

MII O GWAYAK INAAJIMOTAAGOOYAAN [THIS IS HOW IT WAS TOLD TO ME]:
NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract:

The research discussed in this dissertation employs a mixed-methods, qualitative approach to understanding the role of specific narratives, and of storytelling practice in general, in shaping perceptions of Anishinaabe indigenous identity, history, and politics in northern Minnesota, as well as the social and political climate of the region, including relations between the indigenous and settler populations. In order to glean an understanding of the complex influences of narratives on these social and cultural phenomena, three specific narrative case studies were examined in comparison with one another, and against the backdrop of the general narrative life of the region. Each narrative case represents a different narrative type, and each case also carries significant weight within the local environment in which it circulates, communicating particular messages concerning the content and meaning of Anishinaabe history and identity. The study is grounded in the consideration of (A) the relative importance of different types of narratives, (B) the means by which narratives move within and across various social and political spaces, and (C) the ways in which these movements across social and political borders help to determine the shape, meaning, and membership of the communities on either side. In addition to the examination of these central questions, the findings are also used to theorize more broadly on definitions of nationhood and nationalism, transnationalism, and on the kinds of epistemological critiques that indigenous political structures and movements pose to dominant assumptions in both academic studies of macro-level political, cultural, and economic relationships, and in the colonial and imperial politics of the settler state.

Acknowledgements

Gathering and understanding the information on the narrative cases at the heart of this study – indeed, even knowing that there existed information to be gathered – would have been entirely impossible without the assistance of a variety of knowledgeable people willing to indulge my constant barrage of questions and curiosity. First and foremost, I must thank Judy Fairbanks (White Earth Anishinaabe), Elaine Fleming (Leech Lake Anishinaabe), and Bob Jourdain (Leech Lake Anishinaabe), for their generosity and patience in helping me to make sense of the information I received concerning the past and present conditions of Anishinaabe life, and to interpret and report my results in a way that would respect the intellectual and cultural sovereignty of the Anishinaabeg. Particular thanks are also owed to Joseph Bauerkemper, for acting as my bridge between the academic aspects of this project and the political reality of the local environment. I must also thank my dissertation committee at UI Urbana-Champaign (Brian Dill, Monica McDermott, Jodi Byrd, and Jenny Davis), particularly my advisor, Tim Liao, for their guidance, advice, editorial assistance, and support during the two years of research and writing. Gratitude is owed as well to the various organizations and groups that supported this project both financially and intellectually: the UIUC INTERSECT Fellowship in Global Indigeneity; the Bastian Dissertation Research Fellowship; the UIUC Departments in Sociology and American Indian Studies; the Shared Vision Initiative (Bemidji); and the Tribal Councils at the White Earth and Leech Lake Nations. Also to the many colleagues who raised new questions or alternative interpretations (in particular, Sam Malloy, who not only provided me with a place to stay while in northern Minnesota, but offered a vast array of invaluable advice, information, and support.) Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my family, especially Caitlin Lill. I quite literally could not have done this work without your help.

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Glossary

The following terms are central to understanding the social, cultural, and political situation surrounding indigenous life in northern Minnesota. Understand them will help provide some basic context for interpreting the information that will follow in the dissertation paper itself. Many of these terms have varied contextual uses, so the definitions here are, in some cases, necessarily broad. Wherever this is the case, I have noted briefly the multi-faceted nature of the terms and concepts. Wherever most common usages are noted, they are those used most often by people living within the region of research, and may not necessarily apply to other Native or non-Native communities. Italicized terms are original Ojibwe words, though some are used by non-Native language speakers as well.

Identity terms

Anishinaabe (*Anishinaabeg*, plural)

Varied uses. Most commonly used by Ojibwe people to refer to themselves either as members of international Ojibwe population, members of the historical “Three Fires Confederacy” of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi in the US and Canada, or members of the North American indigenous population. The singular *Anishinaabe* can be used to refer to an individual person, the community as a whole, or as an adjective (i.e., *Anishinaabe* values). The term *Anishinaabeg* is only used when referring to multiple individual people.

Literal translations vary, including “original people,” “spontaneous human,” “good human,” “people who were lowered down,” and others.

Ojibwe

A diasporic tribe of Algonquian cultural origin, consisting of approximately 175,000 members in communities throughout Eastern and Central Canada, and around the Great Lakes in the US.

Synonymous with “Chippewa,” but with different political connotations, as the latter term was invented by the colonial state and imposed on the Ojibwe people. Also has further political connotations involving inclusion/exclusion from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (see below).

