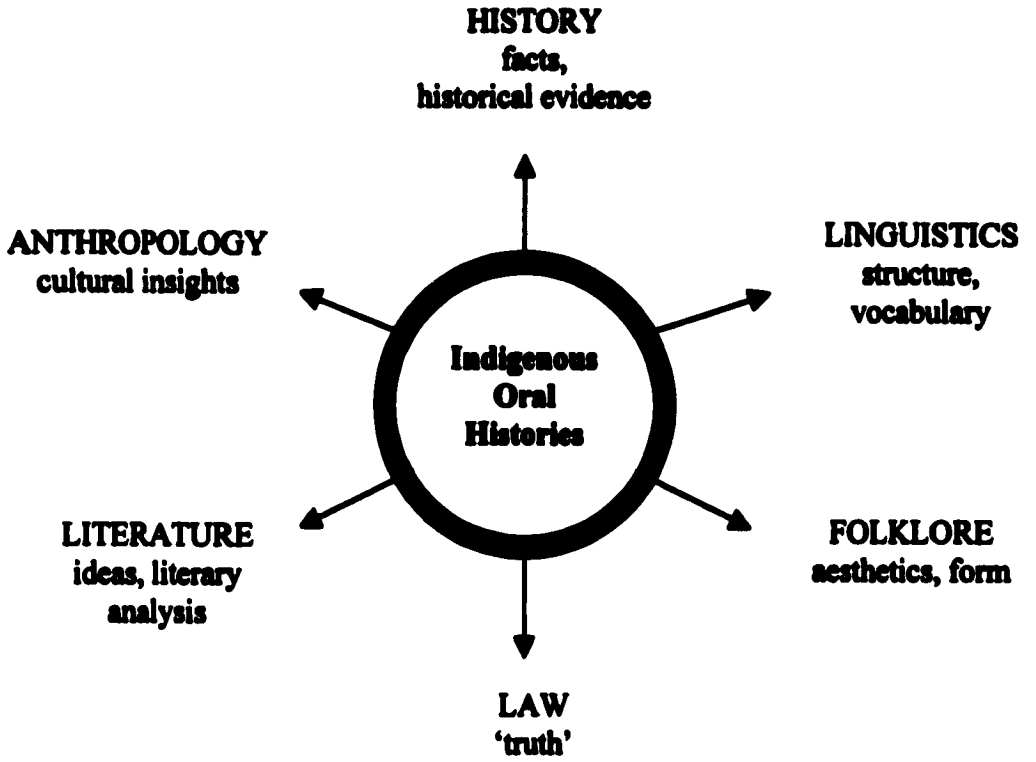
> In this manner legal codes embedded in legends and historic narratives, and signified in potlatch presentations and graveyard celebrations, eluded ethnographers and became fixed in anthropological narration as various forms of funerary customs and oral traditions.[231]

Seamus Deane tells us that the naming or renaming of place, race, region, or person "is, like all acts of primordial domination, an act of possession."[232] Eric Wolf adds that the "ability to bestow meanings—to 'name' things, acts, and ideas—is a source of power."[233] Whosoever possesses the power to name controls communication, and control over "communication allows the managers of ideology to lay down the categories through which reality is to be conceived."[234]

By relegating personal reminiscences and Indigenous oral histories of distant events to the academically defined categories of 'oral history' and 'oral tradition' respectively, historians have adopted and perpetuated a colonialist discursive strategy that delegitimizes Indigenous intellectual traditions.

Figure 1

Academic Treatment of Voice:
Disemboweled Indigenous Oral Histories



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[169] Vansina, Oral Tradition, p. 8.

[170] Thompson, Voice of the Past, p. 113.

[171] Prins, "Oral History," p. 121.

[172] According to Paul Connerton, memories become bodily practices because commemorative ceremonies are performative, performativity is habit-based, and "habit cannot be thought without a notion of body automatisms." Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 39.

[173] Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., The Oral History Reader (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 76.

[174] Vansina, Oral Tradition, p. 197.

[175] Prins, "Oral History," p. 121.

[176] Vansina, Oral Tradition, pp. 13, 14.

[177] Connerton, How Societies Remember, p. 39.

[178] Peter Nabokov, "Present Memories, Past Histories," in Calvin Martin, ed., The American Indian and the Problem of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 145.

[179] Vansina, Oral Tradition, pp. 160, 147.

[180] ibid., p. 161.

[181] Prins, "Oral History," p. 131.

[182] ibid., p. 120.

[183] ibid., p. 137.

[184] See Claudia Orange, The Treaty of Waitangi (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987) and Judith Binney, "Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts: Two Forms of Telling History," New Zealand Journal of History 21, 1 (1987): 16-28.

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[188] Delia Opekokew and Alan Pratt, "The Treaty Right to Education in Saskatchewan," (unpublished report for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, n.d.), p. 52.

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[191] ibid., p. 12.

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[198] Bruce G. Miller, "Introduction," BC Studies Special Issue 95 (Autumn 1992), pp. 3, 4.

[199] Cruikshank, "Invention of Anthropology," pp. 34, 35.

[200] Dara Culhane, "Adding Insult to Injury: Her Majesty's Loyal Anthropologist," BC Studies Special Issue 95 (Autumn 1992), p. 68.

[201] Peter R. Grant, "The Delgamuukw Decision and Oral Histories," (paper presented to the Prairie Treaty Gathering, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 5 August 1998), p. 1. See also Gisdaywa and Delgam Uuk, The Spirit of the Land: The Opening Statement of the Gitksan and Wet'Suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs in the Supreme Court of British Columbia (Gabriola Island: Reflections, 1989) and Antonia Mills, Eagle Down is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).

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Chapter III

Turning Posts, Making Spaces: Internal Challenges to Convention

> To ignore the Indian thoughtworld is to continue writing about ourselves to ourselves. Indian-White history thus becomes white history because it expresses ours or our forbears' perception of reality.
>
> Calvin Martin, The American Indian and the Problem of History (1987)

> Historians who rethink the categories of historical understanding are in fact likely to find a great many submerged voices that contest their historical (and metaphysical) desire for a unified, unambiguous meaning.
>
> Lloyd S. Kramer, "Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination," (1989)

The state of 'history' in its relations with the Indigenous past is changing. New scholarly inroads posing critical challenges to conventional wisdoms have opened the doors to Other historiographic traditions. Ethnohistorians are leading the way to the bush and are demonstrating how listening and experiencing can expand our breadth of understanding. Social Historians have created space for the voices and lives of previously silenced populations. Critical theorists, influenced by postmodernism, challenge history's authority and question the anachronistic foundations of the discipline. In so doing they demonstrate the intellectual arrogance inherent in conventional historical representations and reveal that the boundaries between history and literature are really quite thin. Finally, the lively debates in postcolonial studies offer a wide range of ideas, insights, and strategies on decolonizing the Indigenous past. The objective of the following chapter is to consider what these new inroads have to offer Native American History—what creative approaches, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and textual forms are being proposed that may influence the decolonization of Indigenous histories and help spur the development of new kinds of Indigenous histories grounded in Indigenous intellectual (oral) traditions.

Other Histories

> The bards and we do not agree on such fundamental issues as how one knows about the past, which forces shape events, and what is the purpose of historical accounts. Two different experiences of the world confront each other.[1]
>
> Ernst Breisach, Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1983)

Anthropology and New History

Historical Consciousness. Modern history exudes evolutionary pride and intellectual arrogance, but in the past few decades many anthropologists, ethnohistorians and a handful of historians are recognizing that historical consciousness, 'history,' significant events, and historical poetics or narrative forms are socio-cultural constructs—that there are many more kinds and forms of 'history' in the world than the conventional/modern template propagated in universities.

Calvin Martin offers one of the most original theories on the emergence of Western historical consciousness. According to Martin, human beings became "historical in outlook and behavior only with the advent of the neolithic."[2] As societies became increasingly committed to agriculture, attention to scheduling, spacing, the need for group control and coordination were "placed in the hands and rhetoric and imagination of a Priestly class swiftly becoming ensconced as a ruling elite."[3] The "Agricultural Revolution, Judeo-Christian teachings, rationalism and the commercialization of the earth", he explains, demystified and commodified nature, imposed linear and progressive time, and provided the rationale for the emergence of a Priestly class whose task it was to create order out of chaos and impose monuments (stories) celebrating man's rise above nature:[4]

> Here was palpable history, history that had transformed the land, hard-edged testament to mankind's presence, man's thoughts, his viewpoint—

and his valiant separation from the surround.[5]

Starting with the chronicles of Priest-Kings, history originated as "the oral or literary or visual rendering of that exalted being's success in combating the forces of chaos, of dissolution, of evil."[6]

The development of modern notions of time are inexorably linked to the development of conventional historical consciousness and ideas about evolution. Time, as we know it, is a relatively recent concept. The chronometer was invented during the 'age of enlightenment' which was rife with intellectual optimism and "forward-looking attitudes of time."[7] Historical philosophers of the day expressed "belief in the inevitability of human progress and in the power of science and technology to transform man's knowledge and control over himself and society."[8] Thus, the secular view of history was added to the chronicles of Christian history at the turn of the 18th century with the world of Darwin, Wallace and other evolutionists.[9] Conventional history with its focus on change over time, the movement of time, is undeniably bound to the 19th century idea of progress—man's rise up the evolutionary ladder from savagism to 'civilization'. The application of Darwin's evolutionary theory to studies of human development also launched the fledgling field of anthropology.[10]

Views about the Other became more formalized during the enlightenment through science, philosophy and imperialism. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, the

> racialization of the human subject and the social order enabled comparisons to be made between the 'us' of the West and the 'them' of the Other. History was the story of people who were regarded as *fully human*. Others who were not regarded as human (that is, capable of self-actualization) were prehistoric. German philosopher G. W. Hegel conceived of the fully human subject as one who was 'capable of creating (his) own history'.[11]

Thus, historians studied 'fully human' civilizations, while the Other came under the

purview of anthropologists.

Anthropologists have been interested in the historical traditions of non-literate societies since the days of Franz Boas, E. E. Evans-Pritchards and Claude Levi-Strauss and quickly 'discovered' that the conventional historical paradigm was not universal.[12] Richard White explains that Claude Levi-Strauss "used Native Americans as a model of peoples who constructed mythic pasts that had not yet descended into history." Levi-Strauss divided the world into 'hot' and 'cold' societies—traditional and modern—the former "of history and chronology" which thrives "upon irreversible, cumulative changes", the latter "of myth and timelessness" and resistant to change."[13]

Levi-Strauss's distinction between hot and cold societies has been criticized by numerous anthropologists and historians in his wake. According to Renato Rosaldo, those "who are refining the gross distinction between societies with and without histories have embarked, not on a difficult conceptual journey, but along the wrong track."[14] Rosaldo charges that the "analytic method of freezing time in order better to perceive the relations of a structural-functional societal whole has itself produced the illusion of 'timeless primitives.'" The celebrated contrast between hot and cold societies, he concludes, can be understood "as an artifact of ethnographic method, not as a reflection of the human condition."[15] By bringing history to anthropology Rosaldo hoped to achieve a method for dissolving "hapless analytic dichotomies" in order to show that non-literate societies (in his case Ilongot society) "can best be understood as it unfolds through time rather than as a set of eternal structures."[16]

Marshall Sahlins promoted the development of a structural, historical anthropology to encourage anthropologists to "rise from the abstract structure to the explication of the concrete event." This, he promised, would "explode the concept of

history by the anthropological experience of culture":

> The heretofore obscure histories of remote islands deserve a place alongside the self-contemplation of the European past—or the history of 'civilizations'—for their own remarkable contributions to an historical understanding. We thus multiply our conceptions of history by the diversity of structures. Suddenly, there are all kinds of new things to consider.[17]

Long before Sahlins, however, a handful of anthropologists attempted to historicize their subjects. Though contemptuous, even Robert Lowie acknowledged that Indigenous people possessed a different order of historical consciousness. Arguing that Indigenous oral histories are of no value, he asserted that "native 'history' is not history in our sense":[18]

> If we do not accept aboriginal pathology as contributions to <u>our</u> pathology, if we do not accept aboriginal astronomy, biology, or physics, why should we place primitive history along on a quite exceptional pedestal, and exalt it to a rank co-ordinate with that of our own historical science? ...we cannot substitute primitive tradition for scientific history.[19]

The rapprochement between history and anthropology is now producing a greater concern with time and change in society, and greater sensitivity towards different modes of producing and thinking about history. According to Kirsten Hastrup, "renewed reflection on Other cultures is realizing that the range of Otherness "also incorporates a vast number of separate histories."[20] Hastrup stresses, however, that while Others have been driven to participate in the "construction of a common world" through European imperial expansion, "'they' should not be admitted to history only by being implicated in ours, they should be allowed their own."[21]

The renewed interest in history among anthropologists is primarily concerned with studying "how specific cultural and linguistic traditions shape social consciousness in any given set of political-economic conditions."[22] Historical anthropologists and

ethnohistorians are now moving forward in their thinking about how "different cultural orders have their own modes of historical action, consciousness, and determination—their own historical practice."[23]

Itself in the midst of renewal, the discipline of history was ripe for the 'anthropological experience of culture'. The New History movement, initially led by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre of the Annales school, opposed the dominance of political history and promoted what they called a "wider and more human history" that would include all human activities, be less concerned with the narrative of events and more concerned with analyses of structures.[24] The universalistic tenets of history were denounced by Febvre who challenged the 'objectivity' dictum and reaffirmed the relativity of history when he wrote his well-known maxim in 1949: "History also creates its own subject. It does not create it once and for all. In other words, history is a product of its era. Indeed, there is no history, but only historians." For Febvre, history "interrogates the dead in terms of the living."[25] In addition to challenging Rankean tenets, Bloch and Febvre also promoted interdisciplinary research methods and the use of social science theories.[26] Since then social history and a wide range of other interdisciplinary sub-fields have flourished. As Peter Burke describes it: "In the last generation or so the universe of historians has been expanding at a dizzying rate."[27]

Considerable impetus for New History or Social History came from massive social, political and economic changes in the past fifty years—for example, the population explosion, neocolonialism, decolonization, social revolution, feminism and minority rights movements—and the demands these made on scholars. The result has been a veritable explosion of varieties of history—women's history, history from below, microhistory, cultural history, ethnohistory, ecological history, history of the body, oral

history, the history of reading, political thought, images, and the list goes on. The New History strives to create space for the voices of previously silent and marginalized segments of society. In addition to challenging the focus or content of conventional historical inquiry—'Great Men', Nation States—it challenges fundamental historical tenets. For example, it renounces linear temporality in favor of multiple kinds of time as it experienced "'at the levels where the individual takes root in the social and the collective.'" Jacques LeGoff claims that New History is a revolution in memory, a history based on the study of places in the collective memory—topographical, monumental, symbolic and functional places in addition to those of the State.[28]

A unique and cutting-edge study emerging out of the New History movement is Morris Berman's Coming to Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West.[29] According to Berman our cultural history is encoded in our bodies, "human drama is somatic," but the rise of 19th century scientific approaches amputated history "to the point that what now passes for written history is really history of the head—of the ego."[30] How is it, he asks, that emotions or the body which is most important in human life, gets omitted from virtually all accounts of the past?

Historically, 'history' was storytelling, less concerned with 'the facts' than with facts that happened at the psychic and emotional levels. Pre-Homeric Greece was a somatic and oral culture. Audiences had an active and emotional identification with a speaker and were left "in a state of autohypnosis." Mimesis was submission to the spell of performance and the physical effects were relaxing and erotic. According to Berman, "[p]articipation, or identification, is highly sensual in nature, and is a mode of knowing that cannot be intellectually refuted because of its immediate, visceral quality. Thus learning occurred at the body level, knowledge was directly experiential, and there was

no separate and distanced intellectual analysis.[31] However, in the transition to modernity the emphasis on interior knowing was severely attenuated.

From the 16th century scientific revolution onward a whole series of disciplines developed and objectivity became an essential feature of this mode of understanding the natural and social world. 19th century Rankean history—objective reports of 'what actually occurred'—required the psychic distancing of a past 'out there,' the creation of a rigid barrier between the observed and the observer. Emotions were deemed unreliable because, it was believed, bias affects judgement. [32]

Berman calls for the abandonment of psychic distancing. For example, quantitative studies of church attendance do not necessarily indicate degrees of religious sentiment. What do statistics tell us about peoples sense of religiosity, about what they were feeling about God? About the life of the spirit? "One might also learn more about sainthood from 30 seconds of religious ecstasy than 300 hours of FORTRAN time."[33] Berman goes beyond Theodore Zeldon's call for a "humanization of academia," which emphasizes imagination rather than erudition and a special veracity of history that encourages the injection of personal and idiosyncratic. Berman urges historians to put their own bodies, personal histories and emotional responses into the picture. To do this, we need to create a new approach and a new methodology that will lead directly to a somatic understanding of the past.[34] For such a methodology, studying religious feelings through parish records, or ecstatic experience through computer correlation, "would be completely soft-headed."[35]

According to Berman, not even Michel Foucault goes far enough. In The Order of Things, Foucault demonstrates that pre-modern cognition was based on symbol and analogy, and that the world was reflected in terms of feelings, tone and resonance. These

modes of discourse were verbal expressions of mental structures (words and things) through which men organized their activities and classified perceptions. Foucault's study of pre-modern cognition opened the possibility of "recapturing past experience in the sense that it was actually lived, rather than through the filter of the post-sixteenth century mode of discourse." But

> Foucault denied the possibility of crossing the watershed precisely because the forms of discourse were radically incommensurate; which meant, of course, that he was unable or unwilling to suspend his own consciousness. And this is the problem with virtually all studies in the field of mentalité: they stop short of the attempt to recreate a previous consciousness, and opt instead for describing it from the vantage point of our own conceptual categories. In the last analysis mentalité remains abstract, preserving the psychic distance so central to modern cognition. Mind and body, fact and value, still wind up on opposite sides of the fence. The history of the mentalités reflects the great divide set up by the Scientific Revolution.

Berman stresses the need to abandon modern consciousness temporarily "to allow the mind to sink into the body."[36] Psychic distance must be abandoned as the criterion of truth and other criteria must be put in its place. To accomplish this requires making the leap to what might be called a "(post-Cartesian) *corporealite*", a visceral approach to history that puts the mind and body back together again, to search for the hidden, somatic roots of our more visible behavior.[37]

In another creative work, Greg Dening challenges academic notions of historical consciousness and significant events. He asserts that history is a human characteristic, rather than a technique of inquiry, because it helps people make sense of the past and it includes everyday life experiences. Family dinner history, religious ritual, political parable, dissertation.... Each type of history, he claims, has its own social rules of expression, its own criteria of objectivity, and will balance past and present in different ways.[38] Since we recognize the distinctiveness of these ways of knowing the past, we

already have a practical sense of their different poetics.[39] Poetics like poems, he claims,

> is concerned with the authenticity of experience rather than the credentials of the observer. In a poetic for histories, I mean to free our discourse on history from any claim or presumption by historians or anthropologists that by our expertise we are directed to seeing history as having one form or another.[40]

The New History movement strives for total, inclusionary history but is united only in what it opposes—the traditional historical paradigm.[41] Thus the particular Western sense of history defined as "a mode of consciousness which assumes social change to be homogenous, continuous, and linear"[42] is no longer tenable as a universalistic construct.

In contradistinction to conventional Rankean historical philosophy many historians acknowledge that 'history' is a social construct. Prompted by anthropological studies of the Other and the rise of social history and cultural studies, New Historians recognize that thought "about the past is a cultural activity" that varies from place to place, and from time to time. In order to understand and explain social activity it is vital to pay attention to the ways in which people construe the past.[43] John Davies explains that thought about the past which is produced in Europe is by and large dominated by a European set of concepts and notions. Many Europeans, therefore, expect their historians to produce history "in which chronological sequence is related to cause and effect and in which there is an unfolding story, and this seems to require mainly notions of linear time."[44]

Studies of Native American history have benefited considerably from these interdisciplinary explorations. The earliest academic treatments emerged out of ethnohistory which was officially founded in 1953 by a large number of anthropologists and a handful of historians.[45] Until then, most of the studies on American Indian history

focused on Indian wars and government policy. The objective of this new movement was to produce Indian-centered histories based on all possible sources.[46] According to William Hagan, the New Indian History was born in the discussions of ethnohistory that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. It evolved over the last four decades and is now firmly in place.[47]

Anthropologists and ethnohistorians have paid much closer attention to how Indigenous peoples organize and classify their knowledge about the past than have historians. These studies demonstrate that Indigenous Peoples have their own conceptual frameworks, intellectual traditions, notions of history, and historical consciousness. They demonstrate further that Other Peoples organize their knowledge of the past—their histories—according to their own culturally-specific standards.

As early as 1969 anthropologist Bernard Fontana criticized ethnohistorians for producing histories "of Indians based on evidence written by someone other than Indians themselves."[48] He also criticized historians for not considering Indigenous oral histories since the oral history practice of the day primarily focused on the famous and infamous, leaders, literary lions, the extraordinary man. Anthropologists, he claimed, seek insight into culture, and so he promoted the use of oral history in ethnohistory to locate Indigenous notions of history and truth as well as their perspectives of their own past. If the aim of collecting oral histories is to get the Indian point of view, he stressed, "the question of veracity in our terms has little to do with it. It is their veracity in their terms which counts."[49]

Numerous ethnohistorical studies on non-literate histories have since emerged which demonstrate that "historical insights are most likely to come when we analyze oral tradition on its own terms.[50] Maori oral histories, for example, are transmitted through

song (*waiata*), by proverb (*whakatauki*) and by genealogy (*whakapapa*) all three of which are structured, interpretive and combative. Like Western history, Maori history "is the shaping of the past by those living in the present." By way of analogy Judith Binney explains that a book has a 10-15 year life-span before it's content is reinterpreted. The Life of an oral tradition is much longer—generations—but no less susceptible to reinterpretation. In Maori traditions there is a continual dialectic between the past and the present. For them

> the past is seen as that which lies before one, 'Nga ra o mua', the days in front. It is the wisdom and the experience of the ancestors which they are confronting and seeking to interpret. The words of the ancestors still exist in memory, wrought into oral tradition, and they themselves can be encountered as they appear to the living in dreams.[51]

The oral narratives which surround leadership, the *Tekooti*, demonstrate how the Maori past is inextricably bound with the present and future. Binney explains that all the major prophet leaders of the 19th and 20th centuries created histories which were predictive in the telling such that the oral narratives which surround *Tekooti* were "concerned with the future, restored, autonomy of the people and their land." Since *Tekooti* powers are temporary, held only in trust, and can be used for good or ill "that is their burden. So 'history' constantly tests the leaders and the people."[52]

The Akan of Ghana organize knowledge of the past in sequential time and the relational occurrence of events. *Firi tete*, from the beginning of time, covers the cosmological period of creation up to the early historical past. *Abakosem* refers to past events, *tete* to the remote past, and *kane no* represents an unspecified past which could include the recent past (a few decades) to the more distant past (a few centuries).[53] The Inuvialiut of the Canadian North-West Territories organize historical knowledge temporally as *ingilraani* the long past, *taimani* the recent past, and *gangma* the present

time.[54] Some Indigenous Peoples, like the Ilongot People of the South Pacific conceptualize the past as an "ordered sequence of inhabited and cultivated places" and make sharp distinctions between what they have witnessed and what they have not, giving the former credence over the latter.[55] According to Renato Rosaldo the Ilongot organize their past in reference to the Japanese invasion that so dramatically altered their lives: *kapapun*, the time of the Japanese (June 1945), *pistaim*, the era before the Japanese arrived, long ago, or very long ago (peacetime).[56] The Hopi philosophy of history is religious—the physical world is a living entity and human actions either maintain or impair harmonious relations. The Hopi also place high value on retaining memories of significant events from their distant past as demonstrated by their rich oral histories of the coming of the Spanish and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.[57]

Ray Fogelson urges that an "understanding of non-Western histories requires not only the generation of documents and an expanded conception of what constitutes documentation but also a determined effort to try to comprehend alien forms of historical consciousness and discourse."[58] Fogelson promotes the concept of "ethno-ethnohistory" which he claims "insists on taking seriously native theories of history as embedded in cosmology, in narratives, in rituals and ceremonies, and more generally in native philosophies and worldviews." "Implicit here," he asserts, "is the assumption that events may be recognized, defined, evaluated, and endowed with meaning differentially in different cultural traditions."[59]

Michael Harkin takes Fogelson's analysis further. The positivist view of events, he claims, ignores a range of epistemological issues. For example, the notion that an event can be universally interpreted ignores its specificity by denying that the event is situated "in a particular cultural and discursive context."[60] Drawing on the work of

Fogelson and Braudel, Harkin claims that the fundamental character of an event "is that of a symbol rather than a quasi-physical occurrence." He explains that the "Principles of selection, memory, and narrative clearly place events within rather than outside the realm of culturally constituted reality." Thus, an event is primarily a symbolic phenomenon embedded in a specific historical practice.[61] The work of Robert McC. Netting and others, which employ Geertz's "thick description" and attention to culturally-specific symbolisms when studying encounter events between Europeans and Others, demonstrate that "a history that conveys only some of the meanings or a few of the opposed truths is incoherent and incomplete."[62]

Historical anthropology and much current ethnohistory is concerned with structures and how oral traditions serve as "windows on the way the past is constructed and discussed in different contexts, from the perspectives of actors enmeshed in culturally distinct networks of social relationships" rather than locating facts and reconstructing the "real story." As Julie Cruikshank explains her purpose:

> The exercise here is less one of straightening out facts than of identifying how distinct cognitive models generate different kinds of social analysis, leading to different interpretations of events, one of which gets included in official history, the others relegated to collective memory.[63]

In the midst of numerous studies emerging on the range and unique forms of Indigenous historical consciousness, historian Calvin Martin introduces a New Age strain of Levi-Straussian structuralism that pushes "real" Indigenous peoples outside of history again. In an otherwise cutting-edge historical analysis of comparative man-land-time relations, Calvin Martin takes his new-age essentialism to extremes when he contrasts the 'history of progress' canon of Western scholarship with an idealized 'lack of history' among "mythic" minded hunter-gatherers:[64]

> history, I believe, is very definitely an artifact, a fabrication, of the neolithic....Before that, if we can extrapolate from more recent hunter-gatherer evidence, humanity was naïve of such a concept; there was no need for history in the world as perceived by hunters.[65]

According to Martin, Native Americans traditionally subscribed to a philosophy of history and time that were primal and biological as opposed to historical and anthropological.

Martin is aware that his thesis smacks of noble savagery and while he argues that his is not a nouveau version, Richard White charges that "he replicates nearly all its key tenets."[66] Greg Dening emphatically denounced Martin's thesis that "real" American Indians have no history. He does agree that Indigenous peoples do not have the same "systematic conventionalities—rules of inquiry and evidence—that allow them to historicize in ways recognizable and persuasive to us; nor do they have the infinitude of institutional support systems [archives] to persuade them that accuracy is the truth, that history is the past."[67] However, "being accurate is a fetish of a very special sort of history" and there exists a wide range of histories that have much more varied concerns.[68]

Orality and Literacy. Prejudice against oral history is rooted in the prevailing assumption that literacy is the *sine qua non* of "'modern' ('sophisticated,' 'complex') culture" which, at an individual level, leads to higher orders of intelligence.[69] According to Martin, the Greek rationalists who scorned the epic songs of poets only substituted "one kind of truth for another; they exalted the truth of written history (*logos*) over the very different order of truth we call myth (*mythos*), which was sung....In the ancient world, myth-songs were understood to mean '*ageless truths*'."[70]

This prejudice can be countered by an understanding that human societies have

different modes of communication and that each of these modes is made up of two parts, the means (physical) and the relations (socio-cultural dimensions).[71] Those societies where language takes on a purely oral form (primary orality) are relatively rare these days; literate societies where the oral form has died and the language is only available in written form are also rare (classical languages). By far the most numerous are the composite societies where the language takes both oral and written form for all or most of the population. However, composite societies are not homogeneous. They are further divided between societies which are "universally literate," where most of the population is at least functionally literate, and societies which are "restrictedly literate," where most of the population "live on the fringes of, but under the sway of, the literate register."[72]

Clearly Indigenous populations north of Mexico are restrictedly literate. The past 120 years of western education has guaranteed that primarily oral societies no longer exist, but the poor quality of education available to most Indigenous people, especially on reservations, the inconsistent access, and the dramatically low educational attainment levels,[73] has ensured that many American Indian peoples are fringe-dwellers in the literate world encompassing them. Educational marginalization has very real and hard socioeconomic effects on Native American communities, however, a concomitant (and ironic) result has been the preservation of a fairly large body of oral traditions.

Early anthropological accounts distinguished 'primitive' and 'advanced' cultures in binary terms—the former were mystical, prelogical, incapable of abstract thought, irrational, child-like and inferior, the latter, the opposite.[74] Levi-Strauss debunked the myth that primitive cultures were possessed of primitive thought but reintroduced the dichotomy between "primitive and modern cultures in terms of two distinct ways of knowing,"—one mythic, the other historical—(explained above). Jack Goody goes

beyond earlier civilization-savagery dichotomies by demonstrating how consciousness shifts, previously labeled "magic to science" "prelogical to rational state of consciousness" and "savage mind to domesticated thought", can be more cogently explained as shifts from orality to various stages of literacy.[75]

Walter Ong carries this line of reasoning into the realm of identity. He argues that studies on oral and literature cultures demonstrates that writing "enlarges the potentiality of language almost beyond measure" and restructures thought."[76] He then offers a set of features that characterize primary oral thought and expression which can be summarized by what they are not: they are not subordinative, analytic, experimental, object or abstract.[77] What we have here, James Gee observes, is "Levi-Strauss' recasting of the primitive-civilized distinction in terms of a contrast between concrete and abstract thought, now explained by literacy, [come] to roost in our 'modern' society."[78]

James Gee presents more recent research that debunks the myth that literacy leads to "Higher Order Cognitive Skills." Studies by Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole demonstrate that literacy in and of itself does not result in increased performance of categorization and abstract reasoning. Rather, it comes from the socialization process inherently built into formal education and urbanization.[79] Citing Brian Street's "ideological model" James Gee concludes that claims for literacy—specifically for essay-text literacy values, in speech or in writing—are ideological. They are part of an arsenal of practices, concepts, and conventions "that privileges one social formation as if it were natural, universal, or, at least, the end point of normal developmental progression of cognitive skills (achieved only by some cultures, thanks either to their intelligence or to their technology)"[80]:

Literacy—of whatever type—only has consequences as it acts together

> with a large number of other social factors—including a culture's or a social group's political and economic conditions, social structure and local ideologies.[81]

Studies among Indigenous people further demonstrate that "discourse patterns (ways of using language to communicate whether in speech or writing)" in different cultures reflect particular worldviews or forms of consciousness which are "among the strongest expressions of personal and cultural identity." The introduction of formal schooling to non-mainstream children imposes an assimilative process resulting in identity crisis and the adoption of a foreign reality—values, norms, worldviews—at odds with their own cultural experience.[82]

The development of New Literacy Studies is ethnographic in orientation and "attempts to grapple with the power relations that pervade literary practices."[83] According to James Collins, arguments about literacy are "important politically because they involve claims about the 'Great Divide'" about essential differences "in the cultural and cognitive development of literates and non-literates."[84] Jacques Derrida describes the "violence of the letter" as "analogous to the colonial violence and expropriation that accompanied the spread of European scripts all over the world." Literacy, claims Derrida, leads to exploitation rather than enlightenment. Michel Foucalt likewise argues that the rise of new power, associated with the development of modern capitalist states, used a "'network of writing."[85] Clearly, the distinction between oral and literate societies cannot be characterized in negating hierarchical dualisms. Rather, it is a prominent feature of a contrived political (colonialist) discourse that works to denigrate and dismiss Other ways of knowing.

Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial Studies is rife with internal debates about the nature of colonialism and decolonization. The field is diverse and contentious, even the term 'postcolonial/post-colonial' encapsulates an active and unresolved debate between those who view postcolonial "as designating an amorphous set of discursive practices, akin to postmodernism" and those who see it designating "a more specific, and 'historically' located set of cultural strategies."[86] In the latter view there is further debate between those who believe that post-colonial implies an aftermath—temporally as in after colonialism, and ideologically, as in supplanting. The second implication engenders even further debate: a country may be postcolonial (formally independent) and neo-colonial (remaining economically and/or culturally dependent), and because unequal relations of colonial rule are reinscribed in unequal relations between first and third world nations,[87] and because they take on internal configurations between settler and Indigenous populations.

The debates surrounding the term and the theorizing enterprise are partly due to the inter-disciplinary nature of postcolonial studies and the historical and geographical diversity of colonialism which make theorizing difficult. As Ania Loomba explains, "some particular instance is bound to negate any generalisation we may make about the nature of colonialism or of resistances to it."[88] Thus, postcolonial critics stress the need to build theory with an awareness that diversity exists while watching that the local does not get extended to the status of universal.[89]

Colonial discourse studies address questions about how the colonial encounter restructures ideologies of race, culture, class and sexual differences. It examines the process of decolonization and the problems of recovering the viewpoint of colonized

subjects. It raises questions of authenticity, hybridity, the nation, ethnicity and colonial identities, and questions the agency of the colonized subject, or 'subaltern' and whether it can be recovered and represented by postcolonial intellectuals. Colonial discourse studies question the relationship between colonialism and literature, how colonial representations and subjectivity operate. While all of these new insights are useful, a few examples relevant to issues of Indigenous history—colonized and towards decolonization—will be briefly considered to demonstrate the value of postcolonial studies.

The earliest and most seminal scholars of postcolonial studies are Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi, who along with more recent scholars, have built theories on how colonialism operates at the individual and collective level of both parties. For the purposes of this study the most useful contributions these eminent scholars have made was to describe and critique the process of dehumanization and alienation the colonized experience. In this instance, the objective of the colonizer is to remold the colonized into an agent of his own colonization. Albert Memmi explains that the colonizer is pre-occupied with imposing urgent change and drives it home with a vengeance:

> The mechanism of this remolding of the colonized is revealing in itself. It consists, in the first place, of a series of negations. The colonized is not this, is not that. He is never considered in a positive light; or if he is, the quality which is conceded is the result of a psychological or ethical failing.[90]

Franz Fanon and later scholars demonstrate and theorize on how the colonial enterprise brought complete disorder, disconnecting the colonized from their histories, landscapes, languages, social relations, and their own ways of knowing, thinking, feeling and interacting with the world.[91] As soon as the colonized adopts the values of the colonizer he adopts his own condemnation. As his institutions die he turns his back on what remnants remain because he is faced with "daily confirmation of their ineffectiveness." In

time he draws less and less from his past and when asked,

> who are his folk heroes? His great popular leaders? His sages? At most, he may be able to give us a few names, in complete disorder and fewer and fewer as one goes down the generations. The colonized seems condemned to lose his memory.[92]

Franz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and others have stressed that colonial alienation,

> takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment.[93]

Ngugi wa Thiong'o carries the argument further stressing that alienation begins "with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community."[94] As part of the decolonization process Thiong'o challenges all Indigenous writers to consider seriously the political role of language in literature:

> The question is this: we as African writers have always complained about the neo-colonial economic and political relationship to Euro-America. Right. But by our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not on the cultural level continuing that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit? What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa can not do without European languages?[95]

Edward Said, as discussed earlier, describes the multifaceted process and state of "Orientalism" and how it evolved and is maintained discursively by cultural means and by Eurocentric scholarly methods. In a more recent work Said even calls for an end to anthropology.[96] Building on the work of Foucault, Hayden White, Johannes Fabian and others theorize on the active role of language in power relations.[97]

One of the most recent and exemplary studies to date is Robert Young's White Mythologies.[98] Following a critique of Western historical schools of thought that serve

the colonialist master narrative, Young draws on the work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha in an effort to formulate new non-historicist ways of thinking and writing history as part of the decolonizing project. Likewise, Ashish Nandy argues that historical consciousness "with its relentless historicizing abets colonialism, removes the opportunity for self-definition, and is complicit in the violence that has characterized modernity."[99]

While many creative and sound critiques against conventional historiography have surfaced in the last few decades, "the revision of the discipline from the place of 'otherness' is yet to occur." Post-colonial theorist Gyan Prakash explains:

> We have several accounts of the resistance of the colonized, but few treatments of their resistance as theoretical events; there exists fine descriptions of the 'people without history,' but their conceptions are frequently treated as myths and 'ethnohistories' left for anthropologists to decode and interpret; and while there are scrupulous accounts of Western domination, we have yet to fully recognize another history of agency and knowledge alive in the dead weight of the colonized past.[100]

Decolonized or 'post-colonial' histories of Indigenous peoples need to be more than objective descriptions. They need to be grounded in Indigenous experiences.

The relationship between postmodernism and post-colonialism has been the subject of lively discourse. Postmodernism represents a "diversity of related ways" of understanding contemporaneity, while post-colonialism "works with different maps, chronologies, narratives, and political agendas." They are by no means disparate, rather, they have points of continuity and shared practioners.[101]

Postmodern Turns

Postmodernism does not arise as a singular monolithic assault. Like other intellectual movements it has extremist and more moderate adherents, what Pauline

Rosenau labels respectively, the "skeptic" and "affirmative" factions.[102] The former, she claims, is more closely aligned to the End-of-History movement, the latter with New History. While "most of these challenges overlap; nearly all assume a monolithic, unified, singular, 'old' history that post-modernists criticize as inadequate."[103] Postmodern scholars question all conventional or modern assumptions of time, space, and history. Along with many New History adherents, postmodernists question:

> (1) the idea that there is a real, knowable past, a record of evolutionary progress of human ideas, institutions, or actions, (2) the view that historians should be objective, (3) that reason enables historians to explain the past, and (4) that the role of history is to interpret and transmit human cultural and intellectual heritage from generation to generation.[104]

Hayden White, for example, reproaches modern history for its ironic perspective which enables historians to take a "realistic" or "superior" view of the people and events they study. The underlying premise among historians, contends White, is that "people always lack the perspective in their own time to see the disjunction between their words and experience as clearly as historians see it in retrospect."[105] According to Pauline Rosenau, postmodernists contend that " history is logocentric, a source of myth, ideology, and prejudice."[106] In Metahistory Hayden White contends that history, and ethnography could not make any objectively valid "truth claims". Rather, truth is determined by language or "the linguistic mode".[107] Fact is merely a linguistic construct, truth a value.