Dodem/Totem/Clan

The Anishinaabeg were originally comprised of seven major clans: crane, loon, bear, marten, deer, bird, and fish. The original clans spawned additional clans following the westward migration of the Anishinaabeg during the last millennium. Once, these clans determined social positions, for instance the bear clan was associated with protection and healing, the crane with political leadership, or the marten with military leadership. These distinctions are still known, but exercise less impact on the life-course of the individual than in pre-colonial times.

traditional vs. non-traditional

The term “traditional” is commonly used throughout the research region, particularly by Native people, to refer to people and practices that adhere to the pre-colonial cultural life of the Anishinaabeg. This is especially the case when talking about the spiritual part of the culture. For instance, a “traditional person” is someone who most likely follows the Anishinaabe spiritual beliefs, regularly offers tobacco, lives and probably grew up on the reservation, and may be a fluent speaker. There are degrees of traditional

behavior and belief, but the term “traditional person” is a particular and well-recognized status marker within Minnesota Ojibwe societies.

Ojibwe words and concepts

Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwemowin

Traditional Algonquian-based language of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe people. Within Ojibwemowin alone, there are numerous regional dialects. In Minnesota, most speakers use what is commonly known as the Southwestern dialect, but even within this dialect there are differences in word-use, pronunciation, and spelling.

The grammar of the language is representative of many cultural differences between the Ojibwe perspective and the Western colonial perspective. For instance, Anishinaabemowin contains no gendered articles distinguishing male/female. Also, in Anishinaabemowin, conjugation is structured such that the point of reference is not the first person, but rather the second person (i.e., “you”). The broadest difference is that Anishinaabemowin is a heavily verb-based language, whereas English is heavily noun and pronoun-based – put another way, where English is focused on subjects and objects, Anishinaabemowin is focused on actions and processes.

animacy/inanimacy

In traditional Ojibwe ontology, those things which may be inhabited by a *manidoo* (spirit) are considered “animate.” This category includes all humans, animals, and plants (although certain plant byproducts are linguistically inanimate), and also includes other things that would not intuitively seem animate from a Western ontological perspective, such as some stones, directional winds, and even certain abstract concepts such as stories.” The distinction is clearest in Anishinaabemowin, wherein plural nouns and verbs are conjugated differently based on the object or subject’s animacy/inanimacy.

manidoo (*manidoog*, plural) (equivalent: *manitou*)

Spirit-being from whom Anishinaabeg traditionally ask for help and guidance. No equivalent concept in Western cosmology/theology. *Manidoog* are best thought of as people, but not necessarily humans. *Manidoog* can appear as any “animate” thing (see above), they often possess powers beyond the ability of humans, animals, or plants, and they are often asked and thanked for help and blessings as they are considered much more powerful than humans. It is inaccurate to think of humans, animals, plants, and other animate things as “possessing” a *manidoo*, as the *manidoo* itself has a will of its own. It is more accurate to say that a *manidoo* may reside within any animate thing.

Gichi-Manidoo (equivalent: *Kitchi-Manidoo/Manitou*, Great Spirit, Great Mystery, God, the Creator)

The most powerful and/or the leader of the *manidoog*, responsible for the initial creation of the world. In the colonial era, Gichi-Manidoo has come to be equated with the Christian God, although this equivalence often goes unnoticed, ignored, or refuted by non-Native Christians.

Nanaboozho (a.k.a., *Nenabozho*, *Wenabozho*, *Wenaboujou*, and others)

Trickster-hero of many traditional *Anishinaabe* tales and sacred stories. Nanaboozhoo is a *manidoo*, and is able to change into any form, but is driven by human desires for food, sleep, and even revenge. According to Basil Johnston (1995), Nanaboozhoo embodies “human potential,” but does so in a seemingly idiosyncratic way, making rash mistakes that often have disastrous consequences, and using his wits to get himself out of trouble. Nanaboozhoo is responsible for the creation/discovery of many essential parts of the Ojibwe lifeworld, including tobacco, maple sap, and the re-created world after the first world was destroyed in a great flood.

Mino-bimaadiziwin

Literally, “good life” or “healthy living.” This concept is at the heart of the Anishinaabe traditional cultural ideology, their moral and ethical perspective, and their spiritual and mundane traditions. To pursue *mino-bimaadiziwin*, to put it simply, is to attempt to live correctly in accordance with the laws of the natural world.

Mideniwin

The stratified spiritual institution of the Anishinaabeg, comprised of the spiritual leadership. The *Mideniwin* performs ceremonies, offers counsel, and protects the spiritual knowledge and traditions of the Ojibwe people.

tobacco/*asemaa*

A type of sacred currency for the Anishinaabe. Traditionally, tobacco is offered as a sign of respect and gratitude whenever asking a person (human or otherwise) for help, or when addressing *manidoog* for any reason. This practice is still widely observed by Ojibwe people in Minnesota, particularly those living on reservations.

Political terms

tribe

The collective international population of Ojibwe people.

band

Term imposed during the colonial era to describe a community of Anishinaabe people living in a particular location (i.e., the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe). This term is complicated somewhat by the piecemeal removal of Ojibwe from their lands during the colonial period – for instance, many of the Pillager Band, who lived in central Minnesota, were moved to what is now the White Earth Reservation in northwestern Minnesota alongside members of other bands and even other tribes. The intermingling historical experiences and political/cultural perspectives of these older bands are still believed to have an influence on the politics of the different reservation governments and communities today.

nation

A political entity comprised of enrolled members. In some cases synonymous with “band” when referring to contemporary band boundaries (i.e., Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe = Leech Lake Nation), but having different political connotations. Often invoked as a rhetorical device in defenses of Ojibwe sovereignty.

clan

See above.

reservation

Land with defined political borders, under the jurisdictional control of an American Indian tribe. Reservations were created, recreated, and reshaped, though a variety of political and economic means, and the degree and type of tribal control over reservation land varies widely between reservations, between tribes, and between types of land within an individual reservation. The two reservations in the main area of research (Leech Lake and White Earth) are comprised of land owned by the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, land owned by private individual Ojibwe, by private non-Ojibwe owners, by private companies, and by Minnesota and US government institutions. The population of a given reservation may include both Native and non-Native residents.

trust land

Land held in trust by the US federal government, but occupied and used by Indian individuals or organizations.

fee land

Land owned by a private individual or group and taxed accordingly, able to be used or sold according to the will of the owner.

treaty rights

Rights belonging to enrolled band/nation members, allowing them the use of land on and off the reservation (not including buying and selling the land), guaranteed by treaty agreements made between the tribes and the US government.

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT)

A political entity organized by agreement between six of the seven Ojibwe nations of Minnesota and the state; members of the council include the Chair and Treasurer from each of the constituent reservations. The MCT is the highest political authority governing the Mille Lacs, Fond du Lac, Bois Forte, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, and White Earth nations, though often has difficulties associated with cultural, economic, and political conflicts between the member-nations. The Red Lake Nation is the only Ojibwe nation in the state not included in the MCT.

Boozhoo. Nicholas George Cragoe indizhinikaaz, Minneapolis, MN indoobjibaa, idash Champaign, IL indaa. Gaawiin indoodemisii. Indaanikoobijiganag ningaabi'anong miinawaa giimedonong Europe onjibaa. miinawaa megwaa daso-biboon wa'aw akiing bi-izhaad. Ongow aki gaawiin indayaasii, gemaa nidibaaajimowinan miinawaa aadizookaanag, miinawaa waa-o-miigwechiwi' Anishinaabeg ningii-wiidookawaayaan.

[Hello. My name is Nicholas George Cragoe. I am originally from Minneapolis, MN, but I currently live in Champaign, IL. I don't have a clan. My ancestors are originally from western and northern Europe, and have come to this land over the course of so many years. These are not my lands or my stories, and I want to acknowledge/thank the indigenous people who helped me.]

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Among the Anishinaabeg of northern Minnesota, and in other locations throughout the United States and Canada, it is expected that in ceremonial and other formal settings, when a speaker (or in this case, a writer) is going to address an audience and share words with them, the speaker will make an introduction, telling the audience their name, place or residence or birth, and clan. The information provided in these introductions shared in precolonial times provided the audience with an array of information about the familial, political, cultural, and economic background of the speaker and helped to establish a dialog between speaker and audience that was informed by context, and mutual understanding of position (Benton-Banai 1988; Meyer 1999; Peacock & Wisuri 2009; Warren 1885). While this practice is observed far less than it has been in past centuries, it is still present in ceremonies, in storytelling sessions, and in the introductions of elders to groups of younger learners. During the colonial era, the continued use of traditional greeting practices is a manifestly anti-colonial practice in the vein of what Gerald Vizenor has called “survivance” – the active presence and assertion of indigenous cultural life in the face of colonial repression and cultural genocide (Vizenor 1999).

Scholars in certain corners of the social sciences and humanities have, in recent years, begun to adopt a practice that echoes this traditional kind of greeting. They will formally recognize and/or thank the indigenous inhabitants of the particular place, as a gesture to combat historical erasure as well as acknowledging the centrality of conflict over physical space in the ongoing struggle of indigenous peoples against colonial domination and appropriation. I have also made note of my own geographic genealogy, noting my position as a non-indigenous member of the settler population of the United States. I am invested in being an active ally to indigenous peoples' movements, but I want to establish at the outset that I am not an indigenous person, and their diverse lived realities and experiences exist outside my own. It is my own stories I am telling in this dissertation manuscript, and not the stories of the Ojibwe, Anishinaabeg, or other indigenous peoples.

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For just short of two years, every two months or so I traveled from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign to the woods of northern Minnesota. I would usually stay in the area for eight or nine days at a time, conducting interviews, taking photos, thumbing through archival materials, and cataloguing books and other text materials, and at the end of each trip I would pack my belongings, and any books and pamphlets I may have picked up along the way, and