Intellectual historians influenced by postmodern literary criticism are examining and widening the inherited definitions of history and historical methodologies. Hayden White stresses the active role of language, texts, and narrative structures in the creation and description of historical reality.[108] As early as 1967 E. D. Hirch compared the historian to the literary critic by way of a hermeneutic distinction between interpretation and criticism.[109] According to H. J. Bruggemeier, Hirch advanced the idea that "'all

textual commentary is a mixture of interpretation and criticism'" and that "no historian can 'interpret' a life in the sense of 'understanding its meaning'. He must 'criticize' it in the sense of 'judging its significance.'"[110]

Towards a New Poetics of History

Academic Inroads. The history of history unearths its own origins in oral traditions—from the heroic epics of Homer and earlier Greek bards to Viking sagas and Celtic songs. It also demonstrates that the weaning of history from oral to documentary sources has been a long process ending only in the more recent past. Herodotus and Thucidides, while scorning the songs of poets, relied to large degree on eyewitness accounts in their written narrative histories. Voltaire and Michelet relied on oral testimonies to supplement archival records in their histories of the French court and commoners. Even as late as the 1830s "[a]ging American revolutionaries such as Adams and Jefferson bemoaned the fact that future generations could not really understand their times as they did because all that the future would have would be imperfect documentation."[111]

Until the end of the 18th century history was considered a part of literature in the broad sense and, like fictional forms, shared a heritage of classical rhetoric upon which it based its methods of organizing and presenting subject matter. Historians, however, abandoned rhetoric in order to present unadorned truth through scientific methods which by the 19th century increasingly distanced them from literature.[112]

Modern historiography, or 'history' proper, is a written narrative, a story, textually simulated in 19th century realism. Robert Berkhoffer explains that realism,

as a mode of representation can take different forms, such as paintings,

> motion pictures, novels, and histories. In each case the supposed realism of the representation varies in accordance with the conventions of the form; the imitation of reality in a painting or a motion picture is quite different in form from the appearance of reality produced in a novel or history....Narrative histories, like novels, convey realism by such means as constructing characters, setting scenes, and plotting events over time....Like all other forms of realistic representation, historical realism tries to bridge or conceal the gap in its form and its subject—to give the illusion of reality through its form. Hence the aptness of the title of one of Hayden White's articles: 'The Fictions of Factual Representation'.[113]

As a textual form, historical realism embraces and presumes its own set of principles or assumptions as the basis of normal historical practice and given their "foundations in social and disciplinary conventions, these can be labeled discursive or cultural historical realism."[114] The realism represented in a text depends upon the generally accepted worldview of its readership as to what is real and what is mythical. In conventional historiography, the real world is the historian's society. Textual historical realism presumes the conventions of the genre regarding what constitutes a realistic approach to subject matter—the text cannot produce reality, but conveys illusion of realism according to "social contract" between historians and their readers.[115] Although Berkhoffer is not necessarily a proponent, he concludes that the "literary job of normal historical realism is to make the structure of interpretation appear to be (the same as) the structure of factuality."[116]

According to Peter Burke historical narrative has become the focus for at least two current debates, each taking place independently despite their relevance to each other. The first debate is between structural and narrative historians—the former asserting that structure should be taken more seriously than events, the latter asserting that the job of the historian is to tell a story. Structuralist charge that traditional narratives cannot accommodate important aspects of the past like economic and social frameworks and so

significant factors escape their control. Narrative historians charge that the analysis of structures is static which makes it unhistorical and that it is reductionist and deterministic. The two camps differ in what they consider significant in the past and in their preferred modes of historical explanation. The second debate does not question whether or not to write narrative, rather, the problem they face is what kind of narrative.[117]

Hayden White argues that historical works tend to exemplify recognizable literary plots—comic, tragic, romantic, satire—and the unity they attain is based on aesthetic and moral concerns. History and much realistic fiction share certain linguistic conventions:

> The narrator never speaks in his own voice but simply records events, giving readers the impression that no subjective judgement or identifiable person has shaped the story being told.[118]

Leopold von Ranke, White claims, chose (consciously or not) to write history "emplotted as comedy" by following a "ternary movement...from a condition of apparent peace, through the revelation of conflict, to the resolution of the conflict in the establishment of a genuine peaceful social order."[119]

White charges that history has remained situated in anachronistic 19th century literary and scientific paradigms that emphasize distinctions between fact and fiction. While literary and scientific achievements have flourished, historians have lagged far behind. White laments:

> There have been no significant attempts at surrealist, expressionistic, or existentialist historiography in this century (except by novelists and poets themselves) for all the vaunted 'artistry' of the historians of modern times. It is almost as if the historians believed that the *sole possible form* of historical narration was that used in the English novel as it had developed by the nineteenth century.[120]

Historians choose not to see the fictive elements in their work. Rather, they believe that they have transcended fiction by setting strict disciplinary guidelines. White concludes

that these guidelines only serve as delusionary devices because any attempt to describe events relies on various forms of imagination.[121] They do not see, for example, that they are locked within an ironic perspective that relies on the literary trope of irony to shape the narrative structure of their work.

Lloyd Kramer explains that when irony is applied to the past it enables historians to take a realistic or superior view of the people and events they discuss "because people always lack the perspective in their own time to see the disjunction between their words and experience as historians see it in retrospect." Irony presupposes a realistic perspective on reality.[122] White contends that the challenge to irony "should foster alternative forms of historical understanding and narrative, all of which must evolve of course through different modes of language."[123]

According to Peter Burke more and more historians are realizing that they do "not reproduce 'what actually happened' as much as represent it from a particular point of view."[124] In contrast to White, however, Burke does not believe that historians are obligated to "engage in literary experiments simply because they live in the twentieth century, or to imitate particular writers because their techniques are revolutionary. The point of looking for a new literary form is surely the awareness that the old forms are inadequate for one's purposes."[125]

Cultural historians are becoming particularly aware of the consequences of their "often unselfconscious literary and formal choices." According to Lynn Hunt: "The master narratives, or codes of unity or difference; the choice of allegories, analogies, or tropes; the structures of narrative—these have weighty consequences for the writing of history."[126] As part of the New History movement, cultural historians are also at the forefront of the search for new narrative forms which may prove to be useful inroads for

oral traditions.

In the 'history of the body' sub-field, Morris Berman asserts that since history is made somatically, to be accurate then, it should be written somatically. The two modes of reportage he believes, that produce a visceral 'twinge', are mythology and historical fiction. Storytellers know that the deepest and most significant experiences are lived

> on a level that is largely invisible, a shadowy region where the mind and the body move in and out of each other in an infinite number of elusive combinations. The storyteller also knows that these can only be evoked through allusion, feeling, tone, rhetoric and resonance.[127]

The most effective literature, he claims, is that which creates an emotional response.

Peter Burke stresses, however, that some innovations "are probably best avoided by historians." Among these he includes the invention of someone's stream of consciousness. However, other experiments inspired by modern writers, may offer solutions to problems that historians have wrestled with. Civil wars and other conflicts might be made more intelligible by following the model of novelists who tell their stories from more than one viewpoint which would allow an interpretation of conflict "in terms of a conflict of interpretations."[128] Multiple points of view, heteroglossia, would "allow the varied and opposing voices of the dead to be heard again." In addition to the voices of the past, Burke encourages historians to find a way to make themselves visible in their narratives "not out of self-indulgence but as a warning to the reader that they are not omniscient or impartial and that other interpretations besides theirs are possible."[129]

In a brief survey of recent historical works that attempt to address these narrative problems, Peter Burke located four models. Micro-narrative tells the story of local people in their local setting and is able to address structures.[130] Backward narratives and "stories that move back and forth between public and private worlds or present the same events

from multiple points of view" are also useful models. [131] Peter Burke also suggests that cinematic techniques "flashbacks, cross-cutting and the alternation of scene and story" "may be used in a superficial way to dazzle rather than to illuminate, but they may also help historians in their difficult task of revealing the relationship between events and structures and presenting multiple voices." These developments, claims Burke, promise a regeneration of the narrative. [132] The literary techniques of fictional prose allow wider possibilities for the translation of oral history into textual form because literary techniques—metaphor, irony, nuance, silence—more closely resemble the vernacular of traditional oral story-telling.

A handful of anthropologists and ethnohistorians have been influenced by literary insights in their approaches to writing about Indigenous intellectual and oral traditions. James Clifford contends, that "academic and literary genres interpenetrate", that style cannot be separated from substance.[133] George Marcus and Michael Fischer also promote the writing of "experimental ethnographies" that are not bound by western intellectual paradigms.[134]

However, the ethnohistorian's task is not to submerge themselves in the worldviews of their subjects. Events chronicled in two sets of records—the written and the oral—provide two "complementary perspectives based on different cultural premises." Raymond DeMallie explains that the role of ethnohistorians it to "bring these two types of historical data together to construct a fuller picture of the past."[135] According to Richard White, an ethnohistorical account is, therefore, "a hybrid; it replicates neither perspective but ideally contains both. It is itself a new narrative that constructs yet a third perspective on past events: that of the ethnohistorian."[136]

American Indian Histories—Voice and Poetics. In the academic context Indigenous oral traditions are subjects of inquiry. In their own contexts Indigenous oral traditions are the teachings. Generally, when oral traditions are textually represented back by mainstream scholars they follow four models: As supplemental and anecdotal sources in historical studies, as introspective and/or reflective critiques against mainstream society, as objects of ethnographic study, and as oral literatures for linguistic and literary analysis. A brief overview of the manner in which Indigenous oral histories have been used by mainstream academics not only shows their range interests, it also provides insight on their willingness to apply the teachings—the words and the forms—to their own writings. The writings of mainstreams scholars provide a valuable backdrop in the search for new ways to utilize Indigenous intellectual traditions as paradigmatic foundations in their own right.

In the past few decades there has been an outpouring of books and articles written by historians on various aspects of the Indigenous past. Most of the seminal texts are done by Indian-White Relations historians who challenge conventional Eurocentric and assimilationist attitudes by disclosing the multiple oppressions Indigenous peoples have experienced and their responses to those forces. Despite tremendous gains in 'gap-filling' history and in good intentions, most academics still depend primarily on documentary sources, the textual remains of colonialist agencies—explorers, fur traders, government agents and missionaries—for research and teaching materials.

What most academics do not appreciate is that continued dependence on documents maintains the traditional telling of Indigenous histories within a colonialist framework. It continues to marginalize and neglect Native voices, Native perspectives of their oppressions, as well as survivance and resistance strategies. Just ask any historian of

Indian-White relations to whom they spoke or who guided their questions. You will find that, perhaps they consulted a few as-told-to autobiographies or some translated transcriptions of noble speeches and interviews. Many historians have never even talked with Native American peoples who had direct or indirect experience in the areas they study and write about. Three local examples will illustrate this point.

Severing the Ties that Bind is a historical narrative about the development of the anti-Sundance laws on the Canadian prairies by the federal government.[137] Extensive archival research and emphatically told, the story is devoid of Indigenous voices. This fact is startling because there are still many people alive today who experienced the impact of the anti-Sundance laws. My own grandparents told many stories about that era and even my aunts remember being packed up in the middle of the night by my grandparents, sneaking away to attend ceremonies hidden deep in the bush. They also remember healing sweat lodges built under kitchen tables and the braids of sweetgrass hidden from view.

Another seminal work, Lost Harvest: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy[138] tells the story of the federal government's attempt to impose a peasant-style agricultural program on prairie Indians that was doomed to fail. Again, this study makes brilliant use of written records but is devoid of Native voices, even though there are still people alive today who lived through that era or have family histories about those days. Many of the people who were prohibited from selling their produce off-reserve, denied the right to use time-saving machinery, and had their communal farms forcefully broken up into nuclear family holdings, remember the era with clarity.

My grandparents told of the time when nimoshom, *my grandfather*, was almost thrown in jail for slaughtering his own pig. He described the fight he almost lost with the

local Indian Agents and police until my grandmother found the bill of sale proving it was privately owned, not a 'government pig'. My family is not unique, there are thousands of families in the prairie region who have oral histories about these historical events. What is most surprising is that these two books were written by historians who actually knew enough Native people that contacts for oral history research could have been made. Yet their work suggests that neither one of them stepped outside the confines of their libraries to talk to people who actually lived the experiences they attempt to represent in their books.

J. R. Miller's historical biography of the Chief Big Bear (Cree) contains not a single oral history interview nor does it make reference to any oral history archival collections.[139] In light of a much earlier biography of Big Bear which was inspired by oral history, and considering that interviewing is one of the prescribed methods of modern biography (for subjects living or deceased), Miller's treatment of Big Bear is anemic.[140] From a Cree perspective it is also highly disrespectful given the fair amount of recorded (and archived) as well as living oral history on the life and times of this revered and prominent nêhiyaw, *Cree*, leader.[141]

Furthermore, Miller's treatment of Big Bear is surprising considering it was published the same year as his Shingwauk's Vision, one of the most thorough studies on Indian residential schools in Canada to date and most noted for its use of a wide range of Indigenous oral history sources.[142] Miller spent considerable time in search of Native voices which he collected through interviews (conducted by himself and research assistants), from attending conferences, and from existing oral history collections. Had Miller expended an iota of the energy seeking Native voices for Big Bear as he did for Shingwauk's Vision, the resulting treatment would have been much more balanced.

Generally when historians use Indigenous oral history they use it as supplemental sources. F. Laurie Barron's study on the Canadian Commonwealth Federation's (CCF) Native policy is recent history. Tommy Douglas's CCF party was in provincial office during the 1940s and 1950s and so the events Barron focused on occurred during the lifetimes of thousands of living Aboriginal peoples in this province.[143] But their voices are barely detectable. Walking in Indian Moccasins pays great tribute to the "significant contribution...made by the people who willingly participated in interviews recounting their personal experience and insights about the CCF" but there is little tangible evidence that the "views expressed by informants often shaped the content of the manuscript at critical points and provided the richness in detail unavailable in archival sources."[144] Barron did little beyond the confines of archives and classroom. Of the four Native "informants" praised in the acknowledgements, only two were cited in the text, for one sentence each.[145] Data from two additional informants, previously interviewed by others, were also used twice. Many of us growing up in the 1960s and earlier heard lively stories from our grandfathers about Tommy Douglas, and so it is disheartening that the kinds of relations our grandfathers had with the man—they argued, strategized, bartered, ate and laughed with him, and teased him mercilessly—barely peeks through.

R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser's The Fox Wars is another case in point. The authors claim their book is an "ethnohistory of the Fox's epic struggle to maintain their identity and existence in the face of overwhelming adversity." They explain that, "like other historians, we have tried to incorporate Fox, or Mesquakie, oral traditions and to present these events as much as possible from the Fox perspective."[146] A glance at the notes and references refutes their claim. Only five oral interviews were listed and two of those were with local non-Indians conducted at a café en-route to the tribal office during

their only visit to the Mesquaki settlement at Tama.[147] The other interview was done with an "anonymous" Mesquaki. The only other oral sources consisted of two telephone interviews that took place two years after their visit to Tama, a number of recorded Mesquaki speeches, and one Fox autobiography. How does one derive an understanding of individual and collective identity issues from telephone conversations and archival documents?

Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, Loyal Till Death, relies heavily on Indian oral histories of the 1885 Metis North-West Resistance for its primary thesis.[148] Two sets of oral history interviews were done by local research assistants with fifty-seven Elders. Neither author participated in the oral history process, and researchers were instructed to provide one page interview summaries.[149] While the text contributes considerably to educating historians on the value of oral traditions it has a number of major flaws in methodology: less than one-third of the oral history interviews were utilized, there was no analysis of the oral history interview or data selection process, and the voices are lost in the omniscient narrative. Because it is missing the emphases, nuances and humanity inherent in the voices of the Old People—the inside point of view—it reads like most other conventional histories.

How did the Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux voices disappear from this "Indian perspective" text? The authors offer some insight: "Although the oral history accounts were often lacking in specific detail and therefore of limited use, the interviews provided invaluable insight into Indian attitudes and motivations in 1885."[150] Had the historians actively participated in the interview process they might have heard details about events considered significant from the "Indian perspective" rather than those in the official records. They might have heard about the spiritual occurrences and the 'inside the Indian

camps' stories, some of which were so significant, from the Indian point of view, that at least one Elder smoked the pipe, and many others smudged and prayed, before relaying the stories on tape.[151] The voices were missing in the text because the authors did not hear them. The result: a de-spiritualized, sanitized, authorial distance resonated through the text.

While any number of factors could account for the choices the authors made, their primary methodological error was to treat oral history like any other documentary source. From a mainstream perspective, as discussed in chapter 2, once a story is shared and recorded, 'the facts' are extracted and the remaining superfluous data set aside. The bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, pieces are taken to meet empirical needs, and the story dies.

The history of Indian-White relations presupposes that there are at least two parties in the relationship yet the emphasis of most histories in this field is on non-Indian perceptions of non-Indian actions and Indian reactions which is about all the documentary sources can provide about relationships.

When oral history is employed for the 'Indian perspective' it is often for the purpose of aesthetics, anecdotal color, and/or simulated 'authority'. When employed as a primary source of data, oral history is utilized like any other source—the form of oral histories seldom impact on conventional historical narrative form and the humanity (albeit subjectivity) denied.

Many historians do not realize that the conventional approach they follow serves to reinforce the colonialist notion that Western historical canons and conventions are superior—that their methods, sources and narrative form support 'true history' and that Native peoples have no historical traditions of their own. Indigenous oral sources provide

vital data on events significant from Indigenous perspectives which are necessary for well-balanced accounts. Angela Cavender-Wilson speak for many when she writes:

> The idea that scholars can 'sift through' the biases of non-Indian written sources to get at the Indian perspective is presumptuous and erroneous....they should discontinue the pretense that what they are writing is American Indian history.[152]

Indigenous oral traditions, or oral literatures, have received the most attention from anthropologists in search of structures, ideological, symbolic and metaphorical meaning;[153] folklorists in search of local aesthetics; and from linguists and ethnolinguists in search of aesthetics, poetics and/or linguistic structures. Anthropological cultural and structural analyses have been discussed earlier and it has been noted that a fair number, in addition to 'discovering' and explicating cultural meanings, have addressed historical consciousness and source-analysis questions that confront historians. Ethnohistorians or historical anthropologists also utilize oral sources in their historical reconstruction work.

Native oral literature typically appears in print only "after a hidden history of translation, abstraction, and reproduction" in collections of myths.[154] Folklorists and other compilers generally have no qualms about strategically editing these prose for non-Native American readerships.[155] The "Indian speeches" genre, which often provide excellent source material for historians, publishes parts of or whole speeches previously recorded, which are considered representative of one or a range of Indian perspectives in various contact situations.[156]

One of the popular uses of Indigenous oral traditions is to use them for personal introspection and reflection, or as political critiques against a range of various mainstream depravities. While these two practices serve their authors well, they do little more than propagate New Age Noble-Savagism.[157]

Some of the most creative and useful applications of Indigenous oral histories come from outside the academy and from grass-roots/academic collaborations. Father Peter J. Powell is a widely respected ethnohistorian who has worked closely with the Northern Cheyenne, indeed is an adopted member of the tribe. Father Powell's guiding principle is to present the Cheyenne past from the distinctly Cheyenne point of view which he does by writing in a Cheyenne narrative voice and by presenting historical events from within Cheyenne cultural constructs.[158] For example, in Powell's account human beings transform into buffalo to escape the army in the winter of 1874-75.[159] Raymond DeMallie celebrates Powell's work as "the most thoroughly consistent, culturally grounded interpretation of the history of an American Indian group ever written."[160] According to DeMallie, Powell's work "serves as a watershed" by providing alternative narrative modes, a fresh approach towards "new and more inclusive possibilities of historical narration."[161] However, privileging Cheyenne accounts transgresses historical and scientific cannons, which cost Father Powell credibility with some readers and reviewers. Richard White explains that for the Cheyenne to believe that humans turned into buffalo is one thing, for the historian to believe it is another. Furthermore, while Powell speaks as an adopted Cheyenne, he also speaks as a non-Indian Catholic priest and can, therefore, speak about buffalo transformation in the same manner he speaks about virgin births and other Christian miracle stories that contravene scientific paradigms.[162] But Powell's intentions are not entirely altruistic, the overall intent of his approach is to demonstrate how Cheyenne sacred histories are reconcilable with "a Catholic view of universal history and salvation."[163]

In the USA, the establishment of the Indian Claims Commission was a primary impetus behind the emergence of ethnohistory and serious attention to the recording of

Indigenous oral histories. A similar phenomenon occurred at a later date in Canada. In the past few decades, Treaty Rights protection and advocacy in Canada have prompted First Nation governments and institutions to collect and record Treaty oral histories from Indigenous elders. In most instances these oral history collections are only used as evidence in legal briefs. However, in two instances, the results of this research were published in anthologies that consist of transcribed Elder's accounts and academic interpretations. The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties was commissioned by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Unit of the Indian Association of Alberta and conducted by research team of academic and tribal historians who also acted as interpreters and translators. Seventeen years later, the Treaty 7 Tribal Council of Alberta commissioned a similar, but more comprehensive study.[164] These are instructive, again, in demonstrating the difficulties academic and local historians face when they try to collaborate and consolidate their work.

In both studies the Elder's testimonies were transcribed verbatim and situated in their own chapter. By far the bulk of text consisted of academic historical studies on the Treaty processes, interpretative debates concerning the intent/spirit versus the letter of the Treaties, analyses of the Treaty texts, pre- Treaty historical context, and post-Treaty conditions. The academic narratives were based predominantly on archival sources, the oral testimonies of the Elders were used as supplemental evidence, since their primary function was to direct the line of academic questioning. The transcriptions and the academic narratives stand in stark contrast to each other much like the two parties of the original Treaties themselves did. Like the Treaty Commissioners of old, the historians cited First Nation's accounts to make their points. For scholars of Indigenous history, the most valuable contributions these texts made were, 1) the oral history methodology

essays which described the unique problems and approaches in doing Indigenous oral history research, and 2) the Indigenous translations/interpretations of the spiritual and ceremonial context of Treaty-making.

Other innovative studies, from within the academy, come from recent ethnolinguists who re-evaluate and reconsider earlier transcriptions of oral literature. Demonstrating the politics and mechanics of the translation process, they encourage readers to rethink historicity.[165] The studies by Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock and Keith Basso on oral literatures consider the interaction of language and social life.[166] Basso demonstrates how the study of language provides valuable insight into how people organize knowledge and their social interactions with each other and outsiders. The Hymes and Tedlock studies of existing linguistic and living languages have been instrumental in the development of new approaches to the representation of Indigenous oral traditions, specifically myths and ritual discourse.

As a result of the groundbreaking work of these last two scholars there has been increased appreciation for the "formal aesthetic aspects, especially its prosodic and parallelistic structures, and much ingenuity has been shown in representing these patterns in visually revealing ways."[167] Dell Hymes, working with old ethnographic texts written in languages no longer spoken, claims that the purpose of poetics

> is to come as close as possible to the intended shape of the text in order to grasp as much as possible of the meanings embodied in this shape. Much will still escape. The gestures, voices, tunes, pauses of the original performance cannot be recovered for most of the materials dealt with here. Still, much of structure persists and can be perceived. Essential real relationships remain. Something of the creative imagination of the source can be seen at work.[168]

Working with a living language Dennis Tedlock has demonstrated how oral literatures can be visually represented through the application of European poetry forms and a range

of typographic conventions that highlight the prosodic dynamics. Linguist J. Randolph Valentine explains that: "'Seeing' is the key here, because the *written* form now takes on a long overdue validity through the power of its intersemiotic, visual representation of the aural, grammatical, and rhetorical patterning of spoken words."[169] Such insights are only accessible to outsiders through careful knowledge of language and its role in cultural formation.

These studies are considerably more stimulating than the works of those anthropologist-linguists who publish oral texts for their ethnological value, the bits of vocabulary and syntax they might contain, and for their value in studies of cultural diffusion.[170] Linguistic 'text and translation' was prevalent throughout the early 20th century. A case in point is Leonard Bloomfield's Sacred Stories of the Sweetgrass Cree which does little else but provide Cree texts and translations, and questionable ones at that.[171] Cree linguist Freda Ahenakew goes considerably further than her professional predecessors. Over the last two decades she has published numerous books of Cree stories—personal reminiscences, oral history and traditions—based on personal interviews with elderly Cree-speakers. The texts are published in Cree syllabics, Roman orthography, and are translated into English. and are useful sources on a range of topics. Ahenakew has never published a Cree text without her former linguistics teacher H. C. Wolfart who often takes up more than half of each book with his "Notes to the Text" section.[172]

A handful of anthropologists and ethnolinguists have gone beyond distant objective scrutinies in their experimentations with oral tradition poetics by attempting to apply the stylistic conventions and methodologies used to transmit oral knowledge, or by writing dialogic narratives. Robin Riddington in Trail to Heaven attempts to articulate the

Dunne-za paradigm which assumes that "myth and dream are interior to events in the world of sensation", that "knowledge is a source of power," and which is based on an "Indian philosophy of time and causality."[173] He explains further that his search for a language of translation that would do justice to the Indian style of teaching he experienced was storytelling:

> Like other Native peoples, the Dunne-za experience their lives as stories. While writing for academic journals, I tried also to give voice to Dunne-za experience. I tried to tell stories in a language of anthropology, but within a storytelling style like that of my Indian teachers. I tried to use my own language to tell stories about the storied lives of people who are native to this land.[174]

In his attempt to "give voice to Dunne-za experience" the language of anthropology is privileged and Dunne-za stories serve as style.

Julie Cruikshank's Dan Dha Ts'edenintth's: Reading Voices is also in the cutting edge in many ways.[175] Its significance is heightened by its transdisciplinary approach to the history of the Yukon and because it was written for high school students and sponsored by the Yukon Department of Education. Oral tradition and conventional historical source and forms present Indigenous and Eurocanadian knowledge systems with equitable respect and sensitivity. While Riddington incorporated Dunne-za knowledge and narrative forms into his text, Cruikshank separated the document-based historical narrative from the oral history. The objective behind this style of arrangement was to present two worldviews—two sets of historical consciousness and historical forms—in a complimentary and parallel fashion. The text is respectfully devoid of omniscient explanatory notes or footnotes, but analytical asides, some source referencing and anecdotal floaters are framed in the outside margins, making them both non-intrusive and accessible.

A final example of creative narrative forms comes from historian James Clifford's essay on the Mashpee trial: an "unprecedented trial" which began as a land claim action and ended up in court determining "whether the group calling itself the Mashpee Tribe was in fact an Indian tribe, and the same tribe that in the mid-nineteenth century had lost its land through a series of contested legislative acts."[176] Through a series of vignettes of persons and events based on his courtroom notes, Clifford's work is "a virtuoso performance that pulls the voices of native 'informants,' its author, and contending scholars into a shared conversation."[177] Richard White states that Clifford's account is "a poststructuralist narrative in which local knowledge confronts metanarratives."[178] "Mistrustful of transparent accounts" Clifford sought to "manifest some of its frames and angles, its wavelengths." In the end, the trial "was a contest between oral and literature forms of knowledge" which the Mashpee lost.[179] The linear chronology and documents of the state defeated Mashpee oral tradition, witness memories, local practices, and the "intersubjective practice of fieldwork."[180]

Towards Indigenous Applications

The revolutionary assaults on conventional history and related disciplines from within have helped open the rigid gates of academia to Other historical traditions. For the purpose of the present study they provide invaluable tools and external corroboration for the work being done in Native American Studies.

So far, however, the inroads made by these challenges have not had much impact on the writing of Indigenous histories. While historians are increasingly attending to the role of narrative in history most still adamantly resist postmodernism. While extolling the "virtues of narrative as our best and most compelling tool for searching out meaning in a

conflicted and contradictory world" William Cronan, for example, defends conventional narrative because it is "different" from other narrative types.[181] History is different, he claims, because of three constraints: (1) "our stories cannot contravene known facts about the past," it must be "accurate and true," (2) they must "make ecological sense," and (3) they "are judged not just as narratives, but as non-fictions."[182] While Cronan did not consider historical cross-cultural encounters or the histories of non-Western peoples, his decidedly Western formula is the standard.

What we read and come to understand about the Native American past is not Indian-White relations because the Indian views of those relations are missing. In many ways, these approaches are not even history—they are simulations. When the voices from the past are called upon it is to serve as supplemental or colorful anecdotal sources, otherwise, the voices of those whose past is represented are silenced, the human actors objectified, and their intellectual traditions colonized. The conventional literary styles used in the representation of Indian histories are not couched in Indian realities, they adhere to mainstream structures of factuality.

In their attempts to represent us, most academic enterprises have either Othered or attempted to assimilate our knowledge and knowledge systems—we are still being defined, categorized, and understood in foreign frameworks by foreign standards for foreign purposes. Through the imposition of foreign intellectual traditions our knowledge and knowledge systems have been reduced to mere objects.

The challenge for a New Indian History is to decolonize Indigenous histories by creating a respectful place for Indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems and by finding new narrative forms that will do justice to this obligation. While valuable inroads have been made by creative and thoughtful mainstream scholars, much of which is

useful, the following two chapters focus on what we can learn from our own scholars and our own intellectual traditions.

Endnotes

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[153] Julie Cruikshank, "Images of Society in Klondike Gold Rush Narratives: Skookum Jim and the Discovery of Gold," Ethnohistory 39, 1 (1991): 20-41.

[154] Melissa L. Meyer and Kerwin Lee Klein, "Native American Studies and the End of Ethnohistory," in Russell Thornton, ed., Studying Native America: Problems and

Prospects (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 189.

[155] See for example, Jay Miller, Earthmakers: Tribal Stories from Native North America (New York: Perigee Books, 1992).

[156] See for example, Penny Petrone, ed., First People: First Voices (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) and Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[157] The literature is rife with indulgent "what the Indians can teach us about ourselves" reflections as exemplified in Fred McTaggard, The Wolf that I am: In Search of the Red Earth People (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976) and Calvin Martin In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

[158] Peter J. Powell, Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sund Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969); People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830-1879, with an Epilogue, 1969-1974 2 vols. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

[159] ibid., vol. 2, p. 898.

[160] Raymond J. DeMallie, "'These Have No Ears': Narrative and Ethnohistorical Method," Ethnohistory 40, 4 (1993), p. 526.

[161] ibid..; White, "Using the Past," p. 225.

[162] ibid., p. 226.

[163] Cited in ibid., p. 225.

[164] Richard Price, ed., The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (1979. Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1987 reprint) covered all three Treaty regions (Nos. 6, 7, and 8) in Alberta. Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, with Walter Hildebrandt, Sarah Carter, and Dorothy First Rider, The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996) is a far more comprehensive study focused specifically on the Treaty No. 7 region.

[165] Meyers and Klein, "Native American Studies," p. 189.

[166] For an overview of the vast literature on topic see David Murray, Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). Dell Hymes, "In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981);

Dennis Tedlock, The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Keith H. Basso, Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).

[167] J. Randolph Valentine, "Linguistics and Languages in Native American Studies," in Thornton, Studying Native America, p. 162.

[168] Hymes, In Vain, pp. 7, 8.

[169] Valentine, "Linguistics," p. 162.

[170] ibid..

[171] Bloomfield's command over the Cree language was exceptionally weak and his translations have been criticized by many. Maria Campbell, personal communication, June 1999. Canada, Department of Mines, National Museum of Canada, Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree, Bulletin No. 60, Anthropological Series (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1930) reprinted Leonard Bloomfield, Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree (Saskatoon: Fifth House Ltd., 1993 reprint).

[172] See for example, Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart, eds., (trans.) ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmowina. The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, Publications of the Algonquian Society (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998); kwayask ê-kî-pê-kiskinowâpahtihicik. Their Example Showed Me the Way: A Cree Woman's Life Shaped by Two Cultures as Told by Emma Minde (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997); wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina. Stories of the House People: Told by Peter Vandale and Joe Douquette (Publications of the Algonquian Society (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1987).

[173] Ridington, Trail to Heaven, p. xvii.

[174] Robin Ridington, Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), p. xvii.

[175] Julie Cruikshank, Dan Dha Ts'edenintth's: Reading Voices, Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991).

[176] James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 277.

[177] Meyer and Klein, "Native American Studies," p. 188.

[178] White, "Using the Past," p. 222.

[179] Clifford, Predicament of Culture, p. 291.

[180] ibid., p. 339.

[181] William Cronan, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," The Journal of American History 78, 4 (1992), pp. 1374, 1372.

[182] ibid., pp. 1372-74.

Chapter IV

Decolonizing 'Indian History': Oral History and The Promise of Native American Studies

> Why not a school of Indian thought, built on the Indian pattern and conducted by Indian instructors?
>
> Luther Standing Bear (Lakota), Land of the Spotted Eagle (1933)

> Controlling our choice of a path...is our belief that the Indian must remain an Indian. He cannot realize his potential as a brown white man. Only by being an Indian, by being what he is, can he ever be at peace with himself or open to others.
>
> Harold Cardinal (Cree), The Unjust Society (1969)

> Our new storytellers have a big job. They must understand their sacred place and they must also understand the new language and use it to express their stories without losing the thoughts and images that are culturally unique to them. This new storyteller must also be a translator of the old way, so that it will not be lost to a new generation. And all of this must be done on paper, for that is the new way.
>
> Maria Campbell (Cree Metis), Achimoona (1985)

The Promise of Native American Studies[1]

Native American Studies (NAS) emerged in the late 1960s as a result of the minority and civil rights movements and the recent presence of Indigenous students in universities and colleges demanding a voice in the academy.[2] The primary thrust of the NAS movement was, and to a large degree still is, a revolt against colonialism and colonialist representations of Indigenous life and history. Towards that end, NAS promotes the development of new methodologies, theoretical constructs, and curriculum grounded in Indigenous intellectual traditions and values.[3] The primary objectives of the following chapter are (1) to examine the manner in which tribal oral traditions have influenced Native American scholars, (2) to examine the impact of Native American

scholarship on the decolonization of Indigenous histories, and (3) to encourage more, and creative uses of, oral histories and traditions in Indigenous post- and anti-colonial historical writing. It will be demonstrated that in light of the nature of Indigenous oral traditions and its general treatment in the academy, the mandate and goals of NAS provide an appropriate framework in which to situate discussions on the decolonization of Indigenous histories.

Native American Studies—Mandate and Methods

Native American Studies is first and foremost an anti-colonialist intellectual movement. It is simultaneously a revolt against colonialist representations of Indigenous history and life, a rejection of colonialist relations and treatments, a new intellectual field, and a medium for individual and collective empowerment. Like women's studies and ethnic studies, NAS emerged as the intellectual arm of a larger political rights movement.

NAS is, therefore, accountable to two distinct and often disparate bodies—the Indigenous communities that created it, and the university system that houses it. Because NAS was created to provide professional training and service to meet the unique needs of Indigenous communities, it is judged by community standards. At the same time it is an academic discipline which imposes another set of standards.[4] Cherokee scholar Russell Thornton succinctly articulates this dual responsibility:

> How can the academic system respect Native American studies if Native American studies does not embody the highest intellectual standards of the system? It cannot....How can Native Americans respect Native American studies if it does not attempt to understand them on their own terms? They will not. They should not.[5]

Indigenous students and faculty are, therefore, expected to be mediators, translators, and bridges between these two worlds, a location which, as all interpreters know, inherently

requires its practioners to become fluent in (at least) two intellectual traditions and cultures.

Indigenous scholars and NAS practioners strongly agree that the examination of colonialism and its current forms is critical in understanding Native American history and life because it still impacts Native American people. It is also a necessary prerequisite to decolonizing knowledge about Native American people and to the development of "new, postcolonial perspectives on the Native American past, present, and future."[6] Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that decolonization

> is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices.[7]

Postmodern and postcolonial studies have had varying influences on NAS scholarship. Many NAS practioners like M. Annette Jaimes (Juaneño/Yaqui), Gerald Vizenor (Anishnabe), and Jace Weaver selectively align with, or draw on, the insights of postcolonial and/or postmodern theorists, especially in comparative and literary studies.[8]

Gerald Vizenor asserts that postmodernism "is a cleaver condition." Borrowing Jean-François Lyotard's conception of 'postmodernism' in reference to 20th century cultural transformations, Vizenor embraces it as "an invitation to narrative chance in a new language game and an overture to amend the formal interpretations and transubstantiation of tribal literatures."[9] Native Americans, Vizenor concludes, were the first postmodernists. Native American oral traditions have "never been without a postmodern condition that enlivens stories and ceremonies."[10] He continues,

> postmodern is a pose in a language game that would controvert the institutional power of translation—what is seen or published is not a representation of what is heard or remembered in oral cultures. The postmodern printed word, in other words a pose, is not a source of

> aesthetic presence or historical modernism. The printed word has no evolution in tribal literatures; the word is there, in trees, air, and printed on paper where it has been at all times.[11]

Tuhiwai Smith explains further that the "idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different Indigenous communities, is closely related to the politics of everyday life" and is "very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing." [12] Contested accounts of the past "are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried."[13] Clearly, the postmodern condition is not unfamiliar to Native American.[14]

Tuhiwai Smith cautions, however, that "a thousand accounts of the 'truth' will not alter the 'fact' that Indigenous peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice."[15] The Indigenous colonial experience "traps us in the project of modernity. There can be no 'postmodern' for us until we have settled some business of the modern." This does not mean that Indigenous peoples do not "understand or employ multiple discourses, or act in incredibly contradictory ways, or exercise power ourselves in multiple ways." Rather it means "that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice."[16]

Although NAS scholars like Weaver, Tuhiwai Smith, and Vizenor agree that much of what constitutes postmodernism today "is startling akin to the premodern, to the tribal, to the dynamism of traditional orature"[17] Weaver urges caution and a little bit of skepticism about contemporary postmodern theory:

> [It] is not coincidence that just as postcolonial peoples find the power to assert their own autonomy and personhood, the postmodern theorists of continental Europe and their Amer-European disciples proclaim an end to subjectivity. It serves once again to preserve the myths of conquest and the literature of dominance.[18]

Postcolonial studies have had more direct impact on NAS criticism because it provides a comparative context which helps explain the nature, experience, and impact of colonialism in all its manifestations, past and present. The most recent work by Bonnie Duran (Opelousas/Coushatla), Edwardo Duran (Tewa/Apache), and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (Hunkpapa and Oglala Lakota) stress that understanding the history of colonialism "and the intergenerational trauma it produced is a vital part of the healing and regeneration process for Native American peoples today."[19] Postcolonial treatise, like the works of Franz Fannon, Alfred Memmi, Thiong'o Ngugi, Paulo Freire, Edward Said, Ashis Nandy, and Johannes Fabian, for example, provide NAS a comparative framework for understanding the insidious workings of colonial agency. They provide for a wider understanding of how colonialism maneuvers through language, imagery, and poetics, as well as through more physical affronts, to disempower individuals and their societies at the deepest psychic levels. Postcolonial scholars provide another level of articulating the legacy of colonialism Native Americans have experienced and understood in their own ways. While awareness of intergenerational trauma and postcolonial thinking are relatively new in the social sciences, they are "old and well known in many Native American communities."[20]

Many Indigenous scholars are concerned that NAS voices will be submerged in the larger postcolonial dialogue. Even while drawing on the postcolonial studies themselves, many scholars express the fear that

> the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of 'post-colonial' discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and our current concerns.[21]

Others resist the concept of 'post' which suggests that colonialism is over. Crow-Creek-

Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, flat-out denies the value of postcolonial studies for NAS when she asserts that it "has little to do with independence, nor does it have much to do with the actual deconstruction of oppressive colonial systems."[22]

Tuhiwai Smith and other like-minded Indigenous scholars promote anti-colonial research and argue for intellectual decolonization through the development of Indigenous-framed research methods and approaches. Since its inception, this has been the guiding principle of NAS. According to Cook-Lynn, the First Convocation of American Indian scholars, held at Princeton in March of 1970, mandated NAS to develop into a distinct academic discipline built on Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. The founders of the discipline established that the body of intellectual information that would serve as its foundation would derive from traditional tribal sources located in tribal oral traditions. They believed that this was the primary manner by which "change in the way Native life in America was studied" would occur.[23] As John Red Horse asserts: "American Indian scholars should, and are, changing how research is conducted. This is necessary because we simply do not fit readily into the existing disciplines."[24]

NAS is understood to be the endogamous study of Native America history and life which is differentiated from other disciplines in two important ways: it emerges "from *within* Native peoples' enclaves and geographies, languages and experiences" and refutes "the exogamous seeking of truth through isolation", the general practice of "history, anthropology, and related disciplines all captivated by the scientific method of objectivity."[25] NAS was mandated to "transcend the traditional gap between knowledge and its relevance"[26] in Indian country by looking to Indigenous intellectual traditions for direction and substance. NAS practioners have turned to Tribe-specific, Pan-Indian, and nation-to-nation knowledge and have found, for example, paradigms and theories which

serve as the "bases for the development of disciplinary principles such as sovereignty and indigenousness."[27]

The blocks on which Native American Studies was intended to be built consist of the accumulated knowledge of Indigenous societies, located in the oral traditions. Much has already been written on the primacy of orality in Indigenous American societies. Well-trained memories were repositories where tribal knowledge was deposited for safe keeping. The means by which this knowledge was transmitted was through life example and storytelling. Lakota scholar Joseph Marshall explains that Native American oral traditions are mechanisms which perpetuate culture and preserve the past by transmitting across generations those elements that preserve structure and purpose, and provide a sense of history."[28]

In their search for Indigenous paradigms, Indigenous scholars are well aware that culture, knowledge, and language are not static, that they change over time.[29] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report on Indigenous languages tells us that:

> Knowledge is not static. Neither is culture. They grow and change in an ever-evolving environment. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures have changed and will continue to change as a result of contact and interaction. Aboriginal people know that growth can come from adapting other peoples' ideas and knowledge to their own needs. Growth can also result from re-exploring their own knowledge.[30]

Indigenous peoples have demonstrated remarkable ability to adopt to changing conditions over time. According to Cree scholar Neal McLeod, the move to cities and universities "is merely the latest of changes which has been going on since time immemorial." For knowledge to survive and for Indigenous Studies to conceptualize its own potential, he stresses, "we have to reject hard essentialism....the belief that Indigenous knowledge is unmoving and unchanging."[31]

Citing Gerald Vizenor, McLeod explains that there "is a lot of chance and irony in Indigenous knowing." Those immersed in tribal tradition know that "one of the quintessential manifestations of Indigenous consciousness, the Trickster, is the vehicle of change and the manifestation of irony and humour."[32] According to Cree scholar Willie Ermine, the trickster-transformer, "from the mists of unremembered time [is] a character in our traditional oral narratives" who "continues to guide our experiences into the deep reaches of the psyche and the unfathomable mystery of being."[33] The Trickster is not static. Like Indigenous cultures s/he is highly adaptable to changing conditions.

Oral traditions differ significantly from western ways of knowing, primarily because they are as much about the social relations inherent in transmission as they are about knowledge. Angela Cavender Wilson explains that among the Dakota, oral traditions encompass lineage, relationships with the natural world, and a bonding and intimacy between teller and listener that is absent in Western pedagogies.[34] In oral societies, the sources of knowledge are the storytellers, the teachers, and learning is a social process. The seeking of knowledge, therefore, requires a different kind of relationship based on long-term commitment, reciprocity, and respect. As Willie Ermine explains, interpersonal relationships facilitate dialogue which is an important "instrument in Aboriginal pedagogy and protocol."[35]

The need to return to older ways of learning through social interaction are vital if we are truly committed to Indigenous knowledge systems. The conventional academic approach and methods are foreign and often incompatible with Indigenous pedagogical practices. Cree scholar Neal McLeod describes the lament of his câpan, *great-grandmother's sister*: "'anohc kâ-kîsikâk tapiskoc ê-wêpinacik kiyokêwin' today it is as though people have thrown away visiting' she said."[36] Taking his câpan's words to heart,

McLeod concludes that "if we come to venerate 'scholarship' over the words and eternal remembrances of our old people, then I believe the exercise of Indigenous Studies will become pointless and futile." If this comes to pass, NAS will be reduced to "playing with words" because we will be living "in the shadows of collective memories" only.[37]

Oral traditions are interactive and performative. Written transcriptions only tell part of the stories. Much goes unseen, unheard, unsaid—the traces, nuances, shadows, objectives, obligations, personal relations, emphases, tone—in short, major components of the full story go missing and the Indigenous context is removed. One needs to be there to get the fullest 'telling' yet the performer can have little effect on his/her audience if the audience does not share his/her traditional experiences and images. Harold Scheub explains that image "is composed of words that are given a unique framework by means of rhythm, for example, intonation and gesture, by body movement."[38] According to Scheub: "Image is a visualized action or set of actions evoked in the minds of the audience by verbal and nonverbal elements arranged by the performer, requiring a common experience of images held by both artist and audience."[39]

Noted Cree-Metis storyteller Maria Campbell explains that stories have no beginning and no end—where one may seem to end another takes up and all are interwoven.[40] They are also as much a part of the present as they are of the past. The late Tewa historian Alfonso Ortiz's description of an old storyteller's performance, from his home in San Juan, captures the intimacy of the past in the present:

> When this old man sat down on a winter night and started reciting the oral narratives of the tribe, it was almost as if he were looking at a book on the ceiling, because when he got going, he could give forth with the most lucid prose, the most word-perfect display of memory, hour after hour, all night. It was said of him that when he sat down, lit up his hand-rolled cigarette, and looked up at the ceiling, it was as if there were a book up there, and he could turn the pages by flicking his eyelashes. For him and

> his listeners, truly, there was no time past, no time future, and no time present. All time was fused into one. He was reliving the traditions he was narrating. His words lived for him in a way that those of Western man no longer do.[41]

The transmission of stories across generations is a living performative experience, at once an interactive and a highly personal event.

Each Indigenous community, tribe, or nation has a "distinctive oral tradition in terms of both the features of the process and the nature of the material performed orally" but there are some features that are common across Indigenous cultures.[42] The most generally shared characteristic of Indigenous oral and intellectual traditions is their philosophical groundings in languages, culture and geography. Native scholars assert that language is the primary means by which culture is transmitted—the means by which "members of a culture communicate meaning and make sense of their shared experience."[43] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report on the importance of language explains that: "[b]ecause language defines the world and experience in cultural terms, it literally shapes our way of perceiving—our world view."[44] Willie Ermine explains further that because the accumulated knowledge of the ancestors, the intellectual information, is contained in Indigenous languages and cultures, "it is critical that we examine the inherent concepts in our lexicons."[45]

Other scholars have likewise shed considerable light on Indigenous epistemologies and worldviews through linguistic analysis. Attention to language and the philosophical reasonings found therein, reveals that in most Indigenous societies knowledge is not fragmented into discrete categories. In a ground-breaking study on contemporary First Nations political systems in Canada, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake (Gerald) Alfred explains that decolonization is more than political, it is a total process:

> Land, culture, and government are inseparable in traditional philosophies; each depends on the others, and this means that denial of one aspect precludes recovery for the whole. Without a value system that takes traditional teachings as the basis for government and politics, the recovery will never be complete.[46]

Native American knowledge is not neatly compartmentalized in rigid disciplinary confines—when the Old People teach they do not separate laws from politics, economics, social relations, or religion. Longstanding scholars in American Indian Studies stress that "it is impossible to arrive at a coherent *Indian* understanding of law or political science without a firm grasp of the spiritual principles governing Indian life."[47] Like life itself, all things are interrelated and all Indigenous knowledge is grounded in religion.

This holistic worldview based on religious foundation is most evident when our Elders discuss current issues—they invariably understand, frame and present their stories and analyses in traditional religious terms and within the context of our understanding of the Treaties. Cree scholar Harold Cardinal explains that even our pre-Indian Act (1876) governments operated like theocracies in that all the diplomatic and political rules and processes were shaped by and grounded in religious beliefs—leaders were accountable to their people and ultimately, accountable to their Creator.[48]

Religion serves as the backbone of most societies—religious teachings in the form of sacred stories, ceremony and song, inform and reinforce how people should relate to each other, their neighbors, the land, and the universe around them. Cree-Metis scholar Joseph Couture explains that "traditional Indian knowledge is an experience in matter and spirit as inseparable realities, non-dualistically apprehended."[49] To strip Indigenous intellectual knowledge of its spirituality is colonialist. NAS is *transdisciplinary* in order to facilitate the holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge.[50] It is not ethnography, history, sociology, literature, law, philosophy, or political science—it is

simultaneously all of these, yet does not replicate them. Russell Thornton and C. Mathew Snipp explain that Native American Studies must be more than the typical study of Native Americans within conventional disciplines. While individual disciplines are important and collectively are very important, they "remain limited in their ability to encompass Native American experiences, either traditional, historical, or contemporary ones."[51]

Traditional scholars spend lifetimes learning and applying their knowledge but they are judged differently from academic scholars in a number of ways. The teachings they acquire are only useful, and their wisdom only respected, if they internalize, live by, and share what they learn according to protocol. The holistic nature of traditional knowledge, which is grounded in spirituality and philosophy, entails that practioners live their lives according to culturally prescribed characteristics and values esteemed by the collective. Among all peoples there exists proven methods of accepting and rejecting ideas and leadership.[52] For example, traditional Native American orators have much to teach contemporary Native American scholars about debating skills. Traditional orators were especially gifted in the arts of argument and persuasion, and philosophical and intellectual debate was highly valued. Spokesman and leaders were selected from among the most eloquent orators—those who could combine persuasive speech with knowledge about history and traditions. Indigenous diplomacy required "a mastery of the language and rhetoric...and the skills of dramatic presentation."[53] Indigenous assemblies of all kinds often lasted for days to accommodate slow and deliberate orations and ceremonial formalities.[54]

Traditional storytellers and other leaders made use of clear, straightforward speeches when appropriate, but were more apt to deliver "long, complicated discourses

full of emotion, wit, irony, and sarcasm."[55] They made use of complex figures of speech—metaphor, metonymy, synechdote, oxymoron—and figurative language to evoke multiple meanings.[56] According to George Cornell, the Shawnee and many of their neighbors, used allegory to avoid verbal confrontation.[57] Verbal confrontation was frowned upon because it was rude and because it created internal divisiveness which was detrimental to the welfare of the community. Good manners dictated that symbolic representation in the form of allegory be used to avoid quarrels. Allegory allowed them to distance themselves from personal controversy, to alleviate personal insult and injury, while simultaneously alluding to deeper meanings of political and social issues by addressing concerns in abstract terms respectful of tribal mores.[58] In the course of debate or disagreement, verbal violence often drew shock and silence. Among the Apache, violent verbal affronts engendered silence because enraged persons are irrational, "'they forget who they are'."[59]

In tribal teachings knowledge comes with responsibilities. Among the Northern Cheyenne, for example, knowledge in and of itself is meaningless—"good knowledge is measured by its' positive application to the community" and a true scholar, one who possessed wisdom, was one who learned how to use knowledge to help the people.[60] This dictum is a shared characteristic across many Tribal lines. Thirty years ago the late Cahuilla historian Robert Costo passionately advocated contemporary scholars to maintain that tradition: "Among us, traditionally, the scholars are the servants of the people...And so we say—let the people come for help to their own scholars. And the let scholars spend <u>their very lives</u> and energies in the service of their people."[61]

Traditional wisdom maintains a balance between physical and metaphysical realms of knowledge. Among the Northern Cheyenne knowledge acquisition is a life-

long process that goes beyond apprenticeship and observation. Much knowledge comes by way of non-scientific methods: "[P]rofound knowledge of life's meanings and direction" is considered a gift from the Creator, and is acquired through visions, dreams, and prayers."[62] Indigenous ritual vision seeking, and the belief in the metaphysical and the spiritual potent of dreams, is not unlike the mystical healing cult of Aesculapius (Asklepios) that pervaded southern Greece from the age of Homer to the reign of Constantine.[63] The sophist Aelius Aristides, a man of learning, sophistication, and wealth, highly regarded by his contemporaries and sought after for leading roles in public life and government, depended on dreams and visions for progress in his career, to write songs, and to portend.[64] Aesculapius was a preeminent earth god of healing in the ancient world and is linked with the development of the medical school tradition.[65]

Meditation, in the form of quiet seclusion or ceremonial fasting, is the means by which the mind arrives at "'seeing' through experience."[66] As Cree scholar Willie Ermine explains:

> Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit. Knowledge must be sought through the stream of the inner space in unison with all instruments of knowing and conditions that make individuals receptive to knowing. Ultimately it was in the self that Aboriginal people discovered great resources for coming to grips with life's mysteries."[67]

Otoe/Pawnee writer Anna Lee Walters explains that in many tribal societies a reliable and credible historian is expected "to know and experience, not only rationally, but through the senses and spiritually." Thus, tribal historians are expected to be active in their communities and the world around them as a members "of a family, clan, and land."[68]

Indigenous knowledge is also grounded in the natural world. Since the real world

of most Indigenous people includes the physical and metaphysical, insight requires an understanding of the interrelationship of people with plants, animals, as well as the spiritual dimensions.[69] One of the primary criticisms Native American scholars have of conventional historical treatments of Indigenous history is their neglect for the importance of place and the important role this kinship between humans and all living things played in historical events.[70]

Knowledge from within and knowledge from the land are inseparable parts of the whole. Knowledge comes by "entering deeply into the inner being of the mind" not by breaking through the outer world towards something beyond. According to Joseph Couture:

> This positions the Native person in 'communion,' within the living reality of all things. His 'communion' is his experience of the ideas within, concentric with reality without. Thus, to 'know,' to 'cognize,' is experiential, direct knowing.[71]

In support of the work of Vine Deloria Jr. and Osage scholar John Joseph Mathews (1925-1960), Robert Warrior urges scholars to move out of the psychoanalytic and anthropological explanation realms and return to place-centered religious traditions to more thoroughly understand how these traditions led to actual experience.[72]

Decolonizing Indigenous knowledge and anti-colonial research requires a shift from conventional modes of inquiry to those grounded in specific, or pan-tribal traditions, where appropriate. Contemporary NAS and other Native American scholars are committed to pursuing knowledge that will have some benefit at the community level and so their research results are generally more utilitarian than abstract. As Dr. John Red Horse explains, because "American Indian scholarship has an immediate impact on tribal people...[o]ur research must be responsive."[73] Critical of earlier anthropological studies

which did little to improve Indian life or meet the needs of Indian people, and which were rarely reported back to the communities studied, Native American scholars like Vine Deloria Jr. promote research that has tangible value.[74]

Red Horse explains further that Indian scholarship also differs from non-Indian research by the type of research questions that are asked.[75] Individual and collective goals of self-determination and the improvement of Native American life, combined with experiential knowledge, results in questions that differ from those of mainstream scholars.[76] Jack Barden of the United Tribes Technical College and Paul Boyer, former editor of Tribal College, are also critical of the scientific research models that exclude entire categories—the spiritual, the intuitive, and personal, for example—because they deny Other ways of knowing.[77]

Research approaches, sources, and tools have to be used critically in NAS, always keeping in mind the holism of Indigenous knowledge and the unique intellectual concerns faced in Indian country. NAS promotes Indigenous intellectual traditions as the foundational ideological or theoretical framework of the discipline. Like Cultural Studies or Women's' Studies, while NAS scholars borrow research methods, insights, and texts from other disciplines, ideally they do not understand or incorporate these according to the rigid strictures of their mainstream parent disciplines. Cree scholar Laurie Gilchrist stresses that it is impossible for any one method to be suitable for all research but that Native American scholars have one common struggle: "to decolonize ourselves and our knowledge production."[78] This shared goal demands that we

> change research methods to end the objectification of Aboriginal communities, and to encourage action based knowledge that is useful on the road to self-determination. We need to recognize and forge ahead with Aboriginal based research paradigms even as we engage in critical research....Ultimate powerlessness must give way to as many choices as

> we have nations about which theoretical frameworks and analytic methods we wish to use for the betterment of our nations.[79]

Thus, one of the decolonizing tasks in Indian Studies is to find ways to approach, understand, and present significant issues within Indigenous conceptual modes, without compromising traditional or scholarly integrity. Many NAS practitioners agree that "ideally, Indigenous Studies should be an extension of preexisting knowledge, rather than something in and of itself."[80] The very nature of Indigenous intellectual traditions as found in oral traditions, combined with the transdisciplinary canon of the discipline it grounds, requires the development of Indigenous-based paradigms[81] and begs creativity in method, analyses and form. Indian Studies requires that its practioners develop unique intellectual pursuits because if it "is not unique there is no reason for it to be separate."[82]

Native American Studies and the "New Indian History"

> The Anishinaabeg did not have written histories; their world views were not linear narratives that started and stopped in manifest binaries. The tribal past lived as an event in visual memories and oratorical gestures, woodland identities turn on dreams and visions...
>
> Gerald Vizenor, The People Named the Chippewa (1984)

The history of colonialism has been a central concern of NAS since it emerged over thirty years ago. NAS scholars agree that understanding the history of colonialism is crucial to understanding Native American history and life.[83] It is also a vital foundation for the decolonization movements in the academy and Indigenous communities.

Since its origins in the 1950s and 1960s, ethnohistory has been generally accepted as the way to do Indian history. According to James Axtell ethnohistory is by far "the sharpest, most comprehensive, most inclusive, most flexible tool we have for writing and

teaching the history of America's native peoples. All of the other approaches in use today are but facets of the ethnohistorical ideal."[84] Ethnohistory has been adopted as a recognized subfield in university history Departments and some historians even allege that ethnohistory has become so conventional, the line between it and mainstream or conventional history, has now been virtually erased.[85]

There is no denying that ethnohistory has widened the scope of historical scholarship and produced some of the most insightful and complex studies of the Indigenous past to date, many of which have addressed a range of questions on narrativity and historical evidence. Melissa Meyer and Kerwin Klein explain that studies on Indigenous oral traditions "have effected a quiet revolution in *source criticism.*" Recent "innovations in the collection, encoding, and interpretation of oral texts should force us to renovate the foundations of historical scholarship and imagine new forms of postcolonial source criticism."[86]

Meyers and Klein, however, admit that while ethnohistorians are increasingly taking up the challenges of oral history, Indigenous voices have not received the attention they deserve. Most scholars could "improve our work by attending more carefully to Native American texts and voices, thus making our monographs more *dialogical.*" The wide range of debates concerning oral history can only be enriched by more "monographs that make 'native' texts part of their practice as well as their theoretical reflection."[87] Taking the lead from ethnolinguistics, Meyer and Klein urge scholars to "kick the habit of employing anonymous informants and unselfconsciously substituting translated prose glosses for original oral performances." They encourage the reproduction of "informant discourse" in historical writing which would result in "more block-indented quotations than we have been accustomed to, and more sentences talking about

the provenience of sources, but it would have some concrete benefits." Evidence would be available for evaluation and provide outsiders access to largely inaudible voices.[88]

Many Indigenous scholars argue, however, that it is not enough to have more and longer block quotations in the writing of Indigenous histories. The ethnohistorical approach appears to miss the point that Indigenous people are still being treated as subjects of inquiry rather than as teachers—their knowledge is studied rather than applied and their poetic forms are discarded in favor of banal social science prose.

Oral Traditions-based "New Indian History"

Contrary to Meyers and Klein's assertion that the "New Indian History' began when history departments "adopted ethnohistory as a recognized field"[89] closer study demonstrates that it developed along two parallel, though often overlapping, streams. The first stream flows from ethnohistory and is adhered to by most NAS scholars who endorse interdisciplinary methods. The second stream, promoted by a handful of NAS and predominantly Indigenous scholars, is rooted in Indigenous oral traditions. Generally, the ethnohistory stream maintains sound scholarly inquiry and presents the past in academic history's narrative forms. While both emphasize the value of Indigenous oral traditions, the oral tradition-based stream more ardently promotes oral history as intellectual foundation, source and method, and urges creative and experimental narrative forms. The previous chapter considered the emergence, approaches, and goals of ethnohistory as it informs the New Indian History it activated. The following section will trace the development of the oral traditions-based 'New Indian History' to reveal its unique origins, how it has been conceptualized, how it has been practiced by Native American scholars, and what its future prospects hold.

Early Native American Historical Writing. Oral traditions-based New Indian History has a heritage that pre-dates the emergence of ethnohistory and Native American Studies. Long before anthropologists 'discovered' them or academic historians debated their relevance and reliability, Indigenous oral histories were translated and published by Indigenous writers. As early as the 1850s Indigenous scholars struggled in their own ways against colonialist renditions. They wrote of things "Indigenous' to correct Eurocentric misrepresentations of their pasts, to help bridge understanding, and solicit respect for Indigenous intellectual traditions.[90] They were the first to articulate Indigenous understandings of the past, apply Indigenous historical methodologies, and transform their peoples' oral traditions into written texts.

A brief overview of the historical writings of three 19th and early 20th century Native Americans illustrate the early development of the oral traditions-based New Indian History. William Whipple Warren (1825-1853), a Mixedblood Anishnabe, was born in the fur trade community of La Pointe on Madeline Island in Lake Superior. Luther Standing Bear (c.1868-1939), a Lakota Sioux, was born in the midst of conflict and Treaty-making between his people and the US government, and spent his early childhood on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. Plains Cree scholar Edward Ahenakew (1885-1961) was born in the wake of the last armed Metis Resistance and the last Plains Cree battle with the Canadian government, just nine years after his people signed Treaty No. 6 and were removed to the Atahkakohp (Sandy Lake) reserve in Saskatchewan. While Warren lived and wrote almost 80 years earlier than Standing Bear and Ahenakew, their works are the collective subjects of this brief study because each shared similar experiences, a sincere appreciation for the histories of their people, and the

conviction to ensure that their respective traditional knowledges would never be lost.

All three writers came from the last generations of their people to hear their oral traditions before mission and residential schooling interrupted the seasonal and generational sequence of their tellings and weakened the social bonds between the oldest and youngest living generations. All three received a Western education and were Christian converts but remained fluent in their respective first languages. While Warren came from a longer generational line of literate Christians, Standing Bear and Ahenakew were born of parents only recently converted and were the first generation to learn English and write English prose. Their writing reflects the varying constraints each wrote under, their different eras, and different ages. Warren wrote in the 1840s in his twenties while a member of the Minnesota Legislature. Ahenakew and Standing Bear wrote in the 1920s and 1930s. Ahenakew was in his 40s and was an Anglican clergyman administering and teaching on Indian reserves in the Battleford Agency. Standing Bear was in his 50s, living free of reservation constraints in California where he made his living as a lecturer and a Hollywood Indian. However, the most significant commonalities they share are that each matured in the 19th century "with a sense of tragic wisdom",[91] and they relied almost exclusively on the oral traditions of their respective tribes, personal experience, and European (Euroamerican and Eurocanadian) literary models in writing about history. Gerald Vizenor explains that tragic wisdom

> is the source of native reason, the common sense gained from the adverse experience of discovery, colonialism, and cultural domination. Tragic wisdom is a pronative voice of liberation and survivance, a condition in native stories that denies victimization.[92]

The legacy that Warren, Standing Bear, Ahenakew, and other early Native American writers left for future generations of Native American historians is extensive

and deserves far more attention than space allows for here. For the purposes of this study, however, the following presents a brief overview of each authors' understanding of the nature of history and historical inquiry, and the literary strategies they employed to transform Indigenous oral narratives to written form, and transmit their messages to future generations.[93]

Warren, Standing Bear, and Ahenakew each chose different narrative genres for writing about their peoples' pasts. Warren chose to emulate 19th century historical scholarship by providing a collated record of major events in Anishnabe history according to rigid chronological order and within the framework of USAmerican history. Standing Bear's work mixes genres—the framework is imitative of early 20th century ethnographic studies but contains autobiographical and didactic/commentorial discourse all of which is interspersed with sacred and historical mini-narratives. Ahenakew chose two different literary modes. Part I of Voices of the Plains Cree consists of the personal reminiscences, war, and sacred stories, passed on to him by old Chief Thunderchild (1849-1927). Part II is fictional. Through a trickster-like character named Old Keyam, the text is a running commentorial discourse on Indian conditions couched in personal reminiscences, humorous anecdotes, and stories of the distant/mystical and recent past. Each style allowed the authors different ways to record and interpret the past, to comment on the nature and value of history, to critique current Indian conditions, and to proffer advise to future generations.

All three authors demonstrate intimate comfort in the historical traditions of their people. All praised the remarkable memories and oratorical skills of tribal historians but Standing Bear went into considerable more philosophical detail than either Warren or Ahenakew. He stressed the importance of language to Indigenous history. He explained

the intimate relationship between Indigenous people, how "becoming possessed of a fitting philosophy and art, it was by them that native man perpetuated his identity; stamped it into the history and soul of this country—made land and man one."[94]

Though cognizant, and apparently accepting, of the Western binary between 'myth' and 'history' the three authors dealt with it differently. Warren admitted his love for the "lodge stories and legends of his grandfathers" but strove to exclude the "fabulous traditions that pertain to their history" in favor of those deriving "from the time they [Indians] relate events with any truth and certainty, and this is from the time they first became acquainted with the white man." Despite his best intentions, however, mystical threads from the original tellings found their way into his stories—he could not write of the Anishnabeg totemic system without reference to the six human-like water beings from whom the five major clans or totems originated.[95] Neither Standing Bear nor Ahenakew made any effort to weed the mystical out of their stories, the sacred and the secular flow together with a natural ease reminiscent of original oral narratives.

Given the nature of the oral traditions upon which their stories were built, each writer was also cognizant of the problems of temporality. Warren did his best to impose Western time and apologized for the temporal imprecisions of oral history which he was unable to remedy by "the more authentic records of whites."[96] Standing Bear's ethnographic present narrative needed no historicizing and his autobiographical accounts date themselves. Ahenakew's narratives fall into two temporal frames: pre-reservation and early post-reservation eras. What emerges in each of their works is the significance of place over time. Stories of origin, Intertribal warfare, migration, hunting, ceremonies, song, humor, trickster teachings, and reservation life are place-centered like the oral traditions they derive from.

With a humility seldom found in social science research, their research methods were based more on traditional teacher-student relations than objective science. Warren, Standing Bear, and Ahenakew clearly held their tribal teachers in high regard. They praised their well-honed memories and oratorical skills and neither treated these learned men as 'informants' nor esteemed themselves as scholars. All three spent innumerable days, months, sometimes over several years, attentively listening. Warren presented gifts and tobacco, traveled great distances and was known to give his away last morsel of food to his teachers.[97] Many of their teachers were older relatives but in a few instances new kin ties resulted from their ongoing relationships. Esh-ke-bug-e-coshe, *Flat Mouth*, a renown old chief from Leech Lake, adopted Warren as grandson.[98] However, despite his Crossblood heritage and personal relations with his teachers, Warren identified with Euroamerican society—he consistently referred to his mothers' people as "them" and Euroamericans as "us." Ahenakew and Standing Bear, on the other hand, proudly identified as Cree and Lakota men respectively.

Their oral tradition-based research methods are strongly reflected in their writing styles. They treated their 'sources' with a dignity seldom extended to documents or books. Instead of footnoting them to the margins, Warren and Standing Bear built their sources directly into the narrative, in the form of biographical asides. Ahenakew presented Chief Thunderchild in his introduction and wrote glowingly of the old man's wisdom, his experiences, and his pride.[99] In this manner they not only demonstrated respect for their teachers, they humanized rather than objectified, their scholarship. In traditional oratory, stories that were passed on included their own genealogies—the story behind the story, who passed it on to who—again in the form of asides built into the narrative.

The genealogy of a story was an important part of its validation. All three authors clearly demonstrated awareness that the veracity of oral traditions was highly suspect in the minds of non-Indigenous peoples. Warren addressed this issue in conventional scholarly form by investigating and cross-checking his sources: "a person must go from one old man to another of different villages or sections of the tribe, and obtain the version of each; if all agree in the main fact, even if they disagree in detail, you can then be certain that the circumstances had happened and the tale has substantial origin."[100] Ahenakew did not verify Thunderchild's stories by academic standards. Instead, he relied on Cree methods: "An Old Man dared not lie, for ridicule that was keen and general would have been his lot, and his standing as a teller of authentic tales would have suffered." Storytelling requires an audience and "there were always other Old Men...who would contradiction him readily, and who would delight in doing that."[101]

All three writers were pressed by an urgency to record the legends, histories, philosophies, and/or ways of life of their people before the destructive assimilating effects of 'civilization' wiped them from collective tribal memories. No doubt they were influenced by the ethnographic rush into Indian country and by growing public interest in Indigenous lore during this period. However, each also had more resolute purposes.

All three writers wrote to inform non-Indian audiences. Warren and Standing Bear sought to correct misinformed and misguided representations of Anishnabe history and traditional Lakota ways of life respectively, and did so by privileging their own accounts and interpretations, based on oral traditions and experience. Ahenakew recorded Chief Thunderchild's personal collection of sacred, historical and personal stories, then in "Old Keyam" took a different explicative turn by focusing on the apathy and demoralization that permeated reserve life in the 1920s: "It pained me to see the stoical

indifference, the lethargy, the masklike countenance with which they viewed their condition. I longed to see the flicker of the old spirit."[102] All three also proffered their own solutions to the 'Indian problem.'

Unlike the writing of most Christian Native Americans from the same era, none of the authors produced passionate Christian sermons or lectures. Warren and Ahenakew wrote in a language of deference to the dominant culture and advocated "assimilation into the blessings and benefits of Christianity and progress"[103] but the 'salvationist discourse' is only evident sporadically in Warren's work. His consistent negation of Anishnabeg beliefs, his aggressive Protestantism, and his personal identification as Euroamerican, demonstrate that he drew his sense of self almost entirely from Christian culture,[104] or at least, that is what he intended his readers to believe.

Ahenakew was an Anglican clergyman which required his active participation in the cultural genocide programs of church and state. However, it is evident that Ahenakew was not wholly supportive of the federal government's assimilation program because it did not adequately prepare Cree youth for productive lives in their own, or in mainstream, society. Through the fictive character/narrator Old Keyam, Ahenakew historicized his peoples' contemporary condition and proffered his advice for their survivance. Old Keyam is not only critical of the numerous injustices faced by Cree people, he was also highly critical of Cree apathy. Keyam in Cree means in various contexts *what does it matter?, so be it!* or, *never mind*. Old Keyam gave voice to Ahenakew's observations and interpretations at a time when his own voice was silenced by church and Indian Agents.

Creating a fictive character/narrator was not the only literary strategy Ahenakew employed. Clearly the implied readers are non-Indians since it is only they who have the power to address ineffective and harmful federal Indian policies and, at that time, had

access to published literature. However, there exists a subtext in "Old Keyam" that can only be decoded by those who share Ahenakew's experience and knowledge. This subtext can be recognized in a number of ways, one of which is by identifying the narratees which emerge in the text.

Narratees are creations of the text, they are the readers or listeners produced by the narrative—the person(s) the narrator (Old Keyam) addresses either explicitly or implicitly.[105] Their characteristics and identities are discovered by his narrative strategies and codes which are most evidently identified by his assumption of their extra-textual, or personal, knowledge.[106] A more thorough textual analysis will demonstrate that a number of narratees emerge from the text. However, one specific group of narratees are uniquely instructional for present purposes.

The primary narratees emerging from Ahenakew's "Old Keyam" are clearly Cree people who have at least some of their traditional language and teachings intact and who know well the demoralizing effects of colonization. While many instances can be cited, Old Keyam's lament about the persistence of superstition among his people speaks directly to these narratees. Immediately following Old Keyam's expressed regret over the persistence of superstition he tells a 'superstitious' story: "Let me tell you my grandmother's story of Mâ-mâ-kwâ-sesuk. She said they were U-pes-chi-yi-ne-sâk (*little people or pygmies*). Now my grandmother was not a foolish woman, she was No-tô-kwâ-wi-ku-mik (*Old Woman's lodge*), the sister of Chief Poundmaker..."[107] On the surface Ahenakew denounces superstition, but the following passage, an intentional contradiction perhaps intended to highlight the persistence of superstition to non-Indian readers, also speaks at a much deeper level to those who know the teachings associated with Mâ-mâ-kwâ-sesuk, U-pes-chi-yi-ne-sâk, and No-tô-kwâ-wi-ku-mik. His use of these specific

story characters actually serves to validate sacred stories in Cree terms. Maria Campbell explains that the story must be true because everyone knows that kôhkomnowak, *grandmothers*, are teachers and do not tell lies.[108] The old woman's name is *Old Woman's lodge* after the first old woman nôhtako-âhtoyokana, *Grandmother/Keeper of Sacred Stories*, and to validate her credibility even more, he reminds us that she was the sister of the late Chief Poundmaker, a renown Cree hero. Narratees who know the stories of Poundmaker and the last Cree battle would also know that the old woman was not a fictional character. Ahenakew goes even further. "Mâ-mâ-kwâ-sesuk," "U-pes-chi-yi-ne-sâk," and "No-tô-kwâ-wi-ku-mik" are matowsowinah—they come from high Cree, the old language used in the telling of sacred stories, each containing significant teachings or laws in themselves. No one but Cree speakers familiar with the old stories could read Old Keyam's reverence for this old woman and the knowledge she passed down through oral traditions.[109] Ahenakew inscribed his text with codes that speak directly to his own people, more specifically, to young Cree men.

Throughout the text Old Keyam concerns himself with the diminishing role and power of Cree men. While the primary textual audience is other old people, young men—intradiegetic narratees—fleetingly pass through the margins, seldom stopping to listen, often ignoring the old people, and almost always engaged in their own modern activities. Having returned from residential schools they are caught between two worlds, neither of which they are adequately prepared for. They are confused and lethargy is setting in. Extradiegetic narratees—non-characters situated outside the text—have a much clearer understanding of what awaits these young men. They understand the demoralization and humiliation that comes from powerlessness, they know the loss of language and old stories, and they understand the generational impact of colonialism. According to critical

theorist Gerard Genette, the real reader can more easily identify with the extradiegetic narratee, than with the implied reader, especially in situations where the reader accepts "*as meant for himself* what the narrator says to his extradiegetic narratee."[110] In Maria Campbell's analysis, Voices of the Plains Cree was written in part to future generations of young men, future leaders. In the stories of Chief Thunderchild and Old Keyam, she explains, are the teachings of Napewatsowin, *man ways*, in the context of nehiyawaywin, *Cree ways*. Encoded for future generations are instructions on how to be warriors, providers, and protectors in an ever changing world.[111] What comes through loud and clear to Cree ears is that the strength and knowledge, located in the oral traditions, are as necessary for Indigenous survivance as is the adoption of new tools and strategies.

Unlike Warren and Ahenakew, Standing Bear faced few constraints in his writing. He was one of the first Native American writers to forcefully criticize non-Indian misrepresentations and to actively promote the value of Indigenous knowledge. Following his ethnographic narrative, he wrote a highly critical and emotive essay that condemned federal assimilationist policy and confidently promoted a return to Indigenous teachings. There is no denying the didacticism in this essay. Non-Indian writers, he claimed, have done "irreparable damage" by distorting and discrediting Indigenous life and history, and by ignoring Indigenous philosophies and ideals. This condition can only be countered by Indigenous peoples becoming their own historians:

> The Indian, by the very sense of duty, should become his own historian, giving account of the race—fairer and fewer accounts of wars and more statecraft, legend, languages, oratory, and philosophical conceptions.[112]

It is not fair, he proclaimed

> to rob Indian youth of their history, the stories of their patriots, which, if impartially written, would fill them with pride and dignity. Therefore, give back to Indian youth all, everything in their heritage that belongs to them

and augment it with the best in the modern schools.[113]

Standing Bear firmly believed that the best education for Indigenous people would combine Western and Indigenous knowledge systems but he went one step further: "I say again that Indians should teach Indians, that Indians should serve Indians, especially on reservations where the older people remain." The young people needed the wisdom of the Old People, he stressed, to rebuild their communities:

> To the end that young Indians will be able to appreciate both their traditional life and modern life they should be doubly educated. Without forsaking reverence for their ancestral teachings, they can be trained to take up modern duties to tribal and reservation life. And there is no problem of reservation importance but can be solved by the joint efforts of the old and the young Indians.[114]

Standing Bear's messages to future generations of Native American scholars are loud and clear. As early as 1933 he promoted oral traditions-based Indigenous history and portended the future development of Native American Studies:

> Our annuls, all happenings of human import, were stored in our song and dance rituals, our history differing in that it was not stored in books, but in the living memory. So, while the white people had much to teach us, we had much to teach them, and what a school could have been established upon that idea![115]

Luther Standing Bear was among the first Indigenous writers to articulate what a New Indian History might look like and what it could offer. And his experience and wise words have provided guidance for generations of Indigenous scholars to follow. In the words of Gerald Vizenor, Luther Standing Bear is the quintessential postindian warrior:

> The postindian warriors encounter their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evinced on horses, and they create their stories in a new sense of survivance. The warriors bear the simulations of their time and counter the manifest manners of domination.[116]

During the 1930s and 1940s there was an increase in Native American literary activity and notable writers like Ella Deloria (Yankton Dakota, 1889-1971), D'Arcy

McNickle (Salish-Cree, 1904-1977), and John Joseph Mathews (Osage, 1894-1979) emerged. Like their predecessors, each was driven by a sense of communitism, a proactive commitment to their respective communities,[117] and their work was variously informed by oral traditions.

Deloria and McNickle chose the disciplined route of universities for most of their work. A student of Franz Boaz, Deloria published cutting-edge Dakota linguistics and tribal orature. A fluent speaker of her language possessing tremendous respect for her people's world-views, Deloria used "her academic tools to return sustenance to the Dakota and Lakota nations in strikingly innovative ways. With subtle linguistic features, such as exclamations or compound words...she supplied the emotion, humor, or irony that many folklorists have felt only oral performance could convey."[118] In Speaking of Indians Deloria wrote to a popular audience about contemporary issues and Indian contributions within the framework of the Dakota *tiospaye* or family group. Written to solicit support, she focused on Dakota kinship systems to explain the humanity of her people. Dakota *tiospaye* also served as the foundation for her only novel, published posthumously in 1988, which tells the story of Dakota life from a women's perspective.[119]

McNickle's academic work predominantly focused on federal Indian policy.[120] Like Deloria, however, McNickle wrote fiction to convey the human experience of colonialism. The Surrounded, a "starkly realistic fiction," took at least nine years to write and revise before it was accepted for publication.[121] McNickle explained, "I have chosen the medium of fiction, first of all because I understand the storytelling art, and in the second place I know by rationalization that fiction reaches a wider audience than any other form of writing."[122] His biographer Birgit Hans claims that The Surrounded was

McNickle's greatest contribution to American literature, "with its juxtaposed broken narratives used as structural devices and its oral traditions used as essential narrative elements."[123] He thoroughly understood that fiction "combined most other fields within it and exerted more power than other disciplines."[124]

John Joseph Mathews published five notable texts between 1932 and 1961 and all were concerned to varying degrees with Osage history.[125] The Osages is by far his greatest contribution to the oral traditions-based New Indian History. Based almost entirely on the oral traditions of the Osage elders who urged him to record their stories, he did a masterful job of writing their histories from their point of view, of emphasizing events that were significant to the Osage, and of respecting their voices.

Mathews planned to base his history entirely on Osage oral histories but was forced to consult Euroamerican documents to fill in the gaps in the oral data. Without the 'benefit' of training in historical source criticism, Mathews engaged Euroamerican documents with an astute and critical eye, ever cautious of the biases, interests and backgrounds of the writers.[126] He also made little attempt to proffer 'objective' renditions. To do so would have defeated his own purposes and his elders' expectations: Osage history interpreted with the Osage cultural framework.

The end product of thirty years work, The Osages, opens with Osage Creation, their descent from the stars, then traces the spiritual origins and foundations of traditional tribal government, and major events in Osage history. Mathews' story ends with the death of his long time friend, Chief Lookout, in 1949. Sacred stories, historical accounts, Osage philosophy and culture, are inextricably interwoven and bound by the central theme of Osage relations to an ever changing world.

Mathews, like Charles Eastman before him, did not profess to write academic

history. Eastman (Santee Sioux, 1858-1939) "conceived of himself as a 'rememberer' much like his childhood teachers, his grandmother, and Smokey Days, the story teller."[127] Eastman explains that Soul of an Indian "does not pretend to be a scientific treaties." Rather, it is "true as I can make it to my childhood teachings and ancestral ideals, but from the human, not the ethnological standpoint. I have not cared to pile up more dry bones, but to clothe them with flesh and blood."[128] Eastman rejected "the intellectual and academic aspects of anthropology and history" in favor of human and personal explanations.[129] His biographer claims that over his twenty-five year literary career "an increasing tone of anti-intellectualism emerged."[130] If this 'intellectualism' his biographer claims he resists is "the [Western] doctrine that knowledge comes wholly from pure reason, without aid from the senses" then Eastman no doubt became increasingly defiant to Euroamerican academic treatments of his people's life and history.[131] Gerald Vizenor explains that Eastman was a "conversionist" in two dimensions: "a native of mission education, and a medical doctor who returned to natural reason with a wounded heart."[132]

Each of these early Native American writers' work was informed by the oral traditions and histories of their respective nations—Deloria and Ahenakew recorded translated orature, Warren and Mathews transposed their peoples' heard histories in narrative prose, all engaged in critical and interpretative analysis, and all but Warren and Standing Bear consciously selected fiction to express the human experiences of domination and survivance. Each of the genres they chose to write in—narrative history, ethnography, commentorial essay, translation, and fiction—incorporated literary strategies that were influenced by oral narrative forms. Except in the case of Ella Deloria's linguistic work, the oral traditions these early Native American authors drew upon were not shared as objects of study, as evidence, or definitive translations, which

made them uniquely different from contemporaneous social science or literary translations. Rather, they were drawn upon to tease and to teach in much the same manner as the oral traditions from which they were borrowed.

Contemporary Native American Voices of the Past.

> This new Indian history would have to acknowledge Indians as teachers. It would frame questions and inquiries using Indian terms and categories that reflect Indian realities and are important to Indians.
>
> Alfonso Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," (1988)

Much has already been written on Native American writing since the 1960s and the range of socio-political factors precipitating it. Two such forces—the growth of Native American rights movements and the increasing numbers of Native Americans in post-secondary education—facilitated an explosion of Native American critical and literary works. In the legacy of Luther Standing Bear, John Joseph Mathews, D'Arcy McNickle and others, a new generation of Indigenous historians openly challenged Eurocentric renditions of Native American history and life, ardently continued the task of writing tribal histories, and jumped to defend and promote oral traditions as foundations for New Indian History and a new articulation of Indigenous intellectualism. As will be demonstrated, however, it was not always a cohesive movement.

In the midst of social and political activism in Indian country, this first wave of Native American academic historians produced some of the most forceful, reflective, and influential historical critiques on federal Indian policy, racism, and Indian-White relations in North American society. At the forefront of this new Native American criticism were Jack Forbes (Powhatan/Renápe/Delaware/Lenápe), Rubert Costo (Cahuilla), and Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux).[133] Combined, the critical and revisionist writings of

these academic ground-breakers made them an indomitable force in the academy.

While much has already been written about the contributions made by Vine Deloria Jr. over the past thirty years, Costo and Forbes have not received due recognition for their contributions to Indigenous historical writing.[134] Rubert Costo never held a position of prominence in the academy, however, he was instrumental in the creation and organization of the American Indian Historical Society in the early 1960s. The society not only brought young scholars together, most notably for the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars held at Princeton in 1970, it regularly published The Indian Historian journal and a range of textbooks on USAmerican Indian history. Jack Forbes was instrumental in the establishment of D-Q university and has spent the bulk of his career in Native American Studies at the University of California (Davis). Forbes has also been among the most prolific Native American historians. A man of many interests and strengths, his publications include journalistic columns, monographs, historical studies including tribal histories, short stories, poetry, and most recently a novel.

This generation of Indigenous scholars was primarily concerned with creating space for Indigenous perspectives, points of view, and intellectual/political priorities. The titles of some of the books being written in this period reflect the importance of the idea of Native voices and worldviews to Native scholars. Jack Forbes' The Nevada Indians Speak, Deloria's We Talk, You Listen, Gerald Vizenor's The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa and Alfonso Ortiz's Tewa World opened the doors and set the tone for a new articulation of Indigenous history and the emergence of Native American Studies as a distinct discipline.[135]

A comprehensive analysis of the influence on, and uses of, oral history in Indigenous historical writing deserves a dissertation of its own given the range of sub-

fields that presently exist. For the purposes of the present study, however, the focus will be on tribal histories—because of their tribe-centered mandate, tribal histories constitute the one area where oral history is most accessible and expected. It is also the area where the Tribes themselves may have more influence on research and writing.[136]

Tribal histories, like biography and federal Indian policy, focus on significant issues of "Indian life at the grassroots level." Like John Joseph Mathews' The Osages, tribal histories are valued at the community level as a means of preserving the tribal past. It seems that every generation for the last 150 years has feared the loss of culture, language, and oral traditions in the face of assimilating forces. This fear prompts "an urgent need for them [Tribes] to document their own stories from a tribal perspective, because with the death of each tribal elder another part of history is lost."[137]

The collection of tribal oral histories is not new. Noted oral historian David Henige explains that the 'oral history movement' began as an indigenous movement. Like William W. Warren and other early Native American writers, members of oral societies in Africa and Oceana were researching and writing their own histories until the 1950s and 1960s when they were overtaken by anthropologists and professional historians.[138] As early as the 1830s Hawaiians were writing accounts of their past and Maori scholars were publishing in academic journals at the turn of the last century. Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) a prolific Moari anthropologist wrote in 1926 that "'the ancient writings of a cultured barbarian' were to be preferred to 'the inaccurate writings of a globe-trotting European' whose observations during brief visits were often held by historians to be more useful than any amount of local historical production."[139]

In the United States there were a number of federal or state sponsored oral history projects that conducted interviews with Native American people. In the 1930s the Works

Progress Administration conducted Native American interviews in a number of states. Likewise the Doris Duke Oral History Project of the 1960s resulted in 9,500 hours of taped interviews with 5,400 individuals from 130 tribes and bands.[140]

Tribal histories written in the mainstream were popular, but until the 1980s, only a handful were written by Indigenous historians.[141] As a result, most tribal histories "reflect non-Indian values, perspectives, and world views."[142] In the first issue of the Indian Historian in1964, Rupert Costo, like Luther Standing Bear before him, urged Indigenous historians to reclaim their tribal pasts:

> It becomes necessary now to correct the record, to write the history as it should be written [and] to interpret correctly the aboriginal past....There is a great and rich store of information still locked in the hearts and minds of Indians all over the nation....Friends of the Indian may join our great work, helping but not leading, aiding but not pushing, taking part but not taking over.[143]

Costo's call suggests that the primary source, method, and forms of tribal histories would derive from Indigenous oral traditions: that "great and rich store of information still locked in the hearts and minds of Indians all over the nation."[144] Moreover, it would seem likely that earlier tribal histories, especially John Joseph Mathews' The Osages, would serve as useful models for, or at least influence, contemporary tribal historians. A look at three texts written in the early 1980s, demonstrates some of the conflicts and difficulties academically trained Indigenous scholars encounter in the research and writing of tribal histories.

In Nee Hemish: A History of Jemez Pueblo, Joe Sando (Jemez Pueblo) takes a unique approach to balancing his personal beliefs as a member of Jemez Pueblo with the scientific 'objective' paradigm of modernist history. As a member of the community he asserts that "tribal oral history is valuable and sacred to those raised within its

confines"[145] and presents the Hemish origin story—they emerged from underground at Hoa-sjela, Boulder Lake on the Jicarilla Apache Reservations—as a valid explanation. Richard White explains, a "non-Hemish historian would probably simply say that the Hemish believe they emerged from Hao-sjela, but Sando also believes this."[146] While conceding that the Bering Strait theory might work for some Native American tribes, he gives it no more credability than any other theory flawed by evidentiary problems. By taking such an open-ended approach—leaving all origin accounts indeterminate and unsubstantiated—he created space for Hemish origin stories. Despite his original approach and contribution to the field, however, very few historians acknowledge his work.[147]

Veronica E. Tiller also wrote a history of her own people, The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History, 1846-1970. From the start she advises readers not to view her work as representative of an Indian point of view because most of her primary and secondary sources were produced by non-Indians. While her honesty is much appreciated, her blending of oral and written sources, combined with her specific community-centered perspective, produced a sensitive and insightful interpretation of her peoples' recent historical experiences.[148] Tiller also avoided the 'victimry' contagion so prevelant in Indian-White relations histories of the 1980s by celebrating her people's adaptability and survivance strategies.

Tribal historians often face methodological problems that outsiders either miss or ignore. For example, as members of the community under study they are expected to be sensitive to local protocols and idiosyncrasies. According to Duane Hale, Tiller "had dreamed since she was a girl of writing a history of her tribe, but when she had finally completed the task, it was actually more of a history of her particular clan." This result

could hardly be avoided given the nature of local inter-clan animosities.[149]

One would presuppose that each generation of Indigenous historical writers influences the next but it is often the case that the lessons are hard won. The Underground Reservation: Osage Oil by Terry P. Wilson (Potawatami) picked up where Mathew's The Osages left off by bringing Osage history into the 20th century. Like many academically trained historians, Wilson was initially "puzzled" by The Osages' "sharp departure from traditional linear history." After reading and rereading Mathew's work Wilson finally realized that Mathews "accomplished what Indian historians were striving for: a tribal history conceived from a Native American viewpoint, combining documentary and oral research, and written with Indians as the primary actors."[150] Despite this understanding, Wilson does not emulate Mathew's grass-roots objectives, methods or style. While presenting an Osage-perspective to the best of his ability, Wilson's work emulates the standards of his profession.[151] The Underground Reservation is a strict chronological narrative, based almost entirely on documentary records, and is distanced and almost devoid of historical Osage voices.

Not only does Wilson's tribal history emulate conventional local histories, he demonstrates little sensitivity for Indigenous understandings. Wilson dismisses John Joseph Mathews' oral traditions-based account of the first meeting between the French and Osages as "highly imaginative" and charges that Mathews was more concerned with the "survival of tribal culture" than with "the discovery of oil and the social upheaval that followed."[152] Years earlier, the focus of Mathews' work was determined by Osage elders—fear that the social upheaval they were witnessing presaged the loss of culture and language, no doubt led the Osage elders to resolve that preserving their cultural history was more significant than documenting their social decline. Wilson's charge that

"the decades following allotment in 1907 were too painful for the Osage historian to recall and write about" ignores the fact that Mathews directly confronted this 'pain' in the novel Sundown.[153] Osage scholar Robert Warrior explains that Sundown "complicates and problematizes many of the neat edges" and "enlivens that history through the voices of fictional characters." Literature, asserts Warrior, "promotes a deeper insight into history" and in Sundown "we see the cross-fertilization possible between literature and history."[154]

Clearly Wilson drew a hard line between history and literature, a recent adoption that contradicts traditional oratures and highlights a more assimilated perspective of American Indian history. As recent as 1998 Melissa Meyer and Kerwin Klein note that Native American historical writing lacks the integration of oral traditions as source, method, and theoretical framework. Native scholars, they claim, like their non-Native counterparts, "are related by differentials of class, gender, age, sexuality, or authority to the worlds and stories of others."[155] And so many of them write like their non-Indian counterparts. What Meyer and Klein neglect, however, is that Native American scholars receive their training in mainstream disciplines like all other academics, and are forced to varying degrees, to uphold the standards of their parent disciplines. No doubt the hard years of academic study they endured had assimilating effects on Indigenous social scientists resulting in varying degrees of what some have termed the adoption of an "outside view predicate."[156] Trained in the tenets of western scholarship, Indigenous academic historians face the hard fact that the 'objective' confines of their disciplinary towers restrict play with oral tradition form and subjective experience. The general result has been the production of tribal histories written in the conventional local history mold and differentiated only from mainstream renditions by the infusion of varying degrees of

"the Native perspective" which range from conflict oriented indignation (read 'victimry') to the gentle and jovial voices of old storytellers.

Criticism from the discipline against Indigenous-written historical studies tell their own story about conventional acceptance. In a historiographical essay published in 1983, historian Robert D. Carriker denounces the historical writings of Vine Deloria , Jr. for being more political than historical, and denounces non-academic local tribal histories for dispensing with footnotes and for condemning non-Indian misrepresentations.[157] However, he praises "'accomplished scholars like R. David Edmunds, along with Veronica Tiller, Terry Paul Wilson, and Clifford Trafzer'" who are "'quietly making an impact on the writing of Indian history that will soon exceed the protest of Vine Deloria, Jr..'"[158] What Carriker is praising is the ability—or weakness depending on one's point of view—of Native American scholars to internalize eurocentric approaches, methods, interpretive strategies, and narrative forms in the writing of American Indian histories.

One of the primary criticism against academic tribal histories is that they lack originality. According to critics, the "community study model so popular among social historians has been transplanted to reservations, but no new paradigm, other than placing native historical actors and motivations at center stage, has emerged to replace the arcane tribal history format."[159] Another criticism is that the two distinct patterns of recording tribal histories—the academic chronological account, and the tribal viewpoint based on the oral traditions of Elders—need to merge to create a fuller picture. Academic accounts tend to rely on scientific data, documentary sources, within an Indian-White relations framework but lack cultural bases "upon which the people lived."[160] On the other extreme, local tribal histories generally follow the pattern of first person Elder accounts which are "steeped in tribal lore," recount beginnings, "folkways," and cultural concerns,

and concentrate commentaries on various contemporary practices, like education. According to Karl Cilmont, both approaches describe tribes in their own ways "yet what is needed is a skillful blend of input from knowledgeable and communicating elders and erudite scholars to produce a work where one can fully understand not only contemporary views but also historical perspectives."[161]

Tribal histories have a long way to go before they meet the expectations set out in the mandate of Native American Studies. Before considering how Native American historians envision an oral traditions-based New Indian History, it is worthwhile taking a cursory look at how Indigenous historians outside the conventional mold have utilized oral traditions in their writing.

The most common form of oral traditions used in social science research are personal reminiscences or life histories which have proved most valuable for studying specific events or topics in the recent past. The recent emergence of boarding school stories reveal the human dynamics of a subculture of Indigenous children, whose voices were silenced until the most recent past, in ways no documentary record of the time could uncover. Numerous studies using the personal reminiscence interview method have revealed the pain and suffering that Native children experienced during their internment at government and church run residential schools.[162] However, some studies reveal that the history of Indian boarding schools were not always stories of victimry.[163] Tsianina Lomawaima demonstrates that even under the most repressive conditions students created their own sources of strength and support from among themselves. Not only did they find solace in their peers, they engaged in a range of resistance strategies by devising ploys to outwit the system. Gerald Vizenor criticizes previous generalizations of the boarding school experience because they renounce "the courage and humor of native students" and

"shame the spirit, nerve, and bravery of the students is to recant their memories." Studies like Lomawaima's, based on spoken memories and experiences, celebrate Native survivance.[164]

Ila Bussidor (Dene) in collaboration with Ustun Bilgen-Reinhart wrote the story of the forced relocation of the Sayisi Dene from their traditional territories in the 1950s and their eventual return home a generation later.[165] The text is predominantly made up of first-person accounts which are introduced with contextualizing narrative. Like Lomawaima's, Bussidor's story was full of pain and tragedy—nearly one-third of their entire population died as a result of violence and other social ills in the ghetto outside the town of Churchill, Manitoba, over the course of seventeen years. But the community did not shrivel up and die. They reasserted their independence and returned to their homeland to rebuild their lives and create a healthy future for their children. Clearly, personal reminiscences shed new light on human experiences in the recent past that correct and/or balance general assumptions.

An example of how one academic historian creatively used teachings from Indigenous oral traditions for interpreting and analyzing historical experiences comes from Jack Forbes. Columbus and Other Cannibals presents a cutting study on the nature of global imperialism—and its concomitant ills "colonialism, torture, enslavement, brutality, lying, cheating, secret police, greed, rape, terrorism"—from a Native American perspective.[166] The framework he offers for this perspective is based on Algonkian stories of the wétiko (cannibal) disease and the Algonkian concept of mátchi (evil thinking). Forbes did not go so far as to develop these concepts into a theoretical framework but their allegorical employment provides a creative and intriguing analytical/interpretive strategy. 'Creative' is the key word here. By attempting to present an understanding of

global events from within Algonkian cultural contructs, Forbes demonstrates the value of seeking knowledge from tribal storytellers and elders to explain contemporary phenomenon.

Academic historians tend to distinguish themselves from local or "amateur" historians by virtue of their professional training and all the values, standards, and expectations levied on them by their discipline.[167] However, some of the most sensitive treatments and uses of tribal memories have been employed by Indigenous people, outside the academy.[168] Family histories, like Alexander Wolfe's Earth Elder Stories provide inside perspectives on significant events in tribal history as well as insight on Indigenous intellectual history. While his own work is based entirely on family oral history passed to him, Wolfe strongly encourages historical reconstruction based on oral and written sources.[169]

Ideas on the kinds of forms New Indian History could take have been circulating for the last three decades, however, it has only been in the last decade that a younger generation of Indigenous historians have taken up the challenge. The late Alfonso Ortiz and Vine Deloria Jr., were active participants in the 1970 Convocation of American Indian Scholars where the mandate of Native American Studies was established. At that time Indigenous historical criticism was just emerging, yet Indigenous historians were already stressing that it was not enough to criticize conventional history—Indigenous scholars needed to offer something better.[170]

Indigenous criticism and corrective ideas were also the primary subject of the "viewpoints in Indian History' conference sponsored by Colorado State University in 1974. Daniel Tyler recorded that he was mildly surprised by the turn in Indigenous criticism towards constructive suggestions on how Indian history could be done and what

it could look like.[171] The strongest and most insightful recommendations at the conference came from those, outside the academy, who were actively engaged in oral and community-based historical research projects for Tribes and Tribal Colleges.

Ortiz, Deloria, and Tyler strongly advocated that the study of the Indigenous past must be grounded in the worldviews and oral traditions of the people. Ortiz stressed that historical studies must not only include notions of historical consciousness, relations to the land, concepts of time and space, religious meanings and motivations, the New Indian History should also adopt and apply them:

> This new Indian history would have to acknowledge Indians as teachers. It would frame questions and inquiries using Indian terms and categories that reflect Indian realities and are important to Indians.[172]

The New Indian History Ortiz envisioned, would be grounded in Indigenous intellectual traditions, and would look beyond written texts to a wide variety of ways to record and present the past. Specifically he suggested that "cultural productions other than writing as history"—like song, dance, oral traditions, as well as more contemporary family photographs and records, and sound and video recordings—offered great promise. Ortiz hoped for a new generation of Indigenous historians who would take up the challenge of creating living histories "in which the past and present are brought to bear to find portals of and guides to the future, as do the best of the oral traditions."[173]

Vine Deloria Jr. argues that the "dilemma over the nature of history occurs and will occur wherever a religion is divorced from space and made an exclusive agent of time."[174] Time-centered, non-experiential approach to understanding religion "overlooks the uniqueness of spiritual power in the effort to demythologize everything; to say that almost everything that happened didn't happen because we don't experience it now."[175]

In Custer Died for Your Sins Deloria Jr., enthusiastically proclaimed that

American Indians have a chance to "re-create a type of society for themselves that can defy, mystify, and educate the rest of American society."[176] The older traditions, he explained, are limited because they were not originally developed to confront the unique challenges currently faced by American Indian communities. As a result, new categories of existence and experience need to be created. One of the beauties of Indigenous traditions, he reminds us, is that they are not static, they are adaptable. So he urges Indigenous scholars to return to place-centered religious traditions:

> A solid foundation in the old traditional ways enables the students to remember that life is not scientific, social scientific, mathematical, or even religious; life is a unity and the foundation for learning must be the unified experience of being a human being.[177]

Deloria Jr.'s position has not abated in the last three decades. At a recent conference celebrating the 25th anniversary of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History Deloria Jr. applauded Native historians for starting to throw away "scholarly constraints" and encouraged more to do so.[178]

Daniel Tyler asserted that an Indian worldview historical approach demands "a unique set of terms and references which may not be familiar to non-Indian scholars." However, if Indian history is to be comprehensible and relevant to contemporary Indians it needs "to be applicable to the pressures and problems of living today."[179] Like Deloria, most Indian historians agree that "if history can be a force for social change, the Indians will gladly accept a modification of traditional methods."[180]

Like Ortiz, Tyler proclaims that the forms this New Indian History could take, will only be restricted by lack of imagination and tenacity. He urges experimentation in style, media and subject matter and likens the development and potential reactions to New Indian History with the development and reactions to contemporary Indian Art.

According to Tyler, few agree on what 'Indian art' is but non-Indians occasionally object if forms do not follow "traditional, flat, one-dimensional style." Because art is a more commercial pursuit than writing, he explains, non-Indians presently exercise a large enough degree of control that the art forms are often forced to conform for the commercial market, a problem not generally experienced in the production of history. However, outside reactions to New Indian History will no doubt reflect those levied against contemporary Indian art:

> To insist, for commerce reasons, that Indians produce 'traditional' art forms is to further emasculate their self-identity and the free expression of their emotions....The experimentation in styles, media, and subject matter which is sometimes criticized for being non-Indian represents, in fact, the Indian expression of his search for belonging in a society which has rejected him. This determination to be different, to blend, if necessary, some of the traditional artistic traditions with the frustrations of modern society, is a logical expression of the Indian worldview for the most recent historical period.[181]

In the end Tyler asserts that Indigenous peoples in the arts and in history are determined to find their own unique ways to express, describe, and experience their culture: "This desire for cultural autonomy is genuine; to malign their techniques or channel their interests is to continue the mistakes of the past."[182]

However, the past thirty years has not produced the kind of histories elder scholars like Deloria Jr., Ortiz, and Tyler hoped for. Russell Thornton, Donald Fixico and others lament that the younger generation of Indigenous scholars have still not adequately taken up the challenge. As a result, non-Indians have frequently determined the course of Native American studies and have sought to define the parameters of American Indian history.[183]

Jay Stauss asserts that the call for an Indigenous-based discipline (NAS) sounded in the early 1970s has yet to be met by much more than "tokenism" and "co-optation"[184]

and Robert Warrior laments that "it is striking to see how little impact American Indian critical writers have had on each others work."[185] Devon Mihesuah explains that many Indigenous scholars would prefer to write for Indigenous audiences "but are nervous about utilizing new methodologies that might accurately present their tribal histories."[186] Mihesuah conjectures their insecurity: "'How would traditionalists recount the past?' they ask. 'How can I replicate these unfamiliar storytelling techniques?' At the same time they are aware that their new history-telling styles may not find acceptance."[187] Mihesuah stresses that despite increasing works published by Native writers, the bulk of "'acceptable telling of the Indian story is still in the hands of non-natives'...and in the hands of Natives who write like non-Indians":

> To gain their colleagues' acceptance, some Indian scholars have resigned themselves to compromise. They write histories that include tribal viewpoints in a large measure buttressed by theories formulated by non-Indians. While it is important that scholars become theoretically informed, Indians should define their own perspectives on Indian history and culture instead of relying solely on the thoughts and dictates of anthropology and history theorists.[188]

Deloria Jr. and Ortiz were among the handful of Indigenous scholars emerging in the late 1960s who were strongly influenced by the living oral traditions of their own tribes and by the earliest Native American writers. Like all proponents of the oral traditions-based New Indian History, both strongly encouraged young scholars to return to their communities for teachings, and to study the published works of earlier Indigenous writers for direction and guidance. A cursory review of recent Indigenous scholarship demonstrates that many younger scholars have taken up their call. In addition to studying their tribal histories within their specific tribal contexts, these young scholars are increasingly taking a "generational perspective."[189] As a result they are starting to make significant contributions towards the articulation of Indigenous oral traditions-based New

Indian History.[190]

Angela Cavender-Wilson (Dakota), Harvey Knight (Cree), and Joseph Marshall III (Lakota) all agree that respectful and balanced written articulations of Indigenous oral histories require an intimate and experiential understanding of the oral traditions specific to the tribe under study.[191] But not from the outside looking in. An inside perspective can only be accomplished by immersion and by learning the language because every culture has its own way of organizing, interpreting, recording, transmitting, and contextualizing knowledge about the past.[192]

It also means being prepared to make a lengthy, if not lifetime, commitment.[193] The idea that a student of oral history could assume the role of student with traditional oral historians is not revolutionary. Many ethnohistorians, especially those trained in the older schools of anthropology/ethnography, stress that "knowledge of an Indian language is essential to historical scholarship."[194] What is revolutionary about this revived Indigenous approach is the unique role, expectations, and responsibilities bestowed on Indigenous historians by their traditional teachers and communities.

As discussed above, Indigenous scholars are expected to meet two sets of standards, those set by their disciplines and universities, and those set by their communities, each of which poses its own unique and often conflicting challenges. The easiest root is the assimilationist path. Indigenous scholars can get away with being self- or externally-appointed Indian specialists, protected as they are in the foreign territories of Ivory Towerdom. They can get away with this because most universities have no sincere connection to local Indigenous communities and so have no notion of how to verify these claims. In most cases, universities are simply satisfied with having an 'Indian voice' and in many instances, any voice will do.

For Indigenous historians working within their communities, taking on the role of apprentice or student of traditional knowledge, the path is not easy. Indigenous historians promoting the articulation of an oral traditions-based New Indian History recognize that they are expected to apply their craft according to local practice which means accepting a number of working premises, philosophical reasonings, and values that directly challenge conventional academic wisdoms, many of which were set out earlier in this chapter.

The least communities should be able to expect is for Indigenous historians to respect and work with Indigenous historical traditions in their own right. This means recognizing and accepting the metaphorical/mystical/spiritual aspects of history, the unfragmented nature of knowledge, and spatial as opposed to temporal frames. It also means accepting the role of apprentice and all the social obligations and responsibilities that comes with. An apprentice is expected to apply and practice their craft and to protect its integrity. In addition to learning the language and worldview of their teachers, students of oral history would be expected to develop their memory capabilities, and their oratorical and social skills.

A few years ago Maria Campbell and I attended the "Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts" conference at the University of Toronto. The presenters—all well-known Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars who have spent their entire careers studying oral traditions—addressed a range of editorial problems they encountered when transforming oral to written texts.[195] The topics, insights, and conversations were exciting and illuminating. At the end of the day when Maria and I discussed our overall impressions, what struck us the most, was how so few of the conference presenters possessed oratorical skills. Some of the most exciting topics were presented in droll, monotone voices, lacking humor, or in brisk, squeaky voices, lacking confidence. After

decades of studying oral traditions with Elders "you'd think they'd at least learn how to tell a good story" Maria exclaimed.

Apprentices of Indigenous oral traditions are expected to accept long-term commitments to their teachers and their craft which means committing oneself to taking over the life-time task of memory keeping and transmission, and to protecting its integrity for future generations, if so requested. It also means recognizing and practicing the boundaries between public, private, and sacred knowledge and potentially, of taking on the ceremonial components. It means practicing and applying rather than dissecting and describing.

Indigenous historians are also sensitive to the wounds inflicted by previous generations of exploitative anthropologisms and so are expected to behave appropriately. Anna Lee Walters explains that there

> is considerable oral history of tribal people not yet written. Some tribal people do not want their histories written at all, or *in English*, for several reasons. First is the suspicion that they will be appropriated by the larger society like so much other cultural appropriation that has already occurred. Second, the material is often considered sacred and not for the knowledge of outsiders. Third, the "fixed" quality of written histories carries with it some very complex tribal ideas about how this will affect the "living" state of the people and their continuity. Fifth, tribes often fear distortions of their histories. Concerns go on and on.[196]

The question of whether or not oral traditions should be preserved in written, audio, or visual records are local concerns and decisions made at the local level must be respected.

Many tribes, as discussed earlier, are eager to preserve their stories. Thus, one of the most pressing concerns for the development of an Indigenous oral traditions-based New Indian History is to devise new ways of transmitting oral histories in manners that retain their integrity, and adhere to the values and principles practiced by traditional oral historians.

The most pressing task facing Native American Studies today is "the need to develop the intellectual richness of Native Americans and their societies and cultures, and incorporate it into colleges and universities in ways understood by both academe and Native Americans."[197] According to Neal McLeod the biggest challenges revolve around "the transmission and translation of knowledge from traditional tribal environments to academic settings" as well as the "format and modes of articulation."[198] McLeod stresses that:

> The project of Indigenous Studies is an extension of collective memory which has existed since time immemorial. I think that if we are to have genuine Indigenous Studies, we really need to use techniques of ways of knowing that stretch back deep within our tribal memories. The failure to utilize such techniques will amount, not to liberation through education, but rather assimilation through education.[199]

The intellectual heirs of Warren, Standing Bear, Ahenakew, Deloria, McNickle and Mathews have maintained the ideals and continued the textual path opened by these ground-breakers. Each successive generation is expected to build on the advances of those who came before them. Increasingly, Indigenous scholars have utilized the tools of western scholarship and literature to convey as best they could the histories of their people. However, since the 1960s Indigenous scholarly advances have followed two sometimes intersecting streams. Those in the social sciences jump to the defense and promotion of oral traditions as the foundations for a new articulation of Indigenous intellectualism. Those in the humanities, especially our creative writers, have imaginatively and reverentially embraced oral traditions as foundations and forms of literary expression.[200] While each path continues to affect its own revolutions and liberations they have seldom converged to inform the oral traditions-based New Indian History: Historical experiences and the poetics of oral traditions clearly inform creative

writing, but the poetics of oral traditions and creative writing have not yet seriously informed historical writing.

Writing in the Oral Tradition—Native American Literature.

> This Narrative is not meant to be documentary. In fact it is meant to evade documents. It is meant for the reader to feel and to say I was there and indeed I saw.
>
> George Clutesi (Nuu Chah Nulth), Potlatch (1969)

> Literature, one of Coyote's frequent haunts, can be a place of "free play" in the postmodern sense as well as a means of bringing history to life.
>
> Kathryn Shanley (Assiniboine), "'Writing Indian'" (1998)

Numerous studies demonstrate that the "relationship between the oral tradition and the written word, between story telling and story writing and reading, informs all contemporary encounters with Native Literatures."[201] According to Kim Blaeser (Anishnabe) Native authors strive to "translate not only language, but form, culture, and perspective. And within their written words, many attempt to continue the life of the oral reality."[202] Jace Weaver stresses that Native writers also write with a sense of communitism, "literature is communitist to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community, including...the 'wider community' of Creation itself."[203]

It is not surprising that oral traditions have informed Indigenous creative writing for a very long time. Earlier in the century literature provided the outlet for Indigenous stories that could not find acceptance in either anthropology or history[204] or when they were potentially subversive. In the case of Sundown, for example, Mathews was directly experiencing the effects of social upheaval and fiction no doubt allowed him the space to express the human condition in relative safety. Such is also the case for Edward

Ahenakew. Not unlike the South African storytellers in Harold Scheub's The Tongue is on Fire: South African Storytellers and Apartheid, Ahenakew's criticisms against federal Indian policy had to be couched for his own protection. Also like South African story tellers, Ahenakew's stories are encoded with extratextual meanings, the interpretation of which rests entirely with the reader. Kim Blaeser notes that stories such as these "harbour an absence which is really a presence, inviting or alluding to a greater political message. In that sense, the stories are, as oral literature has always been, alive."[205]

Native writers generally agree that "the oral can never be fully expressed in the written, and that experience cannot be duplicated in text" but most are dedicated to an oral aesthetic, in the rhetoric if not in their written works.[206] How that is accomplished depends on the "cultural, linguistic and literary circumstances in which contemporary writers are reared" and in imaginative and creative personal inclination.[207] Maria Campbell (Cree-Metis) explains that for a long time she could not write because

> I did not know how to use English. I am articulate in English I know it well. But when I was writing I always found that English manipulated me. Once I understood my own rhythms, the language of my people, the history of storytelling, and the responsibility of storytelling, then I was able to manipulate the language. And once I started to be able to manipulate English, I felt that was personal liberation.[208]

Oral traditions are interactive and participatory and many Native writers engage in a variety of strategies to duplicate or approximate that essence. N. Scott Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain was based on interviews with Kiowa elders who provided him a wealth of oral tradition.[209] Through the use of three narrative voices—the mythical, historical, and immediate—followed by two kinds of commentary—documentary and private reminiscence—Momaday first intended to "validate the oral tradition to an extent that might not otherwise be possible."[210] His second intention was to demonstrate that

there is a way "in which the elements of oral tradition can be shown, dramatically, to exist within the framework of a literary continuance." Momaday also uses the device of a journey "made with the whole memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal as well as cultural."[211]

Gerald Vizenor's reimagining or reexpressions of tribal orature "strives to compensate for the inadequacies of written language by involving the active imagination of the reader in discovering the unwritten elements of his work."[212] This he does by employing a range of literary strategies "which refuse to grant his reader certain satisfactions in the text because they would close off other possibilities he deems more essential"—the readers' participation, discovery, and "the possibility that the story has a life beyond the page, the possibility of a new kind of 'survivance'."[213] Readers are left with an open text which "'leaves open the possibility of discourse'."[214]

Through literature, Indigenous histories come alive with human experience and contemplation. In this sense, some of the most effective narrative histories have been written by Native Americans who come from literary backgrounds rather than history. Gerald Vizenor's history of his people defies Rankean rules on many levels. It is both a text of resistance and an imaginative experimental text.[215] Kim Blaeser's analysis of The People Named the Chippewa is helpful. All Vizenor's work rejects the "static, the formal, and the monological" and so by "uncovering the story in history, he invokes the voices of all its actors and 'archshadows' and traces its many connections."[216] Vizenor directly challenges the colonialist nature of conventional histories. According to Blaeser, the

> most compelling and ultimately most rewarding literary representations of history by Native American writers are those which, by their humor, work to unmask and disarm history, to expose the hidden agendas of historiography and thereby remove it from the grasp of the political panderers and return it to the realm of story.[217]

Vizenor's "choice of storytelling mode" and the inclusion of material generally ignored by conventional history "implies a challenge of both the method and the truth of the historical canon." By way of a "documentary collage" Vizenor utilizes "the 'official' documents of history" the biases of which he exposes by contradictory accounts and which he contrasts with sources generally unacceptable to conventional historians—oral tradition, dreams, and visions.[218] Vizenor recognizes the effects of oral tradition, dreams, and visions on historical events. A previously quoted excerpt exemplifies Vizenor's stance and method:

> The Anishnaabeg did not have written histories; their world views were not linear narratives that started and stopped in manifest binaries. The tribal past lived as an event in visual memories and oratorical gestures; woodland identities turned on dreams and visions. Keeshkemun, a tribal elder, told the colonial officers that he was a bird, "if you wish to know me you must seek me in the clouds." Keeshkemun responded with a dream song when the officers asked him to explain his position in the territorial wars.[219]

N. Scott Momaday's The Names, while technically classified an autobiography, is historical in many senses—it tells stories about past events, and is reflective, retrospective, and interpretive.[220] One of the unique aspects of The Names is its experimentation with and use of the oral narrative form which results in an overwhelming visual and imaginative impact on the reader—traces of those contextual ingredients missing in conventional narrative forms abound. In the following passage on Native American names, many of the traces, nuances, and obligations, in short the contexts of Indigenous oral traditions, are evident. Herein are those 'narrative wisps' from which oral and written Native American histories and literatures are imagined.[221]

> THE NAMES AT FIRST are those of animals and of birds, of objects that have one definition in the eye, another in the hand, of forms and features on the rim of the world, or of sounds that carry on the bright wind and in the void. They are old and original in the mind, like the beat of rain on the

> river, and intrinsic in the native tongue, failing even as those who bear them turn once in the memory, go on, and are gone forever: Pohd-lohk, Keahdinekeah, Aho.[222]

Great insights can come to historians who study Indigenous creative writing. Indigenous creative writers have been comfortably writing in the oral traditions for a very long time. They teach by 'doing' how oral traditions can inform our scholarship and have paved the way for students in my generation to go home, relearn, and find ways to write from our own unique places.

Going Home

Before a university grants students of history the esteemed title "historian", and before their work is perceived as valid or scholarly, students are required to submit to years of intense study and training. Throughout this educational process, we students are assimilated into the language, epistemologies, traditions, cultural prerequisites and methodologies of our chosen trade. Our success is determined by our ability to meet the standards—to internalize—the canons of a very culturally-specific tradition. We emerge from our training with a sense of confidence—we know what history is, we know how to do history, we do history. But when we move on to study the histories of peoples outside the mainstream cultural construct—peoples with different historical traditions—how well do we immerse ourselves in their languages, epistemologies, traditions, cultural prerequisites and methodologies? The irony of my 'education' is that I spent 19 years studying my own peoples' past in universities, from outside perspectives, using eurocentric sources, according to foreign conventions, when my own people have intellectual traditions of our own.

As a graduate student in the History Department at the University of British

Columbia my thesis topic was informed by family oral history—oral history provided the questions and the general interpretive framework. But the sources and the narrative followed modern historical conventions. While abiding by the strictures of the discipline caused plenty of grief my primary task at the graduate level was to demonstrate that I could.[223] Since then, the demands for Indigenous social science criticism by conferences and publishers captured my attention, which ensured that almost all of my own published works were reactive rather than active, closed rather than open, and imitative rather than creative in form.

A large part of decolonization entails developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires autocriticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment—a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative, reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities. Jace Weaver explains that in the face of internal colonialism, Native survival and the revitalization of Native traditions

> attests to the truth of [Edward] Said's repeated theme that there is always something beyond the reach of the dominating systems, no matter how totally they saturate society, and that it is this part of the oppressed that the oppressor cannot touch that makes change possible: in 'every situation, no matter how dominated it is, there's always an alternative.'[224]

Decolonization is about reaching the point where mom's advice to "quit complaining about it and get out there and do something" finally sinks in.

The development of an oral traditions-based New Indian History is not about positing a superior or better way to do history, or presenting a superior interpretation. It is

about creating space for another way to do history, and another point of view.

In Cree intellectual traditions "every word is a bundle" and this tenet requires that we become intimately appreciative of Cree ways of knowing. Our histories are different from modern/western histories and require us to step outside the confines of the university system. Before we can write tribal histories, and before we can write from a place and in a form that respects the dignity and integrity of tribal traditions, it is vital that we learn how to learn again. This time by returning home and immersing ourselves in the oral traditions of our communities.

Endnotes

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[1] The discipline is respectively named Native American Studies, American Indian or Indian Studies in the USA, and Native Studies, Indian Studies, First Nations Studies, or Indigenous Studies in Canada. In addition, New Zealand has Maori Studies, Australia has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and Scandinavia has Saami Studies.

[2] W. Roger Buffalohead reminds us that the first attempt at establishing an Indian Studies Department was initiated in 1914 by Senator Robert Owens of Oklahoma. At the urging of a number of Oklahoma Indians, Senator Owens introduced a resolution in Congress to establish an Indian Studies Department at the University of Oklahoma. Senator Owens was unsuccessful in his attempt, as were those who tried again in 1937. "Review and Evaluation, Native American Studies Programs," in The Indian Historian Press, Indian Voices: The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars (San Francisco: American Indian Educational Publishers, 1970), p. 161.

[3] Russell Thornton, "American Indian Studies as an Academic Discipline," American Indian Culture and Research Journal 2, 3 & 4 (1978), pp. 15, 16; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies?" Wicazo Sa Review (Spring 1997), p. 9; M. Annette Jaimes, "American Indian Studies: Towards an Indigenous Model," American Indian Culture and History Journal 11, 3 (1987), p. 9.

[4] Russell Thornton, "Institutional and Intellectual Histories of Native American Studies" in Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p.102.

[5] ibid..

[6] Russell Thornton, " Introduction and Overview," in Studying Native America, p. 4.

[7] Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, p. 20.

[8] Jaimes, "American Indian Studies," p. 10; Jace Weaver, That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xii; Kim Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), pp. 36, 37.

[9] Gerald Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction," in Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourses on Native American Indian Literatures (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), p. 4.

[10] ibid., "Preface," p. x.

[11] ibid..

[12] Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, p. 33.

[13] ibid..

[14] ibid..

[15] ibid., p. 34.

[16] ibid..

[17] Weaver, That the People Might Live, p. 141.

[18] ibid..

[19] Duran et al, "Native Americans and the Trauma of History," p. 60.

[20] Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, p. 28.

[21] ibid., p. 24.

[22] Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies?" p. 14.

[23] ibid., p. 9.

[24] Paul Boyer, "The Utility of Scholarship: An Interview with John Red Horse," Tribal College 4, 3 (1993), p. 19.

[25] Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies?" pp. 10, 11.

[26] Deloria, Jr., "Indian Studies," p. 2.

[27] Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies?" p. 11.

[28] Joseph Marshall III, On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995), pp. 134, 135.

[29] Neal McLeod, "What is *Indigenous* about Indigenous Studies?" SIFC Magazine (1998-99), p. 53.

[30] RCAP, Volume 3, p. 602.

[31] McLeod, "What is *Indigenous* about Indigenous Studies? p. 53.

[32] ibid..

[33] Willie Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," in Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, eds., First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds (Vancouver: UBCPress, 1995), p. 105.

[34] Angela Cavender Wilson, "Power of the Spoke Word: Native Oral Traditions American Indian History," in Donald Fixico, ed., Rethinking American Indian History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 111.

[35] Willie Ermine, "Pedagogy from the Ethos: An Interview with Elder Ermine on Language," in Lenore A. Stiffarm, ed., As We See...Aboriginal Pedagogy (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, 1998), p. 10.

[36] Neal McLeod, "Teaching Indigenous Religions," [http://www.sifc.edu/inst/Indigenous Thought/winter99/teaching.htm], January 2000.

[37] ibid..

[38] Harold Scheub, "Oral Narrative Process and the Use of Models," New Literary Studies 6, 2 (1975), p. 353.

[39] ibid..

[40] Maria Campbell, personal communication, August 1999.

[41] Alfonso Ortiz, "American Indian Philosophy: Its Relation to the Modern World," in The Indian Historian Press, Indian Voices: The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars (San Francisco: American Indian Educational Publishers, 1970), p. 15.

[42] William M. Clements, "'This Voluminous Unwritten Book of Ours': Early Native American Writers and the Oral Tradition," in Helen Kaskoski, ed., Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 133.

[43] Verna J. Kirkness, "What RCAP had to say about Aboriginal languages," in Aboriginal Languages: A Collection of Talks and Papers (Vancouver: V.J. Kirkness, 1998), p. 16.

[44] Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3: Gathering Strength (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group-Publishing, 1996), p. 602.

[45] Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," p. 104.

[46] Taiaiake Alfred, Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press of Canada, 1999), p. 2.

[47] Jaimes, "American Indian Studies," p. 11.

[48] Harold Cardinal, personal communication, August 1997.

[49] Joseph E. Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing," in John W. Friesen, ed., The Cultural Maze": Complex Questions on Native Destiny in Western Canada (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991), pp. 57-58.

[50] The author thanks Dr. David Reed Miller for clarifying the differences between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary education and research.

[51] Russell Thornton and C. Mathew Snipp, "A Final Note," in Thornton, ed., Studying Native America, p. 418.

[52] Thornton, "Introduction," p. 4.

[53] Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 26.

[54] Early Europeans marveled that "a people who had neither the wheel nor writing knew well the power of words." Writing of his theological debates with Chief Carigon, Jesuit father Paul Le Jeune remarked on the "keenness and delicacy of rhetoric that might have come out of the schools of Aristotle or Cicero." Le Jeune, himself a gifted professor of rhetoric, found worthy opponents among the Montagnais. Penny Petrone, First People, First Voices (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 4; James P. Rhonda, "'We Are Well As We Are': An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," in Olive Patricia Dickason, ed., The Native Imprint: The Contribution of First Peoples to Canada's Character, Volume 1: To 1815 (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 1995), p. 231.

[55] Petrone, First Peoples, p. 4.

[56] Petrone, Native Literature, p. 27.

[57] George L. Cornell, "The Imposition of Western Definitions of Literature on Indian Oral Traditions," in Thomas King, Cheryl Calver and Helen Hoy, eds., The Native in Literature: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives (Oakville: ECW Press, 1987), p. 182.

[58] ibid..

[59] Keith H. Basso, Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990), pp. 88, 89.

[60] Roland, "Identifying Scholars," p. 2.

[61] Rubert Costo, "Moment of Truth for the American Indian," in The Indian Historian Press, Indian Voices: The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars (San Francisco: American Indian Educational Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 4.

[62] Franklin C. Roland, "Identifying Scholars in the Tribal Community," (paper presented to the Native Research and Scholarship Project, Orcas Island, WA [http://niikaan.fdl.cc.mn.tcj/summer97/FR.html]. July 1996, p. 5.

[63] Howard Clark Kee, "Asklepios the Healer," in Miracles in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 78; Alice Walton, Asklepios: The Cult of the Greek God of Medicine (Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc., 1894 reprint), p. 77.

[64] Sleeping in or near sacred temples to have dreams to yield useful interpretations, give guidance, or receive diagnosis or healing was called "incubation." Lawrence Durrell, "Can Dreams Live on When Dreamers Die?" The Listener, 25 September 1947, p. 524. Many thanks to Dr. Jennifer S. H. Brown for making me aware of this mystical cult and for sending me a copy of Durrell's article. Kee, "Asklepios," pp. 96, 102

[65] ibid., pp.78, 86.

[66] Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing," p. 57.

[67] Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," p. 108.

[68] Anna Lee Walters, Talking Indian: Reflections on Survival and Writing (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1992), pp. 89-81.

[69] Donald Fixico, "Methodologies in Reconstructing Native American History," in Rethinking American Indian History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 120, 126.

[70] Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," p. 11. N. Scott Momaday eloquently describes this relationship when he writes of Ko-sahn, the old Kiowa woman in The House Made of Dawn. For Ko-sahn, there was no distinction

> between the mythical and the historical. Both were realized for her in the one memory and that was of the land. This landscape, in which she had lived for a hundred years, was the common denominator of everything that she knew and would ever know—and her knowledge was profound.

N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," in The Indian Historian Press, Indian Voices: The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars (San Francisco: American Indian Educational Publishers, 1970), p. 54.

[71] Joseph Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing," p. 61.

[72] Robert Warrior, Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 79, 84.

[73] Paul Boyer, "The Utility of Scholarship: An Interview with John Red Horse," Tribal College (winter 1993), p. 19.

[74] Karen Gayton Swisher, "From Passive to Active Research in Indian Country," Tribal College 4, 3 (1993), p. 4.

[75] Boyer, "The Utility of Scholarship," p. 19.

[76] Most scholars begin their research in archives and libraries then head out to communities, if at all. Most Native American and NAS scholars begin at the community level and end up in libraries. Scholars' initial experience with the subject matter informs their questions, which in turn inform their methodologies, all of which informs interpretation. Serious study comparing the outcomes, both form and content, of research questions framed by archives and secondary literature and those framed by community experience and oral history, would shed considerable light on the distinctions and implications of these two methodological approaches.

[77] Jack Barden and Paul Boyer, "Ways of Knowing: Extending the Boundaries of Scholarship," Tribal College, 4, 3 (1993), p. 14.

[78] Laurie Gilchrist, "Aboriginal Communities and Social Science Research: Voyeurism in Transition," Native Social Work Journal 1, 1 (1997), p. 80.

[79] ibid..

[80] Neal McLeod, "What is *Indigenous* about Indigenous Studies?" p. 52.

[81] Buffalohead, "Native American Studies Programs," 162, 164; Jack D. Forbes, "Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Implications for Native Studies and for Native Intellectuals," Wicazo Sa Review 13, 1 (1998), p. 12.

[82] Thornton, "American Indian Studies," p. 14.

[83] Thornton, "Institutional and Intellectual Histories," p. 94.

[84] Axtell's reference to Native American peoples as possessions of the USAmerican nation-state is yet another indication of the colonialist tendency to treat Indigenous peoples as objects of study. James Axtell, "The Ethnohistory of Native America," in Donald L. Fixico, ed., Rethinking American Indian History, p. 23.

[85] William T. Hagan, "The New Indian History," in Donald L. Fixico, ed., Rethinking American Indian History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 34;

Melissa L. Meyer and Kerwin Lee Klein, "Native American Studies and the End of Ethnohistory," in Russell Thornton, ed., Studying Native America, p. 185; James H. Merrell, "Some Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," William and Mary Quarterly 3rd series, 46 (1989), p. 115.

[86] Meyer and Klein, "Native American Studies," p. 189.

[87] ibid., p. 203.

[88] ibid..

[89] ibid., p. 185.

[90] LaVonne Ruoff, American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography (New York: Modern Language Association, 1990), p. 62.

[91] Gerald Vizenor coined the term "tragic wisdom" to describe the insight and understanding Luther Standing Bear, and others, possessed of their peoples' historical plight in the face of manifest manners of domination. It is also reflected, to varying degrees, in Warren and Ahenakew. Gerald Vizenor, Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p. 147.

[92] Gerald Vizenor, "Introduction," in Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and anthology (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), p. 6.

[93] Except where otherwise stated the following study draws primarily on the following texts. Edward Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995 reprint); Luther Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978 reprint); William W. Warren, History of the Ojibway People (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1984 reprint).

[94] Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle, p. 247.

[95] William W. Warren, "Oral Traditions Respecting the History of the Ojibwa Nation," in Henry R. Schoolcraft, ed., Part II, Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: Collected and Prepared Under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Per Act of Congress of March 3d., 1847 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Brambo & Company, 1852), pp. 135, 137; Warren, History of the Ojibway People, p. 44.

[96] Warren, History of the Ojibway People, p. 133; W. Roger Buffalohead, "Introduction," ibid., p. xv.

[97] Warren, History of the Ojibway People, p. 79; J. Fletcher Williams, "Memoir of William W. Warren," in ibid., pp. 12, 20.

[98] Williams, "Memoir," p. 17.

[99] Chief Thunderchild, also known as Kapitikow, was in his 70s when Ahenakew studied with him. A brilliant storyteller in old age, in his younger years he was a warrior and later, represented his people at the Treaty No. 6 negotiations at Fort Carlton. A follower of Chief Big Bear, Thunderchild resisted adhering to Treaty until 1879 when starvation forced him and his people to resign their efforts. Clearly, Ahenakew held this man and his political stand in high regard. Stan Cuthand, "Introduction to the 1995 Edition," in Ahenakew, Voices, p. xiv; ibid., pp. 10, 11.

[100] William W. Warren, "Answers to Inquiries Regarding Chippewas," Minnesota Archaeologist 13 (April 1947): 5-16 cited in Buffalohead, "Introduction," p. xi.

[101] Ahenakew, Voices, p. 10.

[102] Cited in Penny Petrone, ed., First People, First Voices (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 150.

[103] Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 69.

[104] For more detailed discussion see Arnold Krupat, Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 142, 145.

[105] Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in Jane P. Tompkins, ed., Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. xxi.

[106] Raman Selden explains that the identities or characters of narratees are discovered by the narrative strategies employed by the narrator, who, by attacking, supporting, questioning, and soliciting the assumptions of the narratees, implies various narratee characteristics. Raman Selden, A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 117. Gerald Prince explains further that the narrator also "resorts to comparisons in order to describe a character or situate an event," and each of these strategies "defines more precisely the type of universe known to the narratees." Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee, in Tompkins, Reader-Response Criticism, p. 17.

[107] Ahenakew, Voices, p. 67.

[108] Maria Campbell, "Kiasyno Akuâ Nehiawatsowin: Old Man and Cree Life Ways," (unpublished paper in possession of the author, 1999), pp. 18, 19.

[109] ibid..

[110] Gerard Genette, "The Naratee," in Narrative Discourse Revisited. Trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 131.

[111] Campbell, "Kiasyno," p. 19.

[112] Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle, pp. 227, 254.

[113] ibid., p. 254.

[114] ibid., p. 253.

[115] ibid., p. 236.

[116] Vizenor, Manifest Manners, p. 4.

[117] Weaver, That the People Might Live, p. 43.

[118] Julian Rice cited in ibid., p. 111.

[119] Ella Deloria Dakota Texts (1932. New York: AMS Press, 1974 reprint); Dakota Grammar (1941. Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1982 reprint); Speaking of Indians (New York: Friendship Press, 1944); Waterlily (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

[120] D'Arcy McNickle, Native American Tribalism: Indian Survival and Renewals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1949).

[121] D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded (1936. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978 reprint). Birgit Hans, ed., D'Arcy McNickle: The Hawk is Hungry & Other Stories (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), p. vii.

[122] Cited in Birgit Hans, "'Because I Understand the Storytelling Art': The Evolution of D'Arcy McNickle's The Surrounded," in Helen Jaskoski, ed., Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 237.

[123] Hans, ed., The Hawk is Hungry, p. xx.

[124] Hans, "'Because I Understand,'" p. 237.

[125] John Joseph Mathews, The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), Life and Death of an Oilman: The Career of E. W. Marland (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), Talking to the Moon: Wildlife Adventures on the Plains and Prairies of Osage Country (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), Sundown (1934. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988 reprint), and Wah'Kon-Tah: The Osage and the White Man's Road (Norman: University

of Oklahoma Press, 1932). Garrick Bailey, "John Joseph Mathews," in Margot Liberty, ed., American Indian Intellectuals, 1976 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1978), p. 211.

[126] Mathews, The Osages, p. xiii.

[127] David Reed Miller, "Charles Alexander Eastman, The 'Winner': From Deep Woods to Civilization," in Margot Liberty, ed., American Indian Intellectuals, 1976 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1978), p. 64.

[128] Charles Eastman, The Soul of an Indian (Boston: Little Brown, 1911), p. xvi cited in ibid..

[129] ibid..

[130] Miller, "Charles Alexander Eastman," p. 64.

[131] David B. Guralnik, ed., Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, 2nd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), p. 732.

[132] Gerald Vizenor, Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p. 18.

[133] Jack D. Forbes, "The Historian and the Indian: Racial Bias in American History," The Americas 19, 4 (1963): 349-362 and The Indian in America's Past (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964); Rupert Costo, "Indian Journal to Study History and Development of Native Races," Indian Historian 1, 1 (1964): i; Vine Deloria Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins: An American Indian Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1969); In Canada we had Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969). Harold had only accumulated a few years of university education before his people called him home to assume political leadership. He wrote the book while in his early twenties. Thirty years and umpteen battles later Harold Cardinal is a PhD candidate in law at the University of British Columbia.

[134] For example, see Warrior, Tribal Secrets.

[135] Jack Forbes, Nevada Indians Speak (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1967); Vine Deloria Jr., We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf (New York: Macmillan, 1970); Gerald Vizenor, The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa (New York: Cromwell-Collier Press, 1972) which was later republished as The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Alfonso Ortiz, The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

[136] See Lyle W. Frank, The Protection of Aboriginal Culture: A Resource and

Information Guide on Cultural Appropriation (Westbank, BC: Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes, 1997).

[137] James Riding In, "Scholars and Twentieth-Century Indians: Reassessing the Recent Past," in Colin G. Galloway, ed., New Directions in American Indian History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), p. 140; Duane Kendall Hale, Researching and Writing Tribal Histories (Norman: American Indian Institute University of Oklahoma, 1989 reprint), p. iii.

[138] David Henige, Oral Historiography (New York: Longman, 1982), pp. 18, 182.

[139] ibid., p. 182.

[140] C. Gregory Crampton, "The Archives of the Duke Projects in American Indian Oral History," in Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka, eds., Indian White Relations. A Persistent Paradox (Washington: Howard University Press, 1981), p. 122.

[141] See for example, D'Arcy McNickle, The Indian Tribes of the United States: Ethnic and Cultural Survival (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); Harold E. Fey and D'Arcy McNickle, Indians and Other Americans (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959); Jack D. Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), Warriors of the Colorado: The Yumas of the Quechan Nation and Their Neighbors (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), and Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan (New York: Fawcett, 1973).

[142] ibid..

[143] Costo, "Indian Journal," p. i.

[144] ibid..

[145] Joe S. Sando, Nee Hemish: A History of Jemez Pueblo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), p. 4.

[146] White, "Using the Past," p. 227.

[147] The writer sampled a number of anthologies on Native American history and only found a few rather brief references to Sando's work.

[148] Veronica E. Tiller, The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History, 1846-1970 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[149] Hale, Researching and Writing, p. iii.

[150] Terry P. Wilson, The Underground Reservation: Osage Oil (Lincoln: University of

Nebraska Press, 1985), p. x.

[151] Even the most ardent critics of "the variety of history commonly taught in native American studies programs" James R. Clifton praised Wilson's Underground Reservation for succeeding "rather well" in its "intellectual development in method and style" although he does condemn Wilson for adopting the standard theme of noble Osage "debased, debauched, and deprived by the 'rapacious white man'." James R. Clifton, "The Political Rhetoric of Indian history: A Review Essay," Annuls of Iowa 49 (1987), p. 107.

[152] ibid., pp. 207-8n.3; ibid., p. x.

[153] ibid..

[154] Warrior, Tribal Secrets, p. 45.

[155] Meyer and Klein, "Native American Studies," p. 203.

[156] The concept was first introduced by the American philosopher Phyllis Sutton Morris. Outside view predicates are "those which, when applied to ourselves, imply an 'outside view' in either a literal or a figurative sense." Cited in Dennis H. McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, Indian From the Inside: A Study in Ethno-Metaphysics (Thunder Bay, ON: Lake Head University, 1993), p. 22. According to McPherson and Rabb, the predicates goes beyond seeing oneself as others do, it also allows "others to tell you who you are. It is in a sense giving up your freedom, your self-determination, to others [by] becoming what they want you to become rather than becoming what you have within yourself to become." It is a process of alienation. ibid..

[157] Robert C. Carriker, "The American Indian from the Civil War to the Present," pp. 177-208 in Michael P. Malone, ed., Historians and the American West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) cited in Riding In, "Scholars and Twentieth Century Indians," p. 128.

[158] Cited in ibid., pp. 128-29. See also n.149 above.

[159] Meyers and Klein, "Native American Studies," p. 195. See also, Peter Iverson, "Indian Tribal Histories," pp. 205-222 in W. R. Swagerty, ed., Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Review of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); James Clifton, "The Tribal History: An Obsolete Paradigm," American Indian Culture and Research Journal 3 (1979): 81-100.

[160] Karl E. Cilmont, "A Review and Comments on Indian Histories," American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 9, 1 (1985), pp. 67, 68.

[161] ibid., pp. 68, 70, 71.

[162] For example, see Linda Jaine, ed., Residential Schools: The Stolen Years (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1993) which consists of autobiographical stories about the residential school experience.

[163] K. Tsianina Lomawaima, They Called It Prairie Fire: The Story of Chilocco Indian School (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

[164] Vizenor, "Introduction," p. 13. In this instance Vizenor is criticizing Paula Gunn Allen for celebrating "victimage" and renouncing "the courage of native students who pursued education in the course of tribal enlightenment and survivance", ibid., p. 12.

[165] Ila Bussidor and Ustun Bilgen-Reinhart, Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1997).

[166] Jack D. Forbes, Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism and Terrorism (New York: Automedia, 1992), p. 9.

[167] Carol Kammen, Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1995), pp. 2-6.

[168] Local Historian Carol Kammen reminds us that "amateur" comes from the Latin "amator" meaning 'to love' but has taken on derogatory connotations in the area of history. ibid., p. 2.

[169] Alexander Wolfe, Earth Elder Stories: The Pinazitt Path (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988).

[170] Rosalie Nichols (Miwok) in Jeannette Henry, "The American Indian in American History," in Indian Voices, p. 123.

[171] Tyler, "The Indian Weltanschauung " p. 135.

[172] Ortiz, "Indian-White Relations," p. 10.

[173] ibid., pp. 15, 16.

[174] Cited in Warrior, Tribal Secrets, p. 74.

[175] ibid., p. 79.

[176] James R. McGraw, "God is Red: An Interview with Vine Deloria Jr.," Christianity and Crisis 35 (15 September 1975), p. 202; Vine Deloria, Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins: An American Indian Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 268-69.

[177] Cited in Warrior, Tribal Secrets, pp. 93, 110.

[178] Vine Deloria, Jr., "The Future of American Indian Histories," (paper presented at the 25th Anniversary Conference of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History. Newberry Library. Chicago, Illinois. 13 September 1997).

[179] Tyler, "The Indian Weltanschauung," p. 137.

[180] ibid., p. 136.

[181] ibid., p. 139.

[182] ibid..

[183] Thornton and Snipp, "A Final Note," p. 419; Donald Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," in Devon A. Mihesuah, ed., Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p. 86.

[184] Jay Stauss, "Teaching American Indian History," (paper presented at the 25th Anniversary Conference of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History. Newberry Library. Chicago, Illinois. 13 September 1997).

[185] Warrior, Tribal Secrets, p. xiv.

[186] Devon A. Mihesuah, "Introduction," in Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p. 13.

[187] ibid..

[188] Elizabeth Cook-Lynn cited in ibid..

[189] Warrior, Tribal Secrets, p. 41.

[190] For example, "Angela Cavender Wilson, "American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?" American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996): 3-5; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996): 57-76; Marshall III, On Behalf of the Wolf; Donald Grinde Jr., "Teaching American Indian History: A Native American Voice," Perspectives 32, 6 (1994): 1-16.

[191] Marshall, On Behalf of the Wolf; Cavender-Wilson, "Ehanna Woyakapi: History and Language," and "Power of the Spoken Word,"; Harvey Knight, "Preface," in Wolfe, Earth Elder Stories.

[192] Cavender-Wilson, "Ehanna Woyakapi," p. 5.

[193] Cavender-Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word," p. 104.

[194] Douglas R. Parks, "The Importance of Language Study for the Writing of Plains Indian History," in Colin G. Calloway, ed., New Directions in American Indian History Vol. 1 The D'Arcy McNickle Center Bibliographies in American Indian History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), p. 156.

[195] A handful of the presentations made at that conference were published in the conference proceedings. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice, eds., Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[196] This is not a typing error. Walters did not include a number four in this essay. Walters, Talking Indian, p. 80.

[197] Thornton and Snipp, "A Final Note," p. 419.

[198] McLeod, "What is *Indigenous* about Indigenous Studies?" p. 52.

[199] ibid., p. 53.

[200] For example, Kimberly M. Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); N. Scott Momaday, The Names: A Memoir (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976); Gerald Vizenor, The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[201] Kimberley M. Blaeser, "Writing Voices Speaking: Native Authors and an Oral Aesthetic," in Murray and Rice, Talking on the Page, p. 53.

[202] ibid..

[203] Weaver, That The People Might Live, p. xiii.

[204] Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History," American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996), pp. 22, 23.

[205] Cited in Blaeser, "Writing Voices Speaking, p. 53.

[206] ibid., pp. 56, 55.

[207] ibid., 55.

[208] Maria Campbell, "Strategies for Survival," in Gallerie Women Artist's Monographs, Give Back: First Nations Perspectives on Cultural Practice (North Vancouver, BC: Gallerie Publications, 1992), p. 10.

[209] N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969).

[210] Momaday, "The Man Made of Words, p. 59.

[211] ibid..

[212] Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor, p. 13.

[213] ibid..

[214] Cited in Blaeser, Writing Voices Speaking," p. 61.

[215] Laura Colteli, "Gerald Vizenor," pp. 155-184 in Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak Out (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

[216] Blaeser, Gerald Vizenor, p. 82.

[217] ibid., p. 85.

[218] ibid., p. 87.

[219] Vizenor, The People Named the Chippewa, p. 24.

[220] N. Scott Momaday, The Names: A Memoir (Tucson: Sun Tracks/The University of Arizona Press, 1976).

[221] Gerald Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction," Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourses on Native American Indian Literatures (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), p. 3.

[222] Momaday, The Names, p. 3.

[223] Some of the difficulties encountered in the research and writing of my Master's thesis are described in Winona Stevenson, "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askeenootow (Charles Pratt) of Touchwood Hills, 1851-1884," pp. 304-329 in Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996).

[224] Cited in Weaver, That the People Might Live, pp. 11-12.

Chapter V

Nêhiyawîhcikêwin, *the Cree Way/culture*, and History

An dah stories you know
Dats dah bes treasure of all to leave your family
Everyting else on dis eart
He gets los or wore out
But dah stories
Dey las forever
Maria Campbell (Cree/Metis), Stories of the Road Allowance People (1995)

When our grandfather was alive, when he was here, he was called Wapihesew, White Bird, that was his nickname. This is his story that he told. Keep this story, do not forget this story. In the future when you relate this story to your children you will keep it alive a long time if you remember it. Before he would start a story he used to pray first, then he would start his story. He gave thanks for his life. I am starting this story in the same fashion. I have finished my prayer so that I will not relate this old story in a different way than the way it was told. So I will also not slander the characters in the story. [So] if I make a mistake the Great Spirit will make it right. 'Ah, grandchildren, I will tell you a story about myself...'
Andrew Kay (Cree/Saulteaux), Kawakatoose First Nation (1972)

Nêhiyawak, *Cree People*, Oral Traditions

Returning home to Saskatchewan from graduate studies in Berkeley required some major readjustments. At the wîkôhtowin ceremony that first summer my mind drifted off to all the unfinished papers, unmarked student exams, and phone messages that were waiting back at the office. "Can I really afford to be spending 12 hours in the truck and 24 straight hours of cooking and ceremony?" Always so much to do. My poor competence in Cree made it hard to follow the prayer songs and I got tired of taxing my neighbors for translations. Very gently Maria Campbell leaned over and whispered "pê-atik nâtohta," listen gently, softly, with care. Reeled back in, I focused on the fires and the shadows of dancing feet before me. Calmed and focused I could hear the songs. They

were talking to the spirits of the land, the animals, deceased relatives and ancestors, and they were asking for blessings, to guide us human-beings to live a good life. Wîtaskiwin, *to live together on the land in harmony*. Harmony and balance—urban/bush, English/Cree, academic/Indian, written/oral. My mind drifted off to my capan, *great great grandfather*, who interpreted Treaty No. 4 in 1874 at Fort Qu'Appelle. "Capan," I called to him, "what do you think of all this? You who lived in two worlds and fought so hard for education rights at Treaty."

Wihkôhtowin is a celebration of thanksgiving for life and renewal, we feast and dance with our ancestors and other good spirits in thanks for their lives and teachings. Gazing into the fire that night I was calmed and I remembered why I am a historian and why I am here. Nêhiyawîhcikêwin, *the Cree way/culture*, is an oral culture, a listening culture. We are a people to whom understanding and knowledge comes by way of relationships—with the Creator, the past, the present, the future, life around us, each other, and from within. And I am here on this earth to learn.

The following pages attempt to articulate a context for understanding Cree oral history. It is neither complete nor wholly representational. In the Cree world I am a fledgling oral historian. My learning of this set of knowledge will take a lifetime, and I have only just begun. What I understand so far comes from many places. It comes from being raised in a family instilled with strong Cree identity, values, oral traditions and connection to territory. It comes from living as a guest among many different North American Indigenous communities—rural and urban. And it comes from close friends and teachers. I ask only that what follows be recognized as a fragmentary treatment and that any errors be acknowledged as mine alone.

The Social Life of Stories

The literature on the significance and value of oral traditions in Indigenous community life has burgeoned in the last few decades, and much of it holds true for the Cree. From my own learning I have come to understand that oral tradition refers to the stories' philosophical enterprise and knowledge, the processes and relations of transmission, and the messages in all their forms.

According to Cree Elders in order to understand oral traditions one needs first to acknowledge that everything begins with the Creator. The sacred stories explain that the Creator gave First Man the gift of communication in the form of prayer.[1] They also explain that speech is manitokewin, *sacred*, that it is an act of prayer, and the word is sacrosanct. Within the oral traditions are the stories that embody the laws and protocols the Creator gave to humankind to govern the transmission of knowledge and human conduct in relation to the Creator, creation, and all others.

Oral histories are embodied in the oral tradition. They include the stories of genesis and mystical times and stories of the recent past. They serve to instruct, entertain and preserve knowledge. Their most pragmatic functions are to explain world systems, maintain continuity between the past and the present, and to socialize—to ground individuals in identity, place and reciprocal responsibilities and obligations.

Many of the old stories that tell people how to behave and live in an appropriate manner, and why they should do so, are no longer told, having been replaced by Christian dogma and government laws. Many old people believe this is why there is so much corruption and chaos in our communities today. In the old days certain stories were told at certain times of the year, every year, in familiar and fun contexts. In this way the teachings were instilled in the minds and hearts of the people. The laws and customs

imposed by various Christian sects and nation-state governments are rigid, distant, lacking reason, humor, life and familiar context. As such they lose their audiences. Cree Elder/scholar Stan Cuthand says that the Old Timers never pointed their finger when they told learning stories. "We did not have stories like 'don't be like that.' Why embarrass people? That comes from Christianity, now these modern elders are pointing and saying that."[2] According to Cree linguist/scholar Freda Ahenakew, there is no traditional term for the kinds of stories that admonish or teach by comparing old days with today. These are new rhetorical forms that have come to be known as kakêskihkêmowina, *counseling stories*.[3]

Indigenous histories come in a wide range of oral narrative forms--stories, songs, ceremonies, music, performance and dance. While storytelling is the most common form of transmitting knowledge across the generations, the songs, dances and ceremonies also embody a wide range of significant teachings. All stories are didactic to varying degrees but they hardly ever have built-in analysis—analysis is the job of the listener.

Sometimes oral histories do not have an ascertainable beginning, middle and/or end. However, serious listeners will discover that all the stories combined are really one big story. Sometimes stories are told sequentially but more often than not they are discursive.

Sometimes stories are told by way of flashback or are telescoped so that a series of events over long periods of time seem to have occurred within a few days or weeks of one another. Because oral cultures take such a unique approach to time, it is vital for the historian to understand how the people conceptualize and live by it. By conventional standards, these unfamiliar forms seem unreal—they appear more like creative literature than history, more like fiction than truth—and so many discount it.

Except for the more informal personal reminiscences and family histories, oral traditions are preserved and transmitted by specialists or special keepers because the transmission of large amounts and special kinds of oral data requires considerable time and mental effort by each succeeding generation.

The most learned teachers among us are kisêyiniw, *elders or old men*, who are differentiated from kêhtê-ayak, *old people*, by their standing in the community as wise ones. 'Kisêyiniw' comes from the word kisêwew which roughly translates as *protector*. In defining kisêyiniw the late Alex Bonais gave the analogy of a duck beating the ground with its wing to give its little ones time to run and hide from danger. When the Cree see this they say "that bird or animal kisêwew, that one is protecting its young: This is why that word we use for Kisêyiniw has that meaning. It encircles itself around or over its young, and for the old men they encircle themselves around, or hover around, their children or grandchildren."[4] Kisêyiniw and kisêwew are also related to kisêwatisiwin which variously means *kindness, compassion, empathy*.

Stan Cuthand turned 81 years old last December. Born and raised on the Little Pine Cree reserve he was among the first generation of Cree men to receive a high school and university education. He followed the path of his mentor Edward Ahenakew, a Cree from Sandy Lake First Nation, into the Anglican ministry and served as a minister and school teacher on a number of Indian Reserves in Western Canada. For the past twenty odd years Stan has been employed in various teaching and research vocations. We first met when I embarked on my undergraduate studies at the University of Manitoba in 1982. At that time Stan Cuthand was Head of the Native Studies Department and he taught Cree language. Currently he is a retired Associate Professor but he teaches the occasional Indian Studies or Humanities course when his research allows. His favorite

course is HUM 250 'The Translation of Cree Oral Literatures,' because it allows him the opportunity to actively engage oral traditions.

Over the years I have learned much from Stan Cuthand and have come to know him as my uncle. Uncle Stan has fond memories of growing up among great orators and storytellers. He recalls that story-telling was an integral part of every day life and that there were a number of Old Men who were well known for their expertise and oratorical skills:

"One of the men who told stories was Sakamôtâ inew, the son of Poundmaker. He lived at Poundmaker but he used to come to Little Pines because that's where his friends were....And he brought his blankets and he'd place them against the wall and he sat there and sat there and he said, 'once upon a time Wesakejac was walking...' and my father said, 'well! You make the children happy!'" Sakamôtâ inew was a teller of "miscellaneous" stories—Wesakejac stories, little stories about early times before Treaty of situations that happened, all kinds of stories "about how a person did something, gave a feast, or gave away horses or was a warrior and how he won a wife." Most stories had been passed on to him. His specialty was Wesakejac stories. One thing about Sakamôtâ inew, "people would laugh at him. He would forget the details of some stories, or he would forget a word and wonder, 'now what was that word I was gonna say?' and the men would laugh at him and help him out."

Sakamôtâ inew was one of those who came to tell stories during hard times. One winter when Stan's brother's child was sick Sakamôtâ inew came all the way from Poundmaker and told stories all night. "I often wondered how did he know the child was sick that he came." And he showed up at the wakes, and the responses of the men to his stories "helped the mourners...listen to the stories." It would "relieve the tension with the

mourners."

"The other storyteller was Night Traveler. He was a real Plains Cree, he spent most of his time south in the early 1920's looking for pronghorn antelope. That's the only thing they could hunt, there was nothing left." Night Traveler "was witness to the signing of Treaty No. 6 and he used to talk about it....he specialized in the Treaties. And he said, 'the Queen said you would be looked after, when you are hungry you would be fed,' that's the way they understood it." "The other storyteller was my father" Josie Cuthand whose father Sailing Horse took part in the 'Rebellion'. Josie had a lot of handed down stories because he lived with his old people and lots of experience stories from when he lived in Montana after the 'Rebellion'. Then there was Bonais, who was found as an infant crying among dead relatives in a camp ravaged by smallpox. "He was spoon fed with a little broth. He survived, and when he got older he refused to eat anything that contained milk because, he was not raised on milk, then he had the belief that it would make him sick." Bonais told funny life experience stories, like the time they surrendered to Samanatikamow at Fort Battleford in 1885 and their guns were confiscated. "'We were told to raise our hands, so we raised both hands, we had no choice and they confiscated all our rifles. And there was a pile of rifles. Some were all tied up with wire, mended over again. And these were the rifles that really defeated them [Canadian soldiers].'" Bonais "told funny stories like that." He "was the one, when the soldiers withdrew from Cutknife Hill, he went down the hill and men used to laugh at him, going through the bush he lost his breech cloth, it was hanging on a tree." George Atimoyoo was fond of horses, his "specialty in storytelling was horse racing." They used to race horses across the open country and around the mountains, "my goodness they were hard on horses. But those ponies must have been very very strong, they had a lot of stamina. Just like the Indians."

Cikinâsis told war stories, about the societies and the battles, mostly with the Blackfoot. He had exciting stories to tell and was very entertaining "but then the women didn't like him because he was kiwi-ahkicimos somstê, he told off-colored stories. The women used to say he swears too much. Dirty stories. But the men liked him, some men....if I was around and he started telling stories about, the dirty stories, "'you go on over there' so I'd just go away." Kaytwayhat and Fine Day also told great war stories.

Later on in life Uncle Stan met Matciskinik and marveled at his oratorical skills. In particular, Matciskinik told an âtayôhkewin, *sacred story*, about mistasini, the sacred rock buried under water when the Gardiner dam was built. "The four winds play a part in that story" and "the young man rolled four directions and became a buffalo." Matciskinik also told the story about Saskoweetoon, the drooling face man who was magically healed by the sage smudging of a beautiful woman.

Not all the storytellers could "attract attention, everybody listens, wondering what's gonna happen next." Some storytellers "stop and wonder, they would retrace their steps, and 'I'm going too far, I'll go back' and they would go back again." But Matciskinik told stories beautifully, "perfect Cree and it was just a beautiful story the way one event leads to another." Stan pondered reminiscently, "the way he structured his stories you know, ya...one word after the other, he doesn't forget words."

What makes oral traditions unique from literate traditions is that they are as much about social interaction as they are about knowledge and transmission. Peter Nabokov explains that the

> paradox of memorized history that is spoken and heard is that while it can preserve intimacy and locality over astonishing time depths, it seems to be only one generation away from extinction. It is a fragile linkage of spider strands across time. For it to endure someone somewhere must continue to bear witness, must intuitively resist the demands of media and archive in

favor of the interactive, oral narrative.[5]

The fear that oral traditions will be lost in this modern age of literacy, cyberspace and cable television is very real. During the 1960s a handful of Saskatchewan Elders started publicly voicing their concerns about the increasing loss of Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge. Oral historian Tyrone Tootoosis from the Poundmaker First Nation, explains that these concerns culminated in a series of 65 Elder workshops. From 1970 to 1978 approximately 414 Elders from 55 Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, Dakota and Dene communities in Saskatchewan participated in these workshops.[6] A handful of these same Elders, predominantly Smith Atimoyoo, Ida and John McLeod, Joe Duquette and John B. Tootoosis, went on to found the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Center (SICC) to promote cultural education and house cultural resources, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, the first Indian-owned, degree-granting university in Canada.

At first many were hesitant and worried about recording oral histories, sacred songs and ceremonial information, but fear that all could be lost, convinced them that recording it might be the only way to retain it for future generations. Tyrone explains that "they came to the conclusion that they would have to make some compromise and concession regarding the Laws of Access and the custom of traditional protocol."[7]

The late Cree elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw spoke at an SICC workshop and expressed thanks that his teachings about the Treaty No. 6 pipestem were being recorded "so that our relatives might learn by hearing about it in this way." He explained, "it is better to leave good things for them to use...that they might listen on this kind [*points to the audio-recorder*] and that the young might thereby remind each other."[8]

The late Alex Bonais also allowed his stories, knowledge, and songs to be recorded in the early 1970s by the late Wilfred Tootoosis because he feared it would all

be lost:

> Nobody wants to carry on to replace me, to carry on with these responsibilities across this land. All will stop. Spiritual ceremonies, Sundance, the lodge for smoking the pipe....they will be no more. And at that time where will the people take their children?....Only the white man's world will remain.[9]

As Tyrone Tootoosis and I listened to this old man's recorded voice, a sudden surge of hope broke through his lament. He moved closer, more directly into the microphone, then raising his voice slightly, called out: "in the future you youth try to educate each other with this information." Thirty years later he was speaking directly to us.

Protocols and Traditional Copyright. Harold Cardinal is member of the Woods Cree Sucker Creek First Nation in Northern Alberta. He is well-known for his political leadership, his articulate critiques of federal Indian policy, and for his commitment to traditional knowledge, Treaty Rights and self-determination. I first came to know him was through his books The Unjust Society and The Rebirth of Canada's Indians which my mother gave me in my teens.[10] We met when he took a teaching position in the Native Studies Department at the University of Saskatchewan in 1989, and until he moved to Vancouver in 1997 to commence his doctoral studies in Law, I tagged along on as many of his adventures as opportunity allowed.

Harold Cardinal explains that there are not many things in Cree life where the right of ownership—the concept of exclusive ownership—is recognized. The one area where it does apply is for stories and ceremonies. Harold explains further that the Treaty Elders, for example, acquired the knowledge and earned the right to transmit it through long years of apprenticeship that required them to learn the ceremony in its entirety, and the oral history in its original form—the exact words and the specific descriptions of

those events:

> The rule is if you are going to acquire someone's story, then you have a duty or obligation to recount it exactly as it was given to you without embellishment because it is not your story to do with as you please. That general rule applies whether it is in the context of the ceremonies or specific events.[11]

The late Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw from Onion Lake Cree First Nation, was the recognized keeper of oskiciy, one of the pipe stems used in the Treaty No. 6 negotiations. His grandfather participated in, and his father observed, the Treaty negotiations, and when he was older the pipestem was passed down to him from his uncle. Elder Cannepotato was born in 1907 and never went to school because he was sent to live with Old People. At the Treaty Right to Education gathering in the summer of 1992, Elder Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw told us

> I was raised by old people...14 years old I was when I started to work for the one called Elder. I was angry and frustrated in this arrangement as I wanted to be in a classroom. It was at this time that my late father explained the reason for this arrangement, 'it would be good for you to be able to converse with the whiteman but if I allow you/release you to a school classroom, you will lose what I have taught you, the way I raised you. I am trying to make/raise you as a traditionally Cree educated child.'...Ever since that time, for 70 years, I have worked alongside/apprenticed for an Elder, in his prayer, I have heard many teachings.[12]

For every kind of knowledge one seeks there are formal protocols that must be adhered to, because if you use something that is not yours, or you have not been given the right to use, it is stealing.

One of the major tenets of Western erudition is the belief that all knowledge is knowable. In the Cree world all knowledge is not knowable. Some knowledge is kept in the family lines, other kinds of knowledge have to be earned. While all knowledge is intended for community well-being and welfare, to acquire certain specific kinds of

knowledge one is obligated to adhere to its rules of acquisition. Harold Cardinal and others refer to these rules as traditional copyright. Access to knowledge requires long-term commitment, apprenticeship and payment in various forms. Maria Campbell earned the stories published in Stories of the Road Allowance People by being a helper or servant to her teachers in addition to paying for them with "gifts of blankets, tobacco and even a prized Arabian stallion."[13] In some instances tobacco and a gift is all that is required; in other instances tobacco and a gift is the means to receive instruction on the appropriate protocol.

In Cree terms education is understood as a lifelong process that emphasizes the whole person by striving for spiritual, mental, and physical balance and emotional well-being within the context of family and community. Unlike the Western pedagogical model, Cree education is relational. Solomon Ratt, a Cree linguist and Instructor at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College explains that in Cree terms education does not come in compartmentalized, institutional stages. Education in Cree is Kiskinohamatowin which refers to a reciprocal and interactive teaching relationship between student and teacher, a "community activity."[14] Thus, seeking Cree knowledge requires an entirely different kind of relationship based on long-term commitment and reciprocity. Students working with Cree teachers often find themselves traipsing around Indian country, chauffeuring, picking berries, hauling wood, singeing moose noses, digging roots, hoeing potatoes and even driving them to and from bingo or the grocery store. In the western context our finely tuned gray matter has difficulty equating chopping wood with intellectual pursuits because it is a totally different kind of pedagogy. The nature of oral traditions requires personal interaction based on respect and reciprocity. Learning in the oral tradition is not about racing into Indian country with tape-recorder in hand and

taking information. Neither is it about hiring locals to interview Old People and supply transcriptions for detached academic reflection in the isolated confines of distant offices.

The study of kayâs âcimowina, *old stories*, has taken me moose hunting and taught me to clean and prep such fine feast food delicacies as moose-nose and smoked intestine soup. Traditional copyright teachings came in the wee hours of the morning, over cold Tim Horton's coffee in a 4x4 truck heading down the Peace River highway. One of my teachers has a propensity for second-hand store shopping. Entire days have been spent hopping from one shop to another, mining sale bins for gold. Once it took us almost two days to make a 10-hour road trip north because we stopped at every second hand store and garage sale along the highway. Cree education is based on interactive and reciprocal relations, and all knowledge comes with some personal 'sacrifice'.

Conventional historians have little responsibility to their sources other than to treat them with integrity and critically engage them. But in the Cree world our sources are our teachers and the student-teacher relationship proscribes life-long obligations and responsibilities.

The social relations between a teacher and student, more specifically the degree of commitment on the part of the student determines, to a very large degree, the quality and depth of knowledge the student receives. Back in the early 1970s Catherine Littlejohn promoted the use of oral traditions in education curriculum.[15] Applying conventional oral history techniques she interviewed the late Mrs. Peemee—widow of Horse Child the youngest son of Big Bear. Ms. Littlejohn went to Mrs. Peemee for the "Frog Lake massacre" story but instead of getting a narrative account was referred to a version translated and published by Maria Campbell in McLean's Magazine. While Mrs. Peemee elaborated on a few points, she refused to tell the whole story since the published version

told it "as she wanted it told."[16] The researcher reasoned that Mrs. Peemee's account was "shorter and in less detail" because it was "more personal and apparently more painful to relate":

> Mrs. Peemee's traditionalism, her closeness to her husband and to the physical reminders of those troubled times—i.e. Cutknife Hill—may have kept the pain and sorrow more intimately with her. Therefore, in telling the story, Mrs. Peemee was concerned that her grandchild be present for it was difficult to reveal the depths of her feelings to a stranger, especially one obviously outside her cultural background."[17]

The reader cannot ascertain whether Mrs. Peemee articulated these reasons herself or whether they are conjecture. While "pain and sorrow" may have been prohibiting factors behind Mrs. Peemee's reluctance to retell the story, Ms. Littlejohn later acknowledged "that the researcher must be accepted as from within the Cree worldview as well."[18] Even more so, it would have helped the researcher to understand the depths of distrust the people of Poundmaker First Nation had for outsiders. They were justifiably suspicious of outsiders asking any questions about incidents associated with the 1885 Resistance because both Poundmaker and Big Bear were wrongfully incarcerated, a number of men were hung, many more incarcerated, and the federal government penalize the entire Band by denying them their Treaty annuities and the right to have a Chief and Council until the 1920s. As old as Mrs. Peemee was, she directly experienced the retribution inflicted on her family and community for their alleged role in the 'massacre', and so, like other Band members she was extremely cautious about who she told the story to.

Maria Campbell, on the other hand, spent considerable time with Mrs. Peemee over the course of a number of years during which strong, respectful, and reciprocal student-teacher bonds were established. Maria chopped wood, carried water, drove Mrs. Peemee to town shopping, in short she was friend and apprentice. She not only received

the full story—complete with biographical details on well- and lesser known individuals, stories of spiritual occurrences, and humorous anecdotes—she and Mrs. Peemee collaboratively edited the story for publication; they agreed on an edited and somewhat sanitized version that respected Mrs. Peemee's caution and which protected spiritual aspects from outside judgements. Maria Campbell recalls that at no time did Mrs. Peemee express personal pain or sorrow when telling the stories: In fact "she had a great sense of humor, laughing and talking the whole time." [19]

Two different research methods, two different results. Maria Campbell's research methods were grounded in nêhiyawîhcikêwin, *Cree ways/culture*. Conventional oral history interview methods do not work with traditional Cree storykeepers which is why the practice of racing into Indian country with tape-recorder in hand in search of objective facts meets with little success. There is a direct correlation between the depth and quantity of knowledge one acquires and the level of reciprocal trust and respect developed between the teacher and student.

Notes on Cree Memory. The late Nora Thomas (1885-1982) was my great-great-grandmother by way of my late step-father Colin Stonechild from Peepeepeekisis Cree First Nation in the File Hills, just northeast of Fort Qu'Appelle. She was 87, and I was 15 when we first met at her home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Kohkom Nora was ancient and her tall, slim, and slightly stooped and corporeal presence was sometimes disarming. But she told good stories in her broken Cree/English. My mother spent a lot of time in the 1970s interviewing and recording her stories, and I remember how excited she was when she learned that kohkom attended a recital given by E. Pauline Johnston, a Mohawk poet, at Fort Qu'Appelle. "Kohkom, at that concert, what did she talk about?" "She talked

about canoes, and the corn huskers, yes, and the moose and the hides and, oh my...she had us all quiet as mice." "Kohkom, what did she look like?" "She looked like, oh, she was fat. Ya. And she had a dark complexion and she had her hair all ribbons and she had a string of bear claws in her throat, oh my!" "Kohkom, did she read lots of poetry?" "Yes, no, she read, she didn't. She, well, most of her composition was mostly on air. Ya. And she read some too." In deep remembrance Kohkom lifted her face towards the ceiling and with eyes closed recited her favorite poem:

The Corn Husker

Hard by the Indian lodge
Where the bush breaks in the clearing
Through the ill fashionable fields
She comes to labor
When the first still husk of autumn
Follows large and recent yields
Ages in her fingers, hunger in her face
Her shoulders stooped with weights of work and years
But rich in tawny coloring...[20]

Kohkom Nora was just under twenty years old when E. Pauline Johnston gave her recital at Fort Qu'Appelle over 60 years earlier, but she could recount her favorite poem word for word, as she heard it.[21]

The veracity and strength of Cree memory is well known. As early as the mid-1700s Andrew Graham of the Hudson Bay Company wrote:

> Their memory is very retentive, and their conceptions ready; for they are apt in learning the manners and employments of the English, and remember instances that have happened many years back.[22]

Edward Ahenakew wrote in 1923 that the responsibility and telling of old stories went to those who had attained the venerable position of Old Man in their respective communities. According to Ahenakew the role of Old Man was

> an institution in Indian life through the centuries. The fact that the Indians

> used to have no written language compelled them to rely upon memory for the recollection of things from the far past, as well as for those of a more recent date. Because of this the accuracy of an Old Man's memory can be surprising. Two or three Old Men together will recall the minutest details of events that took place in their childhood, sometimes comparing notes, for instance, about the surface markings of a horse that lived forty or fifty years before.[23]

One of the first academic treatments of the veracity of Saskatchewan Cree oral history was done by Keith Goulet, currently a member of the provincial legislature of Saskatchewan, for his Master's thesis in Education.[24] Goulet, a Cree-Métis from northern Saskatchewan, studied the impact of hydroelectric development through the personal testimonies of Sandy Bay Cree Elders, and found that the memories of the Cree Elders—their eye-witness and experiential accounts—were remarkably particular and precise.

Studies done by scholars of oral history have demonstrated repeatedly that because non-literate societies had no other mechanisms for recording their past, their oral traditions were especially rigorous. Among the Cree, and other Indigenous non-literature societies, memory capabilities were nurtured and disciplined from early childhood. The late Chief Abel McLeod of the James Smith Cree First Nation explains that "our ancestors had no other way to keep the sacred promises [Treaty] given to them, only by memory. They said then their brains were like paper."[25]

The Elders tell us that all our traditions, laws, knowledge and historical records are preserved in the collective memory through a rigorous and disciplined process that emphasizes "accuracy, precision and procedural protocols."[26] The Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan learned through the testimony of more than 160 Elders that "the process of preserving and transferring traditional laws and procedures is a solemn obligation and serious commitment" and a "life-long endeavour."[27]

In oral societies the education of the youngest living generation is undertaken by the oldest living generation. Children are brought up by grandparents because parents spend most of their days working. Historical studies of the education of children by grandparents have been done on non-literate, rural societies which demonstrate a number of points. Marc Bloch, an eminent historian states that

> with the molding of each new mind there is at the same time a backward step, joining the most malleable to the most inflexible mentality, while skipping the generation which might be the sponsor of change. And this way of transmitting memory . . . must surely have contributed to a very substantial extent to the traditionalism inherent in so many societies.[28]

The last living generation to grow up in this manner are our present great-grandparents, although in most cases, even their education in the oral tradition was interrupted by the residential and industrial school systems. However, their formative years had lasting impact and upon their return home, many pursued their traditional teachings.

While a handful of people in the current grandparent and older parent generations were raised by their grandparents in the oral tradition, much traditional and historical knowledge was lost as a direct result of the residential school system and the aggregate social breakdown that hit our communities at the end of the Second World War. However, many returned to those teachings later in life.

Neal McLeod explains that "oral consciousness has ways of encoding memory", for example, body language in the telling are vested with meaning. Numerous studies also documented the role of mnemonic devices as aids to memory among Indigenous peoples, and much holds true for the Cree. In the case of the Treaties, the pipe ceremonies memorialized the events.[29] The Treaty No. 6 pipestem, along with the 10 marker sticks Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw refers to above, which represent the Treaty promises

made by the Treaty Commission in 1876, serve as mnemonic devices. Other mnemonic devices among the Cree came in the form of artistic illustrations and depictions on tipi coverings, clothing, drums, and rock outcrops. Natural phenomena as well as petroglyphs and other artifacts carved on the landscape—trenches dug during warfare, wagon tracks, property boundary markers, even old abandoned cars—have stories embedded and serve to nudge memories.

My mother and aunts seldom discussed what the old family farm looked like on the Gordon's reserve until we went out there one day. The landscape had changed dramatically by then, leaving few signs that a house, barn, outbuildings and garden once stood and supported a large growing family. But as we walked along the edge of the pasture that was once their yard, my mother and aunts told stories of personable horses, grandmother's midwifery adventures, how the women ran the farm when the men went off to war, and many other stories of daily life and adventures on the reserve in the 1940s. The land is mnemonic, it has its own set of memories, and when the old people go out on the land it nudges or reminds them, and their memories are rekindled. "The events of one's life take place, *take place*." N. Scott Momaday tells us. "How often have I used this expression," he recalls, "and how often have I stopped to think what it means? Events do indeed take place; they have meaning in relation to the things around them. And a part of my life happened to take place at Jemez. I existed in that landscape, and then my existence was indivisible with it."[30]

Truth and Lies

According to nêhiyawîhcikêwin the spoken word is sacrosanct. The Old People tell us that the Creator gave all People the spoken word and memory to keep their laws,

lessons and histories protected for future generations. While some Peoples have turned away from the spoken word in favor of writing, nêhiyawîhcikêwin oral traditions remain strong.

Words have great power. They can heal, protect, and counsel, but they can also harm. One is advised early in life to speak with care because when words are spoken they are manitôkiwin—the act of speech is tantamount to doing something in a holy manner, making something sacred, making ceremony. So when the Old People accept tobacco from one seeking knowledge, and when they share the pipe, they are saying that they will tell the truth as they know it. They are bound in the presence of the Creator as witness to speak from the heart, to speak their truth.

Charles Cowley Pratt (1816-1885) was the official interpreter for Treaty No. 4 (1874) between the Crown in right of Canada and the Cree and Saulteaux nations of present-day southern Saskatchewan.[31] His real name was Askînôtow, *Worker of the Earth*, and he was nêhiyawpwat, *Cree-Assiniboine*, from the Young Dogs Band of the Qu'Appelle River Valley.[32] His eldest son Josiah Pratt (1846-1931) not only heard his fathers accounts of the 1874 Treaty negotiations, he was also witness to the proceedings. Josiah's second youngest son, Colin Richard Askînôtow Pratt (1902-1983), was my mother's father, my môsom, *grandfather*. Askînôtow was my capan.

Môsom Colin was a strong Treaty man. He flat-out refused to pay taxes no matter where he shopped, often taking his business elsewhere when store clerks rejected his Treaty claim to tax exemption. He also refused to file annual income tax returns, proclaiming, "we paid mightily in 1874 and by golly we do not have to pay Canada for the right to live in our own lands. The Treaty guaranteed us." We grandchildren often heard the story about how he chased the Federal Tax man out of his house and that

Revenue Canada never bothered him again after that. But decades earlier when the Queen of England called on her commonwealth subjects to fight in the First and Second World Wars, môsom Colin volunteered along with hundreds of other First Nations men in Saskatchewan, including his eldest son Hector.[33] "Because of our Treaty" he would tell us, "by that Treaty No. 4 we were bound to answer her call for help." Môsom Colin was a strong Treaty man and he told us many times the story of Treaty No. 4 as it was told to him by his father. "They gave their word," he would tell us, "they swore on their bible, and our old men used the pipe."[34]

The pipe opened and closed every set of Treaty negotiations in Western Canada. The late Elder Pauline Pelly, whose grandfather Gabriel Cote negotiated Treaty No. 4 on behalf of his Saulteaux band, tells us that the ones who negotiated our Treaties used the pipe because "we as Indian people when we want to tell the truth we put it in the hands of the Creator."[35] The Creator gave us the pipe to talk to him, that is "why when we talk about the sacredness of that peace pipe, if you are going to tell the truth, and if we are going to ask Him to help us, the peace pipe that is picked up by our people, the pipe holders, when they take that pipe already it is for Him." The Cree and Saulteaux people told the Treaty Commission, "'We want to tell the truth, we're going to use the pipe.' Because if you lie on the pipe you will pay...because you're attempting to lie to the Creator."[36]

In Cree this is understood as pâstâhowin, *a transgression or breach of natural order/law.*[37] When promises, agreements, or vows are made to the Creator "they are irrevocable and inviolable." Breaking these vows can bring grave consequences for oneself and one's family for generations to follow.[38] The use of the Bible by the Treaty Commissioners was understand by the Cree as a solemn promise to God, and so it was

understood in Cree terms that pâstâhowin applied. Based on their own understandings the Cree Treaty makers had faith that the Crown Treaty Commissioners were similarly bound to their promises.

In the summer of 1876 the Chiefs of the North Battleford region came to Fort Carlton to make Treaty No. 6 with Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris, the Crown's representative. According to Morris two thousand Indians arrived at the Treaty grounds in ceremonial procession and when they arrived they "performed the dance of the 'pipe stem,' the stem was elevated to the north, south, west and east, a ceremonial dance was then performed by the Chiefs and head men." After presenting Morris the pipe "the Indians sat down in front of the council tent, satisfied that in accordance with their custom we had accepted the friendship of the Cree nation."[39]

Prone as colonial agents are to myopia and cultural arrogance, the Treaty Commissioners trivialized and misunderstood the sacrosanct bindings of the pipe. The late James Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw from Onion Lake First Nation, grandson to Sâkaskôc a signatory of Treaty No. 6, one of the inheritors of the Treaty No. 6 oral history and pipe-stems, tells us that after the Treaty was signed the Old Man Pâkan picked up the pipe and made a long speech to Governor Morris about the Treaty promises: "'Some day you might go after us for taking this good fish and game, you will some day want to reneg on the terms of the treaty. If you are truthful in your promises, hold on to the stem'" Morris replied, "'If anyone tries to break these Treaties, see this red coat beside me, I give him to you and he will enforce your rights.'"[40] Whenever Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw was asked to speak about the Treaties at gatherings around the province he would tell us that the pipe guaranteed that no human being could break the Treaty, "that's what was promised to us, that's where we get our truth."

Among the Plains Cree there were powerful sanctions against attempting to pass off something known to be untrue. Penalties ranged from supernatural punishment to ridicule and humiliation.

A literal translation of 'truth' from English to Cree is tâpwêwin. But like most attempts at translation tâpwêwin means far more in Cree. It is one of those 'bundle' words that comes attached with deep open-ended philosophical understandings. In the Cree world there are few concrete truths or facts. The great truths that do exist are those given by the Creator—the sun rises, plants grow from the ground, women animals give birth. All other truths are relative to an individual's time, place, gender and perspective. In most matters, everyone owns their own truth and in all situations there are layers of truth. The solemn promises the Cree made to the Creator through the pipes and the promises made by the Treaty Commissioner through his Bible during the Treaty negotiations are understood as truths because of pâstâhowin—one does not lie to God. Tâpwêwin is also about trust, the foundation of all human relationships. When "trust shatters or wears away, institutions collapse."[41]

Edward Ahenakew tells us that the ones entrusted with the responsibility for maintaining and transmitting the moral code were those accorded the venerable status of Old Men. They were both historians and legal advisors and were the ones "who were qualified to speak, for they had passed through most of the experiences of life, and their own youthful fires were burnt out."[42]

> An Old Man dare not lie, for ridicule that was keen and general would have been his lot, and his standing as a teller of authentic events would have suffered. He dared not lie, for there were always other Old Men on the reserve or in the encampment who would contradict him readily....Of necessity then, this veracity had to be unimpeachable, and this, together with well-developed powers of observation, made him an authentic repository for the annals of his people.[43]

While Ahenakew describes the social sanctions against lying, his treatment of the concept of a lie in Cree tradition, and the manner in which lies are kept in check are misleading.

Edward Ahenakew was raised in the oral tradition, spoke fluent Cree, and learned oral history from some of the most learned Cree scholars, but he was also an Anglican minister and his Christianity influenced his representations. Stan Cuthand, a contemporary of Ahenakew's and a Cree scholar/Anglican Minister himself, tells us in retrospect that Ahenakew "understood Cree thinking" and had a "Cree ethos."[44] But as a champion of the Anglican church "he looked down on people who practiced Cree beliefs and rituals."[45] Ahenakew deferred to the teachings of his church and his Anglican, Eurocanadian education which strongly affected his translations of Cree concepts and beliefs. As Stan Cuthand succinctly put it, "prevailing Christian/Pagan dichotomy and the judgmental nature of writing about Indians in the early part of this century presented problems" for Aboriginal writers of that time like Ahenakew.[46]

In the late 1930s Edward Ahenakew served as one of a handful of translators and linguistic consultants to the Reverend R. Fairies on the revised and updated Dictionary of the Cree Language.[47] While dictionaries in general are known for their terse and lifeless definitions, Aboriginal language dictionaries are by far the most insipid in light of the colorful descriptive languages they attempt to represent:

> Lie, n. kiya'skewin. --- v.i. (utter falsehood) kiyas'-kew. He lies about him, kiyas'ki-mao, kiyas'kew –chimao, -totum. He lies to him, kiyas'ketutowao.[48]

The lack of a definition assumes a universal significance but in Cree the concept of a lie is much more complex.

The late Smith Atimoyoo was a member of the Little Pine Cree First Nation and his entire adult life was dedicated to promoting Cree values and teachings. Like Stan

Cuthand, Uncle Smith, as we fondly called him, was a student of Edward Ahenakew and followed his path into the Anglican ministry. Unlike Ahenakew, however, Uncle Smith was soon disillusioned with the church and the assimilationist education system it promoted. After he was fired for teaching in the Cree language in a small reserve school in northern Saskatchewan he left the ministry and dedicated the rest of his life to protecting and promoting Cree ways.

Along with a handful of other traditionalists, Uncle Smith envisioned a new order of Indian education—an education system that would balance Cree knowledge, values and language with Western skills. Towards this end he and his peers, the late Ida McLeod, John B. Tootoosis, and others, established the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Center and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Uncle Smith was an active participant in national, regional and local Elder's workshops, education forums, and various cultural education committees. A true Old Man, Uncle Smith was a respected storyteller and purveyor of Cree knowledge and history. From my teens onward I was fortunate to have spent many hours listening to his stories and his philosophies, and it was to him I turned for deeper insight on truth and lies.

As old age and retirement set in Uncle Smith served as a board member and on-site advisor to the Wanuskewin Heritage Center. Most afternoons he could be found in the cafeteria. While fluent in English the effects of old age are such that Uncle Smith relied increasingly on Cree for clarity so Maria Campbell, a long time student of his, would translate. "That's the way it is for Cree people", Maria explains, "as we age we get closer in all ways to the place where we began. That's why in our language 'great-grandparent' and 'great-grandchild' are the same word—nitâniskotâpân, capan for short."

One afternoon over a cup of tea at Wanuskewin I asked Uncle Smith point-blank,

"what is a lie in Cree?" Smith's face shifted from serious attentiveness to mild incredulity then he turned to Maria. Their gaze transfixed a slow moment, eyes sparkled in quiet humor, then Maria asked him in Cree, "what kinds of laws did the Old People have to prevent them from telling lies?"[49] Another lesson for me in 'knowing how to ask for what you want appropriately.'

"The Old People had laws for everything," he began, "and the teacher of those laws was Wesakejac. It was the way he was given to live, to teach." Wesakejac is the Cree version of Nanabooso (Anishnabe), Iktome (Assiniboine) or Coyote as s/he is known to the peoples of the Southwest.[50] S/he is generally called the shapeshifter, the trickster, and is depicted in some stories

> as an artful deceiver, in others as a roaming rollicking minister of mirth, again in others as a sage, invested with the knowledge and wisdom of the ages, and to cap it all, he was credited with the attributes of the omnipotence.[51]

But, more than anything else, Maria says, "he is a teacher." Wesakejac stories always have a lesson and his stories are called story cycles because they are all connected.[52] Smith Atimoyoo explains that Wesakejac taught by telling lies:

> He went around telling lies, in stories, and it didn't matter how many lies he told, they all came out as good teachings. Mamaskac ci! [incredible, amazing!]. How he could do that, make a lie into something good. He was very wise, he knew everything and he shared that wisdom in stories and all the mischief he got into. We call him nistâsinân, *our elder brother*. He could make stories come alive, even the lies. After he left us when someone would lie people would say, "hmmm, that's what our elder brother used to say." That would force the liar to either tell a really good story or face humiliation. That was the law.

If the storyteller made good, transformed the intent to deceive into a good story, the lie was shed.

Children grew up hearing, over and over again, stories about how to conduct

themselves in their relations with each other, the animal peoples, the land, the ancestors, the spirits, and the Creator. Until the interventions of formal schooling and television, children learned by example and through story-telling, and reenacted stories as part of their play. "But cultural changes changed their games too," Stan Cuthand tells us. When they became Christians, "little kids were baptizing little puppies or little cats." Through oral traditions children were taught to distinguish truth from untruth because they heard stories about the dangers and humiliations one could bring on himself and family by trying to pass off untruths for truths from an early age.

According to Uncle Smith the Old People were polite when they doubted something in a story someone was telling. They never outright accused the storyteller of lying, rather, their facial expressions and body language would express disbelief or they would say "that's what our brother used to say" in a tone suggesting that the storyteller was embellishing or distorting reality like Wesakejac often did. This forced the storyteller to make his story good—to turn it into a good entertaining story to salvage his credibility. Sometimes listeners would say "that can't be" or ayanweteman, *I don't believe it*, or ki-tapwewin, *that is your truth*, but they do not outright call the storyteller a liar. They are saying that they cannot believe the story, or as Uncle Smith would say, "it is not what I know to be true." However, Smith Atimoyoo also explained that "lies are different today."

> Today there are so many people, not like long ago. If you told a lie long ago people knew 'cause our world was small. If you said, 'my grandfather was a great war chief,' well everyone knew your grandfather, if not in person, then by the community stories. So you had a hard time telling lies. But today it is different....a long time ago we believed differently.

Today, some people may think that the stories we know to be true are lies because "they don't know our ways or they don't believe in them." Uncle Smith explained that "things

were different then and lies were different then from now."

> nimôsom Willie Bear's father was Misaskoot, that means Saskatoon berry bush. There is a story about him that he was a great runner. He could outrun horses. The people could go ahead of him and he would arrive ahead of them. He was also elusive. He could disappear into thin air. The Blackfoot people once were chasing him and they couldn't catch him 'cause he just disappeared on them, disappeared into thin air. They had power in those days, through their dreams. And they believed in the dreams and so they were true.
>
> And I believe these stories of nimôsom because Indian people were given the gift of supernatural. Like the weasel story. Nimôsom's pawakan [*spiritual power*] was a weasel and he carried that weasel skin in his bundle, it was his helper I guess you would say in English. And I remember when I was a little boy, I used to spend lots of time with him and sometimes when he was going to pray he would take that weasel fur out of his bundle and stroke it gently and sing a little song—the weasel would come to life and run up his arm and around his head and it would play with me. And my môsom would tell me stories of the things êkos had helped him with in his life. Nikitapwatan, *I believed.* We don't live in a world where we believe in the supernatural anymore but back then it was all possible.

In Cree reality, like Indigenous realities elsewhere in the world, belief in spiritual interventions and transformative powers is a given—it is real. If lies are indeed "any intentionally deceptive message which is stated"[53] in Cree thought these stories are not untrue. In this current pragmatic age ridden with empiricism St. Augustine's definition of a lie more closely resembles Cree notions: Telling a lie is "'having one thing in one's heart and uttering another with the intention to deceive, thereby subverting the God-given purpose of human speech.'"[54]

Uncle Smith, however, lamented that over time our conceptual understanding of truth and lies has changed:

> There are so many things today that distort the way we see and believe, that distort human memory, so many old stories, but we start to believe what we are told now. Start to believe what they [non-Cree peoples] tell us to know and we don't believe the old ways anymore. We start to believe we are not alive, what we believe is obliterated. . . .they will make us believe that black is white, that's how powerful it is. That's how the stories

> of our Old People get so far away. We just try to grasp it again. A person will have to be very strong, like my môsom. He did turn into an animal, he did turn into a weasel, he did turn into a coyote, to get away from the people who were trying to kill him, to survive. I didn't get that stamina and thinking to make me into something. And so, really, I'm becoming nothing.

Ayanweteman, *I don't believe it*, is very different from ekiyastat, *to tell lies*. Much of what we knew to be true has become lies because non-Cree notions of truth cannot accommodate known Cree realities. In this way, much is being lost.

In more recent times the European notion of a lie has taken hold and storytellers have become bolder in their critiques of one-another's versions. The Old Timers are very cognizant of different versions of actual event stories. When they get together they often share their versions and discuss the differences. Unless a version is outlandishly different, in which case they boldly whisper "êkaki askit," *he tells lies*, they are understood and respected for their different perspectives. "Matciskinick," Stan Cuthand tells us, "said 'so and so said this, but this is the way I heard it.'...but that's not in the story, it's an aside...there were different versions of it." The different versions depend on who was there, who observed it, and who transmitted it.

Cree Histories

Form and Content

Cree histories consist of many different kinds of overlapping and related stories. Âtayohkêwina are the stories of the mystical past when the earth was shaped, animal peoples conversed, and Wisakejac transformed the earth and its inhabitants through misadventure and mischief into the world we presently know. Âtayohkêwina describe how the world as we know it came into being and furnish the laws that prescribe how

human beings are to conduct themselves. Âtayohkêwina are the foundation of Cree religion and worldview.

The stories of most interest to historians are âcimowina—stories of events that have come to pass since Wisakejac's corporeal beingness transformed into spirit presence.[55] But unlike the rigid binary categories imposed on âtayôhkewina and âcimowina by anthropologists and Indian-White Relations historians[56] one does not always begin where the other leaves off. Neither is the former exclusively "mythical" and the latter exclusively "historical" in the Western historiographical tradition.

One of the earliest studies of Cree oral history, by ethnohistorian Toby Morantz, draws distinct lines between the two: "the *atuikan* or myths are stories concerning the creation of the world" and *tipachiman* "true stories of real people, living, or their ancestors."[57] A more recent study by anthropologist Robert Brightman goes considerably further by acknowledging the range of stories that fall within these classifications and by discerning that binary classifications—true & false—do not neatly conform to Cree cognition. Brightman differentiates âcoyôhkîwin, "a narrative recounting events that occurred in the early period of the world, a past both continuous with and detached from the present"[58] from âcimôwin, which

> refers to a narrative of events transpiring in this most recent condition of the universe. These incorporate spiritual events and presences, non-factual from a Western perspective, as well as more prosaic stories of battles, trapping, hunting, marriage and travel. The category is not limited to formal narratives but also includes gossip, reports of recent events, jokes, and humorous stories understood as fabrications.[59]

Brightman also acknowledges that âtayohkêwina elements influence, and to a certain degree overlap with, some âcimowina. However, his inclusion of "gossip" and other stories "understood as fabrications," which leads him to conclude that âcimowina

"may be either true or false",[60] shows a lack of insight into how Cree peoples conceptualize stories of this nature.

In English "gossip" has negative connotations referring as it does to "a person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors, esp. about the private affairs of others."[61] However, Cree stories about individual conduct have more validity. Because of the communal nature of Cree and similar Indigenous societies the private affairs of others are everyone's business, especially in instances where private actions may impact the family or community. In this sense Jace Weaver's concept of communitism—"literature is communitist to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community"—applies as much to Cree orators as it does contemporary Indigenous writers.[62] Furthermore, in Cree communities, rural and urban, gossip serves useful social functions and is only considered a "fabrication" when proven to be lie.

In the final analyses, Brightman's denigration of the spiritual aspects of âcimowina as "non-factual" upholds lifeless binary categorizations, undermines the validity of âcimowina from a Cree place by imposing ethnocentric referents, and promotes the cold social science extraction of 'facts.' All of which kill the story. Gerald Vizenor, a consistent critic of the imposition of social science methodologies on Aboriginal life and history, explains that

> The invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predicaments is to separate human experience from the world."[63]

To decontextualize and de-spiritualize âcimowina for whatever purpose transforms them into lifeless and false accounts—the stories becomes colonized.

Cree knowledge of the past does not adhere to conventional disciplinary lines.

Political history is not segregated from social, economic, military or intellectual history. Life histories overlap with family, sacred, and distant past-events history. And, there are no distinctions between the public and private spheres, between secular events and their spiritual or sacred affinities. Harvey Knight from the Muskoday Cree First Nation stresses:

> Because Indian oral tradition blends the material, spiritual and philosophical together into one historical entity, it would be a clear violation of the culture from which it is derived if well-meaning scholars were to try to demythologize it, in order to give it greater validity in the Western sense of historiography. It would be equally unjust and inappropriate to place this history into the category of mythology or folklore, thereby stripping it of its significance as authentic historical documentation.[64]

Angela Cavender-Wilson, a Dakota historian, makes the same case against picking oral histories apart for their 'factual' data, separating the mundane from the sacred:

> Our oral tradition is a kind of a web in which each strand is part of the whole. The individual strands are most powerful when inter-connected to make an entire web, that is, when the stories are examined in their entirety. Each of our stories possesses meaning and power, but is most significant when understood in relation to the rest of the stories in the oral tradition.[65]

In order to get to the layers of meaning, she concludes, it is important for historians to become familiar with "accounts outside the historical realm." Most traditional oral historians would agree that the culling of oral history for 'facts' and disregarding the rest is presumptuous at the very least, and colonialist at worst.

While a range of themes and narrative genres overlap to varying degrees in Cree oral tradition there are identifiable types of stories about the distant and more recent past. Kâyas-âcimowina are literally, *old stories*. It is a catch-all term for old-time stories of events that happened in the generations preceding the tellers'. Kihci-âcimowina are *great*

stories—stories about great valor, wars, treaties and other events that may have impacted community or the course of history to some degree. Because these histories were considered significant enough for preservation in the collection of community remembrances most adhere to formal structures. The bulk of these stories are retained in memory alone while others, those with significant spiritual components and especially those with contemporary implications like the Treaty stories, are contained in memory, song, ceremony and are sometimes accompanied by mnemonic devices.

Cree historians trained in the oral tradition do not assume omniscient authority. The keepers of âcimowina strategically build side stories into their oral texts which serve to establish the original source(s), the teller's relationship to the incident and persons involved, how the teller came to acquire it, and the relevant time referents. In Jim Tootoosis's story of the Battle of Cutknife Hill as much time was spent recounting the stories behind the story as on the story itself [See Appendix 1]. Towards the end of his story Jim Tootoosis tells us:

> How I come to know, I'm gonna tell you. This story is my great grandfather's brother,[66] his name was *Wind Walker*, Pimohteyawiw. He was only about seventeen or eighteen years at that time and he was here watching the fight.... That old Wind Walker, he's a cousin to our great-grandfather Skunk-Skin and he was very old. He was around ninety years old then maybe older. My brother Adam was about twelve or thirteen years old then and that old Man told that story three times, three times over, so he wouldn't forget. 'This is your future, you'll be able to tell the story to other people so he won't get lost.' That's how I come to know this story. My brother told me different times.

Stan Cuthand tells us that the old man Matciskinik began every story with an introduction, "that's one thing about Matciskinik, he gives the setting." However, sometimes the stories are so old the names of the original owners are lost. Stan Cuthand tell us that the Mistasini story begins, "this is a story told by our grandfathers, those far

away grandfathers..." In recounting the Saskowêtoon story the storyteller begins, "'now those were people, nobody knows where, who they are, or what tribe they belong to, but they are on the prairies,' and then the story."

Distant-past stories are most often told in plain narrative and dialogue, or direct quotation, form. The differentiation between a retelling of a story told by someone and a story about someone is embedded in the language.[67]

Throughout the story the teller constantly reminds the listener that this story comes from someone else. The story-teller animates dialogue and interjects "ekwa wiya itwe", *and s/he said,* or "itwêw", *so s/he said*, or "tapwê", *it is true* which means that the teller is telling the story as s/he heard it.

In some stories significant missing pieces located outside the community are built into the narrative with an aside on its source. In the Battle of Cutknife Hill story one Blackfoot warrior survived the battle by hiding in a water-filled cave in the cut-bank along the creek. After all the Crees had left he sneaked away under the cover of darkness and made it back to his people. Jim Tootoosis tells us that

> Sometimes they'd have a fight and other times they'd make a treaty, smoke together, smoke a peace pipe. Make a treaty until they asked stories about different incidents, about different times. And this fella that had hid in the water here, he didn't know when to quit [going on trips into enemy territory] ....One guy asked about this incident when Cutknife was killed. And well the Indians [Cree] said they lost one to the Sarcee, 'we lost one Sarcee, he got away.' This guy was telling him, 'that was me.' That's how we come to know that story. And he told the story about how he hid in the water and how he went home and how they come way up into the hills west of here.

The full story was reconstructed from information obtained from an enemy during a time of peace.

There are a number of different versions of the Battle of Cutknife Hill story, each

of which originated from people who participated in or observed the battle who then handed the story down through family lines. Edward Ahenakew recorded, edited and wrote Chief Thunderchild's version of this battle in Voices of the Plains Cree but the part about the one Sarcee escaping the battle is not included. This indicates that either Thunderchild's original source was not privy to the peace meeting between Wind Walker's people and the Sarcee party that occurred after the battle or that Ahenakew omitted that segment when he wrote it.[68] Ahenakew did admit in a letter to Wallace that he edited Thunderchild's Wesakejac stories: "I have left out much of the detail and have I am sure lost much of the beauty through desire for brevity."[69]

What the Edward Ahenakew version does share with the Jim Tootoosis version however, is a comical side-story about Red Wing or Red Feather who did not take part in the battle but pretended he did to acquire the hand of a beautiful widow. According to Ahenakew's version Red Wing was too old to fight, but when the beautiful widow promised to marry the first man who avenged her husband's death by bringing her a Sarcee scalp, he jumped into the battle, took a scalp and brought it to her. The Tootoosis version is much more detailed and animated: Red Feather was one of those men who had never been anywhere, not even on a buffalo chase, but he had his eyes on a beautiful widow. So when she said "'anybody comes with a fresh scalp, I'll live with him, I'll take him in,'" he waited for an opportunity. His chance came in the form of a brave Cree warrior who was always the first to jump into battle, and so Red Feather "he was right behind this guy all the time. Watching. Right behind him." When the Cree brave jumped into a pit for a knife fight with a Sarcee, Red Feather waited with his knife, right behind him, then at first chance he jumped behind the Sarcee and wisked away his scalp, "pulled his scalp out and 'to hell with the fight' he said, 'where's that widow, where's that

widow!' That's all he was thinking about. So he goes and gives the widow that scalp, a fresh scalp." The widow agreed to marry Red Feather but when he wanted to go home with her immediately she said no. "It was customary in cases like that, you had to wait four nights. It was the longest four nights that guy ever spent!"

The side-story of Red Wing or Red Feather may appear irrelevant to the story line until you find out at the end that the scalp he took belonged to Cutknife, the Sarcee warrior so renowned for his prowess as a great warrior that the hill and creek where the battle took place and he met his demise, as well as a local settler town, were named after him. The site is presently situated in the Poundmaker First Nation reserve and the Poundmaker Heritage Center is located close by. In the Thunderchild version we also learn that Cutknife's hair was four feet long and that the widow was grandmother to Moosomin the Cree leader that the Moosomin First Nation was named after. The more versions of the story one hears, the more information one gathers.

Personal reminiscences or life histories are much more complicated and require far more analyses than most historians who have used them acknowledge. Native American autobiography has recently attracted the attention of scholars from various interrelated disciplines so there exists a lively discourse on Indigenous written and oral autobiographical accounts to draw inter-tribal comparisons from. Taking the lead from David Brumble an autobiography is "a first person narrative that seriously purports to describe the narrator's life or episodes of that life."[70] In Cree oral tradition such stories are known as wiya ôtacimona, *his/her stories*, or âcimisowina, *stories about oneself.* However, recent studies agree that there is little in Indigenous life history accounts that conforms to western notions of autobiography.[71] Arnold Krupat claims that the "genre of writing referred to in the west as autobiography had no close parallel in the traditional

cultures" of Indigenous North Americans, that "the western notion of representing the whole of any one person's life...was in the most literal way, foreign."[72]

The first point of departure between Western and Indigenous autobiography is the concept of self.[73] According to Krupat the concept of self in Western literary traditions are "thoroughly committed to notions of interiority and individualism," being as they are "far more attracted to "introspection, integration, expansion or fulfillment"[74] By contrast, in Native American autobiographies the "narration of personal history is more nearly marked by the individual's sense of himself in relation to the collective social unit or group," what Krupat calls, the "synecdochic sense of self."[75] This preference for "synecdochic models of the self", he claims, "has relations to the oral techniques of information transmission typical of Native American cultures." As most Indigenous cultures are collectively-oriented rather than individualistically-oriented, individual stories reflect concern for community welfare, so what comes across is "the subordination of the individual to the collective needs of the community."[76] Combined with the public and interactive nature of personal story narratives—where others who may also have been eye-witnesses to the events bear witness to the telling—community focus is further emphasized. Thus, an event that brings honor, visions, accomplishments, defeat and the like is represented in a form that not only impacts and reflects on the narrator, but impacts the community as well. Gerald Vizenor challenges Krupat's synecdoche model for understanding the relationship between the individual and community. Krupat, he charges "seems to have overlooked the obvious, that natives are not as communal as he might want them to be in theory."[77]

> Consider the value of individual visions, the value of individual descriptive dreams and nicknames. In other words, the many ceremonies, shamanic visions, practices, and experiences in native communities are so

> highly individualistic, diverse, and unique, that romantic reductions of tradition and community as common sources of native identity are difficult to support, even in theory.[78]

The tribe, Vizenor explains, "could be the mere part" and "an individual vision could be more inclusive than entire communities."[79]

Cree personal histories, like other Indigenous autobiographical stories, include a range of themes not found in their western counterparts. In addition to genealogies, family histories of past-events, expositions on daily and community life, and stories of personal deeds, Indigenous life histories often include spiritual experiences, and/or mythological accounts which are used to help explain some life experience. Flora Beardy, a maskêgôwininew, *Swampy Cree,* from York Factory, Manitoba, and her coeditor Robert Coutts, claim that life histories among the Swampy Cree "put the meat on the bones of cultural experience":

> Embedded in the autobiographical themes of daily life and religion and mythological narrative are descriptions of community experiences which reflect reconstructions of the past that are both personal and dynamic.[80]

Beardy and Coutts found, like Julie Cruikshank, that the "emphasis on landscape, mythology, everyday events and the continuity between generations" form the core of Cree life histories.[81] Bataille and Sands add that some of the basic characteristics that autobiography shares with oral traditions is "emphasis on event, attention to the sacredness of language, concern with landscape, affirmation of cultural values and tribal solidarity."[82]

Julie Cruikshank's study of the life histories of three Yukon Aboriginal women Elders also demonstrates that personal stories of Native women differ in substance from the stories of Native men and from non-Native women.[83] Bataille and Sands claim that men and women's life histories reflect the division between gender roles in traditional

cultures. Men's stories emphasize stories of prominent male leaders and public events. While women's stories integrate historical, ceremonial and other significant social and public events, they concentrate on more private and intimate aspects—everyday and life cycle activities and events.[84]

Numerous studies of life histories demonstrate the pervasiveness of subjectivity. Personal investments in recounting stories about oneself, especially relative to public reputation, private self-image and identity, permeates autobiographical accounts.[85] Because recounted personal memories are often selective acts of imagination and are susceptible to change over time, historians need to reflect more seriously on the kind of data they hope to locate in life history accounts. If they are seeking 'facts' they might not find immediately what they want. However, if they are seeking alternate perspectives, insider reconstructions of the past, or insight into cultural workings and the individual, then life history studies will yield abundant information. Oral historians urge, however, that the subjectivity, bias, and omissions located in life histories are no worse or less than those found in written documents. According to Paul Thompson all "historical sources derived from human perception is subjective, but only the oral source allows us to challenge that subjectivity; to pick the layers of memory, dig back into its darknesses, hoping to reach the hidden truth."[86]

Taken a step further, how we imagine ourselves publicly is a gauge by which our personal behavior is collectively judged. In communal-oriented societies public reputation is a matter of considerable concern. However, among the Cree, the ability to recount and laugh at one's errors or bad luck is a trait much valued by traditionalists. Freda Ahenakew in Stories of the House People tells us that it

> takes a very self-reliant, mature person to tell about his own misfortunes,

> to mock his own failures. This sovereign attitude is highly regarded in Cree society, as of such a person one can say with admiration ê-nihâwâhpihisot 'he/she is good at joking about himself/herself.'[87]

Many âcimisowina take the form of wawiyatâcimowina, *funny little stories,* that derive from personal experiences. Freda Ahenakew explains that these are usually the domain of older people, those who "can look back on youthful foolishness or on some misfortune and tell about it to amuse and instruct a later generation." The storyteller can be coaxed with "*mahti êkwa, âcimoso*! 'Come on, tell about yourself'" but can "always get off the hook by responding "â, *nomôya êkoyikohk cêskwa nikêhtê-ayiwin,* 'Oh, I'm not old enough yet!'"[88]

Wawiyatâcimowina are intended to make people laugh, but not all derive from personal experience. At old-time wakes funny little stories are told to cheer people up, make them laugh so they won't be too overcome with grief. Often two or more story-tellers engage each other in contests to see whose stories elicit the best audience response. My late step-father's wake in Peepeekisis in the winter of 1977 displayed some of the best competitive story-telling I ever experienced. Two old men at opposite corners of the room stayed until just before dawn taking turns trying to outdo each other's stories. To the outsider the scene might seem strange—a room full of Indians seated against the walls of a tiny living room with an occupied coffin, a table of food, and two old men telling jokes back and forth. The occasional wails of women in mourning interspersed or drowned out by uncontrolled laughter. Funny little stories are licensed to embellish and the contest is determined by who can tell the most outlandish or unbelievable story.[89] The humor keeps mourners from sinking into the deep recesses of anguish and keeps the human energy high enough to make it through the burial rites at the end of two days and nights of little or no sleep. The Old People say that too much mourning can prevent the

spirit of the deceased from making his journey to the otherworld. It could also take the spirit of the mourner.

The family history bundle consists of a wide range of recent and distant-past stories. In Cree, family histories are called âmiskôtapan otâcimowiniwâwa, which is more accurately interpreted as, *peoples' stories about their relations in the past that have been passed down through the generations*. The most significant âcimisowina or most humorous wawiyatâcimowinisa become family histories when the original teller passes away and his/her children (or nieces and nephews) recount them.

Each generation carries the memories of relations who went before them. Some memories bring laughter and dreamy reflection. Some teach. Others are a burden. Though I was never an inmate of a residential school myself, my mother's and aunts' bleak memories of their experiences at residential schools have burned like-scars in my own mind's eye. The brutal beating my aunt endured at the whip of a supervisor, and the image of her blood splayed across her little sister's dress as she stood screaming, forced to witness her sister's penitence, will never fade. "Some of my mother's memories have become my own," N. Scott Momaday writes, and this "is the real burden of the blood; this immortality. I remember: My mother was very young, four or five years old...."[90]

Family histories also consist of accounts of significant distant-past events. Many of us grew up hearing families histories about the Treaties passed down by ancestors who were eye-witnesses. These stories combined paint a relatively complete picture and provide multiple perspectives. However, there were also specialists designated by the collective leadership at that time of the Treaties to protect and maintain detailed remembrances. Because it was such a significant event, the Old Men who were charged with the task of keeping and transmitting it were bound by the pipe.

The events of Treaty No. 6 at Forts Carlton and Pitt, for example, including what was spoken back and forth and what was agreed upon, became protected by ceremony. For a complete telling of that event the seeker is required to adhere to strict protocols and actively participate. The Treaty Story-keepers have apprentices who learn all the sacred songs and ceremony attached to that knowledge before they can take over the task of keeping, and before they were allowed to tell the story, and that process takes years. Thus, while many people witnessed the signing of Treaty No. 6, very few possessed the entire story in all its detail—very few have the complete oral history of that event.

Temporality

Cree oral traditions do not adhere to Western notions of progress or linear time systems but neither are they cyclical—the past is gone and cannot be relived in mundane terms. However, the atâyokewina tell us that differentiated worlds have come and gone in the past which leaves little doubt that they will come and go in the future. Furthermore, because the primary function of histories is to guide the present and remind us that all decisions and actions made today will impact future generations, there is a continuous link between past, present and future. Thus, time spirals in an unbroken chain linking all phases of the four worlds, as well past, present, and future.

Like many other Indigenous languages, there is no corresponding word for 'time' in Cree.[91] Rather, the idea of time and its referents are expressed in specific contexts: *Long ago*, kayas, or, *a long long time ago*, mitone kayas, or kayas kayas mitone kayas, so far back it doesn't matter how long ago. The atâyokewina, the sacred stories from mystical times, do not need to be temporalized because everybody just knows that these events occurred before the world came to be as it is now.

Cree histories educate and entertain. However, because cause and effect analyses are the responsibility of the listeners not the storytellers, temporal frameworks for cause/effect analyses are not built in. Cree histories focus on the actors and the deeds—the specific time referents are not vital components.

As with most primarily oral societies, nêhiyawak have a different concept of time and assign a different degree of significance to the temporal aspects of events. In most âcimowina the passage of time occurs in the turning of seasons which is a far more complicated measure than the Julian calendar because Cree seasons are precise. The four main seasons are further delineated according to localized climatic and ecological phenomena like the sprouting of certain plants, the beginning or end of certain mammal hibernation periods, ice formation and break-ups, bird hatchings and migrations, and these events transcend calendars. An understanding of time in the Cree world requires an intimate knowledge of the local land and environment. Alex Wolfe (Saulteaux) in Earth Elder Stories explains how his Grandfather, Earth Man, articulated time in his histories:

> In recounting an event, Grandfather usually began with the season in which it occurred--like the berry season, hatching time of the fowl, or the first flight of the young birds. For an event that took place in the winter season he usually said 'the mid-winter time' or 'when the fog came in late winter', or 'at the time when the bear cubs are born.'[92]

A range of familiar events are also employed as time referents. Outstanding or unique human events like a war, the death of a renowned leader or a disease epidemic, natural disasters, astronomical sightings, as well as human life cycles and memorable personal experiences, also serve as time indicators.[93] Temporal referents take the form of asides, or mini-stories, that are built into the larger narrative. Alex Wolfe explains that sometimes a significant event that was used to mark time was a story in its own right and thus is incorporated into the telling:

> Battles and fights between groups and individuals were also used. Usually a leader was mentioned, and where and why he fought. The details—if he won or lost—were not important, the main thing being that this event happened. This was Grandfather's way of measuring time within a story he was telling.... He sometimes began a story by saying, 'It was the time when Whitehead was killed within the camp and his head was cut off.' The important thing here was the time when Whitehead was killed, not where he was killed or why his head was cut off. People would know that story because Whitehead is well known and that made the event very significant.[94]

If historians are adamant about locating temporal exactitude in oral histories, they can find it, but only if they immerse themselves in the local oral traditions rather than selectively picking out stories to serve their immediate purposes. Careful listening over time will demonstrate that the âcimowina and atâyokewina are related, they overlap and intersect. Combined they are all really one big story, one just has to be patient and locate known temporal indicators. Cree historians, for example, tell us "kayas oma the summer of the hungry pup" referring to the starving time before Treaties, or "aspik anima the sickness with scabs," the last major smallpox epidemic in southern Saskatchewan. Citing Sylvie Vincent's work, Toby Morantz tells us that clues can be isolated to assign time periods. Among the James Bay Cree the time referents distinguish the pre-contact from the post-contact eras: "these are time periods when there were only Indians (i.e. no white men), only game (no flour), only hides (no cloth) and so forth." She adds further that the "indicators are names of people and specific happenings which can be dated precisely by recourse to the written record."[95]

Documentary sources are not the only means of cross-checking for temporal specificity. Seneca oral history dates the ratification council of the Iroquois League (Confederacy) to an afternoon eclipse that darkened the sky over Gonandaga (Victor, NY) which astronomers claim occurred in 1142 AD.[96] In documenting their land claims

for the Black Hills, the Lakota date their occupation of that area as far back as 1000-100 BC through oral history, sacred stories, astronomical calculations in a new technique called archaeoastronomy.[97] The Gitskan of Northeast British Columbia date their occupation of traditional lands back thousands of years to the time when the giant Bear came crashing down the mountainside on the village of Dimlahamid.[98] Scientific studies by archaeologists, geologists, and paleontologists determined that a massive slide took half the mountainside down over 3,500 years ago.[99]

Alex Wolfe tells us that Earth Man never went into detail in telling stories that he and his people were not eye-witness to. Rather, his "sole purpose in referring to the event was to establish a time when some other event occurred and begin the story that flowed from it."[100]

Present-day time reckoning among most Cree Elders observe both the Indigenous and the foreign derived systems. The advent of writing and Christian conversion required the internalization of Western temporal systems. This transformation is increasingly evident in oral histories in the form of asides intended to affix historical dates as closely as possible. Jim Tootoosis's rendition of the Battle of Cutknife Hill exemplifies this tendency:

> And when I said this incident happened here about 1840, how we come to know is there was an old man that used to come here from Mistawasis and his mother used to tell him when he was just a baby, he was a baby in the moss bag when this happened here. And according to the time, when he died, we backtracked and found this happened in 1840.

The incorporation of Western notions of time into the Cree thoughtworld is best exemplified in the language. The concept of a year, made up of one earth's rotation, was internalized in kind. Thus, a year is designated as askî, *the earth*. All the Cree sources I consulted agreed that the twelve month calendar presently used in Cree is a recent

innovation. Some say we had the equivalent of thirteen lunar months, each of which began at the first appearance of the new moon.[101] According to Joseph Dion, when the Julian calendar was introduced one of the moons had to be discarded. The one to go among the Plains Cree was the tenth moon, situated between present-day September and October, previously known as "the one that tried but never quite succeeded in freezing everything solid."[102] A month is designated as pîsim which derives respectively from kîsikâw pîsim, *the sun* and tipiskâw pîsim, *the moon*. When pisim the moon/sun was adopted to represent the Julian month, it was transformed from an animate to an inanimate noun.

When the time of day was a significant factor in traditional Cree histories it was referenced by the movement of the sun. The day, kisikaw, was divided into four main parts: pâhtapun, *dawn*; apihtakisikaw, *half-day* or *noon*; ip'skanow, *sunset*, tipiskâw, *the night*. The introduction of the clock and hourly units required the development of an even more complicated lexicon. A clock became pîsimokân which also signifies a mushroom and because both are alive, they are animate. An hour became tipahikan, a measurement of indeterminate quality that can also signify distance. Time movement is conceptualized as *flying around*, ispayin, from the root word ispayâw, *he flies to or flies high*. This action is like that of a spirit because it is invisible and as such conceptually differs from pimihâ which signifies *flight* as in floating about with the wind. A translation of 'it is four o'clock' is nêwo tipahikan ispayin which more accurately translates, *four hour it flies*, or nêwo tipahikan espayew, *four hour it flies to*. 'It is one-thirty' translates as pêyak tipahikan mîna âpitaw ispayew, *one hour and a half it flies to*.

The concept of a week as a unit of seven days, was introduced by missionaries to differentiate Sunday as a day of rest and prayer. The verb ispayâw, *flies to or flies high*,

was transformed into the noun ispayik to designate a week. In some communities where Christianity has a stronger hold, the week is designated by the word for Sunday, ayamihêwikîsikâw, *day of prayer*.[103] The rest of the week days are designated numerically, as in pêyak-kîsikaw, *one-day*, nîso-kîsikaw, *two-day*, nisto-kîsikaw, *three-day*. However, in some communities the days of the week are more descriptive: Monday is variously signified as atoskâkîsikaw, *work day*, poneayamihêwikîsikâw, *after prayer day*, or macipayik, *beginning of the week*.

The introduction of Western time, especially clockwork, has by extension severely impacted traditional activities. Numerous studies on the destructive impact of residential schools on family cohesion demonstrate that part of the breakdown resulted from the interruption of family economic systems which were based on seasonal rounds and ceremonial life. Certain ceremonies, for example, need to occur at very specific times like when the buds of a certain tree sprout. Often we are lucky to get 24 hour advance notice to attend an all-day ceremony which means we have very little time to make arrangements for our absence at work, pack up the truck and drive anywhere from two to twelve hours out of town.[104] Sometimes our employers are understanding of the need to participate in berry-picking, moose-hunting, trapping, and ceremonies. But the stereotype that Indigenous peoples have no respect for time or time-based responsibilities pervades and in many instances, has been internalized. The notion of 'Indian time' which once referred to our environmental/spiritual clocks, has been bastardized to signify and excuse flagrant tardiness. The stereotype dies hard.

It is not difficult then to understand why some conventional historians have difficulty conceptualizing and appreciating Indigenous notions of time in oral histories. To those accustomed to serial time our time appears disordered, unpredictable and

unreliable. But to us it is precise. Seasonal and other natural occurrences do not adhere to serial time—they cannot be ordered or controlled. An understanding of Indigenous temporal systems requires intimate knowledge of the local environment and peoples' relationship to it, and an intimate knowledge of the peoples' stories with their own unique temporal/space referents. Traditional 'Indian time', like oral traditions, does not fit neatly into modern conventions.

Endnotes

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[1] Elder Jacob Bill, Pelican Lake First Nation. Testimony cited in, Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan, Statement of Treaty Issues: Treaties as a Bridge to the Future (Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 1998), p. 12.

[2] Stan Cuthand, interviewed by Maureen Mathews, January 1996, original tape in possession of Stan Cuthand (audio).

[3] Freda Ahenakew, wâskahikaniwiyiniw-âcimowina: Stories of the House People (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1987), p. xvii.

[4] Alex Bonais, Plains Cree. Little Pine First Nation, interviewed by Wilfred Tootoosis, Poundmaker First Nation, SK., c. 1974, original in possession of Tyrone Tootoosis (audio).

[5] Peter Nabokov, "Present Memories, Past History," in Calvin Martin, ed., The American Indian and the Problem of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 145.

[6] Tyrone Tootoosis, "Our Legacy: Ka ke pesi nakatamakiawiyak" Eagle Feather News 1, 10 (1999), p. 21.

[7] ibid..

[8] Jim Kâ-nîpitêhtêw cited in Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart, eds., ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmowina: The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998), pp. 101, 65.

[9] Alex Bonais interview, c. 1974.

[10] Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969) and The Rebirth of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977).

[11] Harold Cardinal, personal communication, October 1996.

[12] James Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw [Cannepotato] Testimony, OTC Mock Trial: A Special Presentation to the Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan, (Regina: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 15 September 1992), video. Tyrone Tootoosis translator (hereinafter, OTC Mock Trial).

[13] Maria Campbell, Stories of the Road Allowance People (Penticton: Theytus Books Ltd., 1995), p. 2.

[14] Solomon Ratt Testimony, OTC Mock Trial (14 September 1992). Video.

[15] Catherine Isabel Littlejohn, "The Indian Oral Tradition: A Model for Teachers," (M.Ed. Thesis: University of Saskatchewan College of Education, 1975).

[16] Littlejohn, "The Indian Oral Tradition," p. 46.

[17] ibid., p. 56.

[18] ibid., p. 58.

[19] Maria Campbell, personal communication, August 1999.

[20] Kohkom Nora Thomas, interviewed by Bernelda Wheeler, February 1974, original and transcripts in possession of the author (audio).

[21] Kohkom's rendition of "The Corn Husker," is almost a precise rendition of the original:

The Corn Husker
Heard by the Indian lodges, where the bush
Break in a clearing, through ill-fashioned fields.
She comes to labour, when the first still hush
Of autumn follows large and recent yields.

Agues in her fingers, hunger in her face,
Her shoulders stooped with weight of work and years,
But rich in tawny colouring of her race,
She comes a-field to strip the purple ears.

And all her thoughts are with the days gone by,
Ere might's injustice banished from their lands
Her people, that to-day unheeded lie,
Like the dead husks that rustle through her hands

E. Pauline Johnson, Flint and Feather, The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (Don Mills, ON: Paperjacks, 1972 reprint), p. 93.

[22] Glyndwr Williams, ed. Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay 1767-1791 (London: The Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1969), p. 144.

[23] Edward Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1995 reprint), p. 10.

[24] Keith N. Goulet, "Oral History as an Authentic and Credible Research Base for Curriculum: The Cree of Sandy Bay and Hydroelectric Power Development, 1927-67, an example," (University of Regina, Master's Thesis, 1986).

[25] "No. 21, James Smith Band Submission, 7 March 1947," in Canada, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Continue and Complete the Examination and Consideration of the Indian Act: Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1947), p. 1123.

[26] Office of the Treaty Commissioner for Saskatchewan, Statement of Treaty Issues: Treaties as a Bridge to the Future (Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, October 1998), p. 12.

[27] ibid..

[28] Marc Bloch cited in Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 39.

[29] Neal McLeod, "Rethinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of Mistahi Maskwa (Big Bear)," (forthcoming) Canadian Journal of Native Studies, p. 6.

[30] N. Scott Momaday, The Names: A Memoir (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976).

[31] Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, including the negotiations on which they were based (Toronto: Belfords, Clarke & Co, 1880. Reprint. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991), p. 81.

[32] The author has published on various aspects of the life and times of Askînôtow: "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askeenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884," pp. 304-329 in Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996); "'Our Man in the Field': The Status and Role of a CMS Native Catechist in Rupert's Land," Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society 33, 1 (1991): 65-78; "The Red River Indian Mission School and John West's 'Little Charges,' 1820-1833," Native Studies Review 4, 1 & 2 (1988): 129-165; "The Church Missionary Society Red River Mission and the Emergence of a Native Ministry, 1820-1869, With a Case Study of Charles Pratt of Touchwood Hills," (MA thesis: University of British Columbia, 1988).

[33] Môsom Colin and Uncle Hector seldom told their war stories but when they did we always heard about how neither of them were eligible to serve in WWII, the former being seven years too old, the younger being three years short of enlistment age. Both lied about their ages to enlist. My favorite story is about, how after three years of separation

they met and embraced on the eve of the allied crossing of the Rhein River, following the Battle of Reichswald Forest. Very little has been published on the war experiences of Saskatchewan First Nations. The only one that gives biographical sketches is Gordon Ahenakew, ed., We Were There: Saskatchewan Indian Veterans (Saskatoon, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, n.d.).

[34] For analyses of the role and symbolism of the Treaty pipe ceremony see, Gordon Lee, "The Importance of the Sacred Pipe Ceremony, pp. 111-112 in Richard Price ed., The Spirit of the Alberta Treaties (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1987 edition), and Wilton Goodstriker, "Introduction: *Otsistsi Pakssaisstoyiih Pi (the year when the winter was open and cold)*" in Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 13-15.

[35] Pauline Pelly "Testimony," OTC Mock Trial.

[36] ibid..

[37] Christian missionaries understood pâstâhowin (pasta'hoowin) as "Vengeance, retribution, an evil spell (Indian idea is the consequent vengeance of offending the Diety)." Faries and Watkins, A Dictionary of the Cree Language, p. 408.

[38] Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt. "My Dream—That We Will Be One Day Clearly Recognized as First Nations," (unpublished report prepared for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan, March 1998), p. 9.

[39] Morris, The Treaties, p. 183. The following account by A. G. Jackes, Secretary to the Commission, provides a more detailed description:

> In about half an hour they [Indians] were ready to advance and meet the Governor; this they did in a large semi-circle; in their front were about twenty braves on horseback, galloping about in circles, shouting, singing and going through various picturesque performances. The semi-circle steadily advanced until within fifty yards of the Governor's tent, when a halt was made and further peculiar ceremonies commenced, the most remarkable of which was the 'dance of the stem.' This was commenced by the Chiefs, medicine men, councillors, singers and drummers, coming a little to the front and seating themselves on blankets and robes spread for them. The bearer of the stem, Wah-wee-kah-nich-kah-oh-tah-mah-hote (the man you strike on the back), carrying in his had a large and gorgeously adorned pipe stem, walked slowly along the semi-circle, and advancing to the front, raised the stem to the heavens, then slowly turned to the north, south, east and west, presenting the stem at each point; returning to the seated group he handed the stem to one of the young men, who commenced a low chant, at the same time performing a ceremonial dance accompanied by the drums

and singing of the men and women in the background.

This was all repeated by another of the young men, after which the horsemen again commenced galloping in circles, the whole body advancing. As they approached his tent, the Governor, accompanied by the Hon. W. J. Christie and Hon. Jas. McKay, Commissioners, went forward to meet them and to receive the stem carried by its bearer. It was presented first to the Governor, who in accordance with their customs, stroked it several times, then passed it to the Commissioners, who repeated the ceremony.

The significance of the is ceremony is that the Governor and Commissioners accepted the friendship of the tribe. Morris, The Treaties, p. 198.

[40] Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, "Testimony," OTC Mock Trial.

[41] Sissela Bok, Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), p. 31.

[42] Ahenakew, Voices, p. 10.

[43] ibid..

[44] Cuthand, "Introduction to the 1995 Edition," ibid., p. xii.

[45] ibid., xix.

[46] ibid., xiv.

[47] R. Faries and E. A. Watkins, A Dictionary of the Cree Language (1938. Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1986 reprint).

[48] ibid., p. 111.

[49] The following account by Smith Atimoyoo was translated by Maria Campbell.

[50] Saskatchewan Archives Board, SHS file no. 30, Dan Kennedy, "Address of Dan Kennedy to Normal Students," 12 April 1939 cited in Penny Petrone, ed., First People: First Voices, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984 reprint), p. 157.

[51] ibid., pp. 157-58.

[52] Dulcie Meatheringham, "Wisakacahk," Eagle Feather News 1, 10 (1999), p. 16.

[53] Bok, Lying, p. 15.

[54] Cited in ibid., p. 33.

[49] Cree orthography is not standardized. 'âtayôhkewin' according to Freda Ahenakew's orthography is represented as 'atiukan' by Morantz and 'âcoyôkîwin' by Brightman. However, Ahenakew and Brightman agree on the spelling of 'âcimowin.'

[56] Leonard Bloomfield, Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree (Saskatoon: Fifth House reprint, 1993), p. 1; Richard J. Preston, Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meanings of Events, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnological Service Paper No. 30 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1975), pp. 288-293; Toby Morantz, "Oral and Recorded History in James Bay," in William Cowan, ed., Papers of the 15th Algonquian Conference (Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1984), p. 174.

[57] ibid..

[58] Robert Brightman, Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 37.

[59] ibid., p. 38.

[60] ibid..

[61] David B. Guralnik, ed., Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language 2nd College Edition, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980 edition), p. 604.

[62] Jace Weaver, That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xiii.

[63] Gerald Vizenor, The Peoples Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 27.

[64] Harvey Knight, "Preface," in Alexander Wolfe, Earth Elder Stories: The Pinayzitt Path (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988), p. ix.

[65] Angela Cavender-Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word: Native Oral Traditions in American Indian History," in Donald Fixico, ed., Rethinking American Indian History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 108.

[66] Among the Cree parallel cousins are often referred to as siblings. There is no error in Jim Tootoosis's reference to Wind Walker as his great grandfather's brother, and later as Skunk-Skin's brother.

[67] Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart, eds., kôhkominawak otâcomowiniwâwa: Our

Grandmothers' Lives as Told in Their Own Words (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishing, 1992), p. 386.

[68] Ahenakew, Voices, p. 30.

[69] cited in Cuthand, "Introduction," p. xiv.

[70] H. David Brumble III, American Indian Autobiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 17.

[71] Julie Cruikshank, with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, Life Lived Like A Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), pp. 2, 3; Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts, eds., Voices From Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. xiv.

[72] Arnold Krupat, ed., Native American Autobiography: An Anthology (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), p. 3.

[73] Brumble, Autobiography, p. 18.

[74] Arnold Krupat, "Native American Autobiography and the Synecdoche Self," in Paul John Eakin, ed., American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 172, 174.

[75] ibid., p. 176.

[76] Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 4.

[77] Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, Postindian Conversations (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 62.

[78] ibid..

[79] Gerald Vizenor, Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance (Hanover" The Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p. 177.

[80] Beardy and Coutts, Voices from Hudson Bay, p. xiv.

[81] Cruikshank, Life Lived Like a Story, p. 2 cited in Beardy and Couttes, Voices from James Bay, p. xiv.

[82] Bataille and Sands, Telling Their Lives, p. 3.

[83] Cruikshank, Life Lived Like a Story, p. 3.

[84] Bataille and Sands, Telling Their Lives, pp. 6, 7.

[85] See for example, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, "Critical Developments: Introduction" in The Oral History Reader (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 3; Naomi Rosh White, "Marking Absences: Holocaust Testimony and History," in ibid., pp. 179-80; Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia," in ibid., p. 301.

[86] Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 reprint), p. 150.

[87] Ahenakew, House People, p. xiii.

[88] ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

[89] ibid., p. xii.

[90] Momaday, The Names, p. 22.

[91] G. J. Whitrow, Time in History: The Evolution of Our General Awareness of Time and Temporal Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 reprint), pp. 8-9. See also, Calvin Martin, In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

[92] Wolfe, Earth Elder, p. xix.

[93] Human and environmental time referents are often employed in primarily oral cultures. For example, Joseph K. Adjaye, "Time, the Calendar, and History Among the Akan of Ghana," Journal of Ethnic Studies, 15, 3 (1987), p. 73; Whitrow, Time and History, p. 14.

[94] Wolfe, Earth Elder, p. xix.

[95] Morantz, "Oral and Recorded History," p. 175.

[96] This date was calculated by Dr. Barbara Mann and astronomer Jerry Fields. Bruce D. Johansen, "Dating the Iroquois Confederacy," Akwesasne Notes New Series 1, 3 & 4 (1995), pp. 62, 63.

[97] Victor Douville (Lakota Studies at Sinte Gleska College), "Lakota Cosmology." Teaching and Writing Local and Reservation History Seminar, Newberry Library and Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana, 17 June 1994.

[98] Terry Glavin, A Death Feast in Dimlahamid (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990).

[99] The Seely Lake landslide. Peter R. Grant, "The Delgamuukw Decision and Oral Histories," paper presented at the Prairie Treaty Gathering, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 5 August 1998.

[100] Wolfe, Earth Elder, p. xx.

[101] Joseph F. Dion, My Tribe the Crees, edited by Hugh Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow , 1993 edition), p. 168; David G. Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical and Comparative Study (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979), p. 358. One version of the more contemporary twelve month calendar can be found in Jean L. Bellegarde and Solomon Ratt, Workbook: Cree Language of the Plains (Regina: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College,1992), p. 323.

Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree, p. 359	Dion, My Tribe, pp. 168-69	Bellegarde and Ratt, Workbook, p. 232
Kitci pisim Great Moon, or apitapipun pisim, mid- winter moon	**Great, greatest, longest, or oldest moon** The first moon is also said to be kind and sympathetic	**Kisêpîsim**, January The Great Moon
Mikiciw pisim Eagle Moon	**Moon of the Eagle or bird of prey** Is inclined to be cruel and would like to change places with its predecessor.	**Mikisiwipîsim**, February The Eagle Moon
Miskih pisim Goose Moon	**Moon of the wild goose** In olden times this bird always made its appearance before its moon had passed	**Niskipîsim**, March The Goose Moon
Ayiki pisim Frog Moon	**Moon of the Frogs** The dividing moon between winter and summer when the frog emerges from hibernation and sings to herald the advent of spring	**Ayîkipîsim**, April The Frog Moon
Sakipakaw pisim Leaves Appear Moon	**Moon of the Eggs** Birds make their nests and lay eggs	**Sâkipakâwipîsim**, May The Budding Moon
Pinawew pisim Eggs Laying Moon, or paskawehow picim, eggs hatching moon	**Moon of the Bursting Egg Shells** When birds hatch their chicks	**Paskâwihowipîsim**, June The Hatching Moon
Paskowi pisim Feather Moulting Moon	**Moulting Moon** When birds shed their feathers	**Paskowipîsim**, July The Molting Moon
Ohpahowi pisim Start to Fly Moon	**Flying Moon** Ducks and other birds fly again with new feathers	**Ohpahôwipîsim** August The Flying Up Moon
Notcihito pisim Breeding Moon	**Mating Moon** Rutting season of the moose	**Nôcihitowipîsim**, September The Mating Moon, or **Takwâkipîsim**, The Autumn Moon
Pinacko pisim Leaves changing color moon	**Moon That Tries to Freeze** The other dividing moon between summer and winter	

Falling Leaves Moon	**Moon of the Heavy Frost When lakes and rivers freeze solid**	**Pimihâwipîsim**, October The Migrating Moon
Okaskatano pisim Frozen Over Moon	**Moon of the Hoar Frost When white frost covers the trees**	**Ihkopiwipîsim**, November The First Moon
Piwahteakinaci pisim Scattering Moon (twigs fall from the trees and are scattered over the sand).*	**Moon that Sweeps the Hoar Frost off the Trees**	**Pawâcakinasîpîsim**, December The Frost Exploding Moon

[102] Dion, My Tribe, pp. 69-70.

[103] Ahenakew, House People, p. 236.

[104] As far as I am aware the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College is the only university in Canada that has a provision in the faculty Collective Agreement for traditional ceremonial leave.

Chapter VI

Narrative Wisps of the Ochekwi Sipi Past: A Journey in Recovering Collective Memories[1]

Scholars working in the field of contemporary Native American Studies are increasingly practicing their craft in consultation and collaboration with First Nation communities. In many instances, however, reconstructing local histories of First Nation communities is an arduous task because much traditional knowledge and practices have been lost over time. Cultural transformation resulting from colonial intrusions have left large gaps in collective and individual memories which pose manifold methodological problems. These problems become especially complex with a community directs its historian to write their history in their own words and voices. The objective of this paper is to discuss some of the methodological problems historians encounter in situations like this, and to explore some the options available to meet this challenge, in accordance with scholarly and tribal integrity.

The Ochekwi Sipi, *Fisher River*, Cree First Nation is located 2 ½ hours north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The reserve straddles the Fisher River some five miles inland from Lake Winnipeg. The community looks like many other large reserves—dirt roads, new Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission (CMHC) houses interspersed with old Indian Affairs houses, big trucks, dead cars, and scruffy dogs. On either side of the bridge connecting the north and south shores of the river is the child & family services center, the school, recreation centre, Band administration office, health clinic, and new housing subdivision. Collectively these make up an impressive community center. A little further down river are the Treaty grounds, the site of the old Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)

post, and the old Methodist, now United Church. The panorama from the bridge yields the barren river bank, home to new and retired fishing boats, bulrushes, flood plains, mud flats, and traces of the old river lots where the founding families made their first homes.

Before Treaty No. 5 in 1875 and the reserve survey in 1878, the region was a hunting, fishing and trapping commons, a migration corridor shared by Muskego-wininiwak, *Swampy Cree peoples*, from the north and Saulteaux (Anishnabe) people from the south, all related through marriage or through social and economic ties with the HBC. Most of the Cree people who settled the region came from Norway House located on the northernmost tip of Lake Winnipeg. A handful of Saulteaux and Saulteaux-Cree people came from Netley Creek or St. Peter's on the Red River to the south, and from the islands and eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg.

Prior to the Treaty, Norway House was a major hub in the north. As the HBC inland administrative center in the early 1800s it attracted Aboriginal wage labourers (full-time and seasonal) in the HBC Home Guard Cree tradition. The Methodist mission, established in 1840 and named Rossville, encouraged further Aboriginal settlement so that by 1875 there were over 800 Aboriginal souls at Norway House—the Christian Crees lived around the Rossville mission, the Pagans lived along the shores of the river and Playgreen Lake. In the summer months the population almost doubled as inland fur brigades and supply boats from the Bay exchanged their freight and turned around before winter froze the waterways again.

Up to the early 1870s the HBC employed an average of 200 Aboriginal men as full time or seasonal wage labourers. However, as the trade declined and steam boats replaced flotillas, the HBC dramatically reduced its labour force. Between 130 and 140 of the 200 Aboriginal men employed by the HBC lost their jobs on the boat brigades and

another 60 to 70 lost seasonal wage labour jobs.[2] Facing starvation and the need to find an alternative livelihood, the Christian Crees of Rossville petitioned the federal government for a Treaty to secure land in the south for farming.[3] In the fall of 1877 a large flotilla of Muskego-wininiwak from Norway House arrived on the banks of the Fisher River, and their descendants have made this place their home ever since.

I came to Fisher River initially through kinship ties, then by discovery and work, and was drawn into the community's history as a member, a student, and a land claims researcher. Over the past 10 years the land claims research branched out well beyond its original mandate to the point where it now includes: close to one hundred hours of taped interviews with thirty-eight Old People; an Elders' genealogy project; a founding families genealogical project; a historical photograph collection consisting of over 450 turn of the century photographs of reserve life; a large historical documents and secondary source collection; the creation of the Ochekwi Sipi Cultural Heritage Committee; and a beautiful log house for the Cultural Resource Centre. In the meantime, the specific claims case which was once my sole task has been stuck in the hands of the federal Indian Affairs and Justice Departments for over three years now. Still in progress are curriculum development materials for the Sinclair School (K-12), a CD Rom oral history project, and a book manuscript tentatively titled *A Narrative History of the Ochekwi Sipi Peoples.*

Of all these projects, the writing—the textual representation of the Ochekwi Sipi peoples' past—has proven to be the most challenging. The collective direction I received from the Old People was to write their history in their own voices, to tell it as it should be told. Although schooled in social science rather than literary methodologies I was confident and comfortable enough working with oral traditions that the task did not seem insurmountable. But the writing just wasn't happening. When asked by a few Old People

"what's taking so long?" I whimsically replied, "writer's block." However, retrospection reveals that the problem is much deeper—more complex—than that. The problem is an amalgam of intersecting and paradoxical methodological contests. Simply stated, it boils down to the problem of how to write the story in the voices of the Old People, as they instructed me to, when the oral history has so many gaps that the bulk of our material comes from conventional Eurocentric primary sources.

The documentary records are plentiful. The Methodist church was thorough, records of birth, death and marriage records as well as annual reports on the state of the church and community go back to 1840 in Rossville.[4] Through the HBC materials I could trace family migrations southward, in some cases back 10 generations, and the RG10 Indian Affairs (Black Series) and Canadian *Sessional Papers* provided invaluable socio-economic data for the post-treaty era. But over the last nine years, during which our research team interviewed thirty-eight of the oldest and most respected members living in the community, personal reminiscences and family histories rather than stories about major community events dominated their tellings.[5] We heard and recorded wonderful stories about their own and their parents' life experiences. We also heard stories about Wesakejac, the Little People and other Lake Winnipeg mysteries, as well as descriptive accounts of traditional healing practices.

However, all but a few of the Old People were reluctant to talk about what they heard of events that occurred during their grandparents' time or earlier.[6] All could trace their ancestors back to 1875 and even earlier. They all knew that their ancestors converted to Methodism back at Norway House and some knew who the baptizing ministers were. Everyone also knew when the Treaty was negotiated and that they settled at Fisher River as result of the Treaty. But no one interviewed gave us detailed stories

about the conversion process or what transpired at Treaty No. 5,[7] nor were there any detailed stories about the 1877 migration from Norway House to Fisher River—a momentous event in which a fair sized flotilla consisting of three York boats (containing the women, children, dogs, and baggage), ten fishing skiffs, and twelve canoes brought 160 people, or about forty families, across Lake Winnipeg through late-autumn rain storms and unseasonable cold, on a journey that took close to 2 ½ months.[8]

In the collective memory of the community these were significant events but the details were missing. For the research team, this collective memory gap among our Old People was confusing. As far as we naively assumed, Old People were supposed to know everything—were they purposely withholding this information, did they really not know, or was the event less important to them than to us? How could the details of such significant events just evaporate? To a handful of Old People I finally asked directly, "why don't we know this history any more?" Some admitted that they did not really listen when their grandparents told them the stories. Others replied, "we didn't think that stuff was important to know" or "that was too long ago to remember." Finally, two of the Old People, on separate occasions reprimanded me: "well, that's your job now isn't it? Go on out there and find out!"

None of this discussion is intended in any way to provide fodder for those historians who forcefully or secretly argue that oral history is unreliable. Numerous studies demonstrate that where Indigenous oral histories exists, they are strong; that in their own right they can stand on their own as legitimate methods, sources, and forms.[9] I am describing a different kind of situation here.

So how does a community lose pieces of its collective memory? How do the details of significant historical events, events that shaped the current realities and

dynamics of a community, disappear from the collection of past stories held by our Old People?

Bernard Lewis tells us that the history of events, movements, persons or ideas that were forgotten at a certain stage may in fact have been rejected by the communal memory for some reason.[10] A closer look at the historical experiences of the Home Guard Cree of Norway House helps shed some light.

By the 1840s the Home Guard Cree of the Norway House region had endured and adapted to a century of colonial intrusion and culture change. The shift from a single sector to a dual sector economy found them entrenched in a global market system that had little appreciation or respect for their unique ways of life. Methodist missionaries arrived in 1840 which attracted further settlement and placed further stress on available resources, and soon thereafter the fur trade began its decline. These series of events eventually left the Home Guard Cree vulnerable with few options. By 1875 starvation reduced many of these once self-sufficient people to welfare dependency on the HBC and mission.[11]

The missionaries' arrival was timely. While they offered a new way to make a living, it came at a costly and distressing price. The history of Indian missions is a well-known story. Christian missionaries were/are colonial agents *par excellence,* demanding nothing less than total cultural transformation and forcefully condemning Aboriginal customs and religions as heathen and inhuman. Albert Memmi explains that the colonizer is preoccupied with imposing urgent change and drives it home with a vengeance:

> [T]he mechanism of this remolding of the colonized is revealing in itself. It consists, in the first place, of a series of negations. The colonized is not this, is not that. He is never considered in a positive light; or if he is, the quality which is conceded is the result of a psychological or ethical failing.[12]

Those who convert eventually internalize this indictment—they come to view their own culture and history as strange and become more receptive to even more colonial pressure. Peter Nabokov and others tell us that for memory "to endure, someone somewhere must continue to bear witness, must intuitively resist the demands of archive and media in favor of the interactive, oral narrative." Oral history "is called into being during and for inter-personal situations."[13] Add enforced residential school internment to their colonized past, and alienation from community, family, the past and self pervades.[14] Writing about alienation, Franz Fanon explains that:

> The historical conditions which confront men always structure their actions: [that] 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.'[15]

In time the "oppressed learn to perceive the cause of their oppression in their own inferiority, their power of resistance weakens."[16] Then, as Albert Memmi explains:

> As soon as the colonized adopts [the values of the colonizer], he similarly adopts his own condemnation. In order to free himself, at least so he believes, he agrees to destroy himself.[17]

As his own institutions die he scarcely believes any more in the remnants that do remain because he is faced with "daily confirmation of their ineffectiveness".[18] In time he "draws less and less from his past" and when asked,

> who are his folk heroes? His great popular leaders? His sages? At most, he may be able to give us a few names, in complete disorder, and fewer and fewer as one goes down the generations. The colonized seems condemned to lose his memory.[19]

Franz Fanon summarizes the experience in a well-known dictum:

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.[20]

The situations presented by Fanon and Memmi represent the extreme colonial experience. No one can deny that the experience of colonization is traumatic—displacement, depopulation, alienation, powerlessness, demoralization, internalized hatred —the forces of colonialism not only rape the land, they violently assault the body, spirit, and mind of the colonized.

While the degrees and impacts of colonial encounters vary across time and space, there is no denying that the overall effects are long-lasting. A recent study by Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes the impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples as "historical trauma or intergenerational trauma" the contemporary symptoms of which include disproportionately high rates of "alcoholism, poverty, learned helplessness and dependence, violence, and the breakdown of values that correlate with healthy living."[21]

A handful of studies have been done on the impact of historical trauma on the collective memory of a people. Raymond Fogelson's study of Cherokee memories of the 1830 'Trail of Tears' demonstrate in this instance that the Removal event was so traumatic it was denied: "Removal experience was so degrading, so incredible, so brutally real that it became unreal to the Cherokee mind."[22] Thus, despite the abundance of written documentation left by non-Cherokee eye-witnesses there were practically no Cherokee oral accounts of the event itself. In a study of Holocaust survivor testimonies, Naomi Rosh White explains that often Holocaust survivors slip into silence. "For some," she claims, "silence has its source in the pain from which the survivor seeks protection."[23]

> Silence can be a sanctuary which protects speakers from themselves and from their listeners. It encloses feelings and experiences which may attract censure because they are unfamiliar, alien or threatening to the listener.

> The sense of impotence and powerlessness...feelings of having been defiled, diminished and humiliated may remain unspoken because the listener's response may be disbelief, contempt, abandonment, misunderstanding or pity.[24]

Rosh White writes of "anguished memory" which recovers the sense of being divided, of living in more than one world at a time. She speaks of "humiliated memory" which reveals a "besieged self", who, as in the past, is unable to act in the present because memory and the process of narrating offer no rescue from uncompensated and uncompensatable loss. "'Unheroic memory' reveals the 'diminished self' with its deprivation of moral agency and its partially traumatized or maimed self-esteem. The long-term impact of which is a fractured, fragmented self."[25]

The relocation experience at Fisher River was not nearly as dramatic as the Trail of Tears and holocaust. The Swampy Cree had choices—they chose to move in order to start a new life, the distance they relocated to was comparatively short, and they relocated to lands situated on the southern limits of their traditional hunting territories. Thus, the trauma resulting from starving conditions at Norway House, their rejection of traditional religious beliefs for Christianity, and their decision to leave their homelands to start a new life from scratch, were not as severe. However, there can be no denying that the overall impact of their experiences did impact their collective memory. They left to start a new life, and they hoped to leave the hardships behind in the process. Furthermore, their almost wholesale conversion to Christianity 160 years ago worked against the retention of any aspects of their pre-Christian worldviews and practices that contradicted their new found religion. Within this historical context, it is a testament to a People's spiritual strength that so much oral history still exists in our communities, or that any exists at Fisher River.

Ethnohistorians are in the business of historical reconstruction—they seek to recover the history of events, movements, persons and ideas that have been largely neglected by conventional scholarship. They also strive to correct errors and reach deeper understandings. But theirs is an objective and generally distanced pursuit of knowledge. However, their initial questions are seldom informed by experience, generational or direct. Most ethnohistorians begin their research in the archives and later on end up in a community. On the other hand, many Indigenous historians begin in the communities and end up in the archives. The distinctions and implications of these two methodological approaches has not been seriously considered, but they should be. We all recognize that the kinds of questions we ask inform our methodologies which in turn inform, affect, or dictate the outcome. For scholars doing Indigenous historical research a significant question to ask at the outset is, how the forms and content of their work compare or contrast when the questions are framed in an archive and when questions are framed by community oral history.

Students of Indigenous oral histories are well aware that each community has its own ways—its own forms and methods—of keeping and transmitting knowledge about the past across generations. Some oral historical accounts are rigidly formulaic, others less so. And while the forms of their transmission have received considerable scholarly interest from folklorists, linguists and literary scholars, for example, they are studied as objects rather than applied or adhered to. Oral traditions are unique among peoples and can be used as templates for the textual representations of oral historical accounts. In communities where oral traditions are alive and strong, we have a lot to work with. Not only do we have templates for form, we also have direction on content. We have the community's point of view or determination of what constitutes a significant historical

event or person which is in many cases different from an outside perspective.

In the case of Fisher River, however, the priorities of the research team were determined by what we did not know or what was missing in our collective memories. Another paradox is that while many of the details we sought had been lost, the traditional story-telling form is alive and well. In fact it was the pervasiveness of the oral tradition form in the community, the story-telling tradition and the great storytellers, that initially led us to believe that there must be lots of oral history—that the Old People would have lots of stories about the Treaty and the migration from Norway House.

So, our Old People are great story-tellers, and they want their book to be filled with great stories, and my questions become more pointed—the Indian and the academic in me engage: "would not using our oral tradition story-telling forms to textually represent non-traditional (non-Indian) sources, undermine or bastardize traditional and scholarly integrity? Would this not be an exercise in inventing tradition?"

Bernard Lewis, Eric Hobsbawm, and Terrence Ranger provide some help here.[26] Hobsbawm explains that the "strength and adaptability of genuine tradition is not to be confused with the 'invention of tradition.' Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived or invented."[27] If history has demonstrated little else, it has shown that we are a strong and adaptable people. Thus, the tasks of Tribal Historians are to recover the past and to present it to the public in a form that meets the approval of the people whose histories and lives it represents. Recovered history is a process of reconstructing the forgotten past, which Bernard Lewis explains, is a "modern and European task."[28] Tribal historians, like ethnohistorians, glean our data from all possible locations in order to fill in the gaps. Unlike most ethnohistory, however, our questions and ideally our textual products come from the communities directly.

In the end, the problem is not, whether or not to write narrative history, but rather what kind of narrative history—what forms and literary strategies could be borrowed to write our recovered histories?

Twenty years ago this would have been a lonely venture, but the challenges and insights of Hayden White and other critical theorists, by literary critics and New Historicism, are pushing historians to think more critically about what we do, how we do it, and the limits of our potential.[29] Way out in the front are our own people, our literary and intellectual greats like Gerald Vizenor, N. Scott Momaday, and Maria Campbell who have been writing in the oral tradition for a very long time.

So there I was, filling in the gaps in our oral history with eurocentric documentary records and listening to the taped interviews of the Old People over and over again to feel the rhythm of their voices, to discern the local nomenclature and their unique Cree-English syntax. Trying to disassociate from my modernist social science training, striving to adopt a creative literary approach, so I could write our histories the way the Old People told me to. As always I found temporary respite in a conventional historical method—I kept doing research. One afternoon while learning about whitefish pemmican, I presented Lena with my dilemma—"Lena, how can I write our histories in our own words when most of the information we have about our past comes from journals and books written by fur traders and missionaries?" The immediate look on her face struck me—it was one of those "what a dumb question" kind of looks. Then staring me straight in the eyes she said, "just take it!" "Just take it?" I replied, a little dumbfounded. "Yes, just take it!" "Listen girl," she said, "they took our memories from us, now you just go on and take those memories back, and make them ours again."

Sifting through the thin stained pages of missionary journals I searched for the

ancestors of the Fisher River Muskego-wininiwak—the People I knew. Historical imagination some call it…reading through the lines, between the words, across the cultures, into the minds, and searching through their eyes for narrative wisps of the Ochekwi Sipi past.

Sitting on his worn-out couch Old Alec raised his eyes and slapped his hands together… "Ahow!" he started, "We come from up north, us. Where the muskeg and rock, and the caribou and the moose, they meet. That's what old Jim he told me when I was a kid working the boats with him. Back then some of us were known as asini-wininiwak, Rock Cree Peoples. Now we are known as muskego-wininiwak, Swampy Cree Peoples. How we came to be, one from the other, now that's a long story…."

Endnotes

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[1] My thanks to Chief David Crate, former Chief Lorne Cochrane, the Fisher River Councils and Education Authorities for their constant support and encouragement for the oral history project. Most of the Elder interviews were done by Fisher River university students over the course of five summers from 1990 to 1995. The author acknowledges the tremendous efforts they made towards the project and extends a special thanks to Tanya Cochrane who stuck with it from the very beginning and is now the Fisher River Heritage Center coordinator. Without the enthusiastic support and efforts of the Elders living at Fisher River this project could never have happened. I thank you all, kinanaskomatinawaw, and fret not, the manuscript is in progress.

[2] The Reverend John H. Ruttan, "Report on Norway House Mission," 54th Annual Report of Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, June 1877-June 1978 (Toronto: 1878), pp. xvii-xviii.

[3] Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), MG12, B1, Alexander Morris Papers, No. 783: Indians of Rossville to Alexander Morris, 25 June 1874.

[4] The earliest baptism, marriage and death records for the Methodist mission at Rossville and later missions are housed in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

[5] Personal reminiscences differ from oral histories because they are specific to the life experiences of the teller—they include direct observation and to a large degree are autobiographical in nature. Oral histories, on the other hand, while they may contain autobiographical details, are stories about significant events and persons of the more distant past.

[6] Interviews conducted with Elders from the previous generation have proved invaluable especially the stories on family migrations to Fisher River. A special thanks to Verna Kirkness for providing a copy of an interview she did in 1967 with her late grandfather James Kirkness (1871-1975).

[7] Alexander Morris, "Lake Winnipeg Treaty No. Five," in The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories including The Negotiations on which they were based (1880 reprint. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991), p. 343.

[8] United Church Archives, Personal Papers (UCA PP) John Semmens, fond 3204, Box 1, file 1, "Under the Northern Lights: Notes on Personal History, 1850-1921," pp. 30, 31; Ruttan, "Report on Norway House Mission," pp. xvii-xviii. The Hudson's Bay Company reported that the government hired two good boats (York) and one condemned boat, to take forty families to Fisher River. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Hudson Bay Company Archives (PAM HBCA) B.154/a/71, Norway House Post Journal, 5 September 1877, fo. 62.

[9] The scholarly literature on the tenacity of Indigenous oral histories of events and peoples of the distant past is vast. See for example, Gordon Day, "Roger's Raid in Indian Tradition," Historical New Hampshire 17 (June 1962): 3-17; and Oral Tradition as Complement," Ethnohistory 19, 2 (1972): 99-108; Bernard L. Fontana, "American Indian Oral History: An Anthropologist's Note," History and Theory 8, 3 (1969): 366-370; Angela Cavender-Wilson, "Grandmother to Granddaughter: Generations of Oral History in a Dakota Family," American Indian Quarterly 20, 1 (1996): 7-13.

[10] Bernard Lewis, History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1987), p. 12.

[11] See for example, PAM, HBCA B.154/a/71, Norway House Post Journal, 27 March 1875, fo. 10; ibid., 27 July 1977, fo. 59.

[12] Albert Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 84-85.

[13] Peter Nabokov, "Present Memories, Past History," in Calvin Martin, ed., The American Indian and the Problem of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 145.

[14] Numerous studies of the residential school experience and the impact of that experience on contemporary First Nations communities have been done, many of which incorporated the personal reminiscences of the inmates. For example, see Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill, eds., Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy (Vancouver; University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Linda Jaine, ed., Residential Schools: The Stolen Years (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, 1993); Celia Haig-Brown, Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988): J. R. Miller, Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

[15] Renate Zahar, Franz Fanon: Colonialism & Alienation (New York: Monthly Press, 1974), p. 5.

[16] Zahar, Franz Fanon, p. 19.

[17] Memmi, The Colonized, pp. 121-22.

[18] Zahar, Franz Fanon, p. 37.

[19] Memmi, The Colonized, pp. 102-3.

[20] Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (1961. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991 reprint).

[21] Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Native Americans and the Trauma of History," in Russell Thornton, ed., Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 61.

[22] Raymond D. Fogelson, "The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents," Ethnohistory 36, 2 (1989), p. 143.

[23] Naomi Rosh White, "Marking Absences: Holocaust Testimony and History," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., The Oral History Reader (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 176.

[24] ibid..

[25] ibid., p. 180.

[26] Lewis, History: Remembered; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[27] Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in The Invention of Tradition, p. 8.

[28] Lewis, History: Remembered, p. 13.

[29] See for example, Robert Berkhofer, Jr., Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University 1995).

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Appendix I

Story of Chief Cutknife, a Sarcee, and the Battle of Cutknife Hill
Compiled from the tellings of James Tootoosis

This story I am going to relate is about Chief Cutknife, a Sarcee Chief. His real name was Broken Knife but the Crees translated it Cutknife. That's the reason that town is called Cutknife. It just so happened that he had been in numerous forays into enemy territory. He was always looking for that fast buffalo pony. The faster the pony the more buffalo they killed. That's the reason they were out to steal horses from other tribes. A faster and easier way to get a fast horse than raising it was to steal it from the neighbors. Sometimes they got into fights with that.

And so it happened that Cutknife was on one of these forays looking for a Cree camp. And there was a camp, here, where Kenny lives. So it happened, the day before, the Cree had a buffalo chase just before you come down that creek about five miles north of the town Cutknife. Those Sarcee happened to be around this part of the country, just west maybe seven or eight miles from the corner of Cutknife Hill. Chief Cutknife had a lookout and traveled by night and slept on that hill during the day. They saw the Cree having this buffalo chase, and after they had the kill they butchered the buffalo, and the Sarcee they watched which way they went taking their meat home, so they could find that camp later.

Towards evening the Sarcee traveled to this hill. Cutknife knew the country, he had been here numerous times before over the years. Then Cutknife told his men to go down to the creek, where the Cree had the chase. He told them to wait for him down there and he stayed on the hill. They had guns and telescopes all ready by then and he said,

"I'll watch." It was foggy and there was dew on the grass. "Maybe the fog will lift and we'll be able to see where the horses are." He knew the camp was somewhere around there. So the men went down the hill, picking up some leftovers, some little chunks to roast. They were glad they came down the hill to the creek, so they made a little fire and had a lunch.

Early in the morning there was a couple of Cree guys from the camp, they got up real early just before daybreak, and with their ponies they went to where they had this buffalo chase. One of the guys had old people, probably his parents, and he wanted some tender meat for the old people. So they went to where they had the chase looking for buffalo calves. So they road back up there to look, but it was foggy down there. They went on top of one of the hills just across the creek, and this guy saw somebody lying on top of that hill, and he told his partner, "look there's somebody over there!" He told his partner to come back to camp, notify the people that there was some strange people there, there must be enemy around someplace. So this guy went to notify the camp, it is just about a mile north of that field over there, down below the creek. This guy said "I'll go and sneak up on these guys." By then he saw Cutknife and told his partner "I'll go and investigate and watch this guy."

So it being foggy there was a lot of dew on the grass and this guy saw single file tracks and then when they came across the creek, on a little piece of prairie just across that slope from Josephine's, the tracks spread out. He saw that he came with eleven people. So he sneaked back to where this guy was lying down. He tied his horse below the hill and went up the hill. In them days the grass was always tall and you could hear a person walk a long ways, but there being dew on the grass it didn't make any sound. He sneaked up on Cutknife lying on the ground. I bet Cutknife was tired and he fell asleep.

So this guy, he pointed his gun at him and said, "who are you?" By God, Cutknife jumped up real fast but he didn't do anything because he had a gun on him, and he said "I'm Cutknife."

He was a Sarcee you know, but how he come to talk Cree was, in them days when they used to go on forays like that into enemy territory they used to kidnap little girls or women. Catch them going for water, they'd kidnap them and take them home so they could learn the language from them. Sometimes during the fights they would get a chance to steal women or little kids. That's how he come to learn to talk Cree. He said, "I'm Cutknife, you probably heard about me." He said, "ya, I heard about you. Where are your partners?" "They've gone to the creek down below there." There was just the two of them, him and Cutknife and he had his gun on him. Cutknife's gun was on the ground but he had a knife. Well he told Cutknife, "as a warrior I'm going to give you a chance to live. I'm camped north of here, if you run, if you and your men run down the hill, south, there are some big gullies down there, you might have a chance to live." He told him, "my partner, he's gone to the camp, he'll be coming in a short while." Now Cutknife, this guy had told him to go south. But no, he said, "I'm going north, you want me to run into your camp, so I'm going north." He said, "it's up to you." So Cutknife went running down the hill to find his men at the creek. And this Cree guy went and got his horse and rode back up the hill. And he watched. Before long a bunch of men from the camp were riding over the hill, they came running up that hill where Adolphus lives. This fella fired his gun.

Cutknife went running up that hill and saw the horsemen coming, so he turned right around and went down that hill and crossed the creek someplace here. By the time they got there the horsemen were already circled. That's how come they built a trench

there and stayed there for the better part of the day. They got circled there, so they dug a pit down below here. Nobody knows the exact spot. That was 'cause it happened long ago and a lot of times there's been some big floods. The hole was covered and after the battle nobody bothered coming back. So they had a fight, killed them, scalped them and left them where they were.

Now how I come to know this story, a cousin of our great grandfather, our great grandfather was Skunk Skin, his cousin's name was Pimohteyasiw, 'Walking on the Wind' or 'Wind Walker'. He was only a young man, oh, maybe he was seventeen, eighteen years old, but already it was known that he had powers. A gun wouldn't kill him Pimohteyasiw awa, a bullet or anything couldn't kill him, it would miss him and he was known for that. When these men were riling all the braves up at camp to go fight Cutknife, there was one brave man, he was an uncle to Pimohteyasiw. Pimohteyasiw all he had was a knife, he had no gun, he was just young. He didn't know what he could do, he was timid, and he was crying as he ran along towards the fight with the others.

And there was a widow in that camp, a beautiful woman, wearing these long braids you know like the women always did. These warriors all had nice women and everyone had their eye on her. Her husband had been killed not too long before that by enemies someplace. Now these other young bucks they'd go and propose to her, but no, she wouldn't marry anybody. And one of these fellows, he wasn't too notable or anything, a young man but he'd never been anywhere, never went into any forays into enemy country, never even went on a buffalo chase, he had his eye on this widow. His name was Red Feather. Now this time she said, "anybody who brings me a fresh scalp, I'll live with him, I'll take him in." So Red Feather never forgot that. So he thought, "here's my chance," and he sharpened his knife and he started off on horseback with

everyone. Even the women went, they all wanted to see the fight.

So here's this little guy running along there and Pimohteyosiw he was running along. But Pimohteyosiw he was very timid, wondering if he should try something or not. Then these young folks pulled up and said, "heh! Jump on!" so they caught his arm and threw him behind, they rode double. And these young folks told him, "here's your chance! When we rush the enemy, you want to be right in front, to do something." Pimohteyosiw he wondered why his uncle didn't invite him along, "my uncle doesn't invite me for some reason, he wants me to get killed." So they all rode up there, and the widow and a bunch of women, they were along there too where they should be.

You know, when the Sarcee came running down that hill when they were crossing the creek, one fellow doubled back and he went around the creek, round kind of a bend, a cutbank. Sometimes there's willows that grow around the water and the cutbanks go into the bank. Well he found a little place between the water and the bank, and he crawled in there and stayed in the water all day, listening you know.

So now we get to the fight. Well, these big warriors in braids, they said "nobody use a gun, just grab them, nobody fire a gun, its too close, we might kill each other." It was dangerous, someone might get shot. So, everyone put their guns down and started to sing, when I quit singing everybody jumped up. Now this Red Feather, he had his eye on this widow, and he knew there was one brave who would be the first to jump in. So he stayed right behind this guy all the time, watching, right behind him waiting for his chance. When they put their guns down and rushed in, this brave here was the first. He jumped right at the edge of the pit. Now, Cutknife was listening to him sing. So when he quit singing Cutknife just jumped out of the pit with his knife. And these two started to wrestle. They grabbed each other's wrists, wrestling. Now Red Feather had a chance. He

was right behind him with a sharp knife, he jumps behind Cutknife and scalps him. Pulled his scalp out and "to hell with the fight," he said, "where's that widow, where's that widow!" That's all he was thinking about. So he goes and gives the widow that fresh scalp. When they hit the camp the guy wanted to go home with the widow. The widow said no. It was customary in cases like that, you had to wait four nights. It was the longest four nights that guy ever spent.

When they got through killing the Sarcee, they pulled them in this pit and scalped them. By God! This guy who had been on top of the hill talking with Cutknife, he said, "there's only ten here, there's one missing, there were eleven!" When he saw these tracks on the prairie, there were eleven, now there was only ten. They all got on their horses, some on foot, and they searched that creek all the way up across the hollow. They never found him though and he laid in the water all afternoon until he couldn't hear anything, everyone had gone home. After dark he crawled out and headed for home country. He damn near starved going back, he couldn't kill anything to eat.

And it happened that Pimohteyosiw, he was a very good looking man. Light hair and he was a good singer. And when we were coming home, his uncle called for him from the road, told him to jump on behind the horse. "Now," he said, "son, you should have been way down the lead over there, you being a good singer." Pimohteyosiw thought his uncle wanted him to get killed!

So sometimes there would be fights and other times they would make a treaty, smoke together, smoke a peace pipe, and they would ask stories about different incidents. They always had somebody that could talk Cree and some talked Sarcee and some of them could talk Blackfoot. And this fella, the one that hid in the water here, he didn't know enough to quit going on these forays. One guy asked about this incident when

Cutknife was killed. "We lost one Sarcee, he got away." "That was me," he told them. And that's how we come to know that story. He told the story about how he hid in the water and how he went home, and how they had come by way of the hills west of here, the Indian name for them is Wolf Dung Hill. He still went out on war parties, he didn't know enough to quit. That's how we come to know the Sarcee side.

Well that about ends this story about Cutknife. That's how I heard it. How I come to know, I'm gonna tell you. This story is my great grandfather's brother, Wind Walker, Pimohteyosiw. He was very old, he was around ninety, maybe older. My brother Adam was a little boy, about twelve or thirteen years old then. And that old man told him that story three times, three times over, so he wouldn't forget. "This is your future, you'll be able to tell the story to other people, so he won't get lost." That's how I come to know this story. My brother told me different times.

And when I said this incident happened here about 1840, how we come to know is there was an old man that used to come here from Mistawasis. And his mother used to tell him when he was just a baby, he was just a baby in the moss bag when this happened here. And according to the time, when he died, we backtracked and found this happened in 1840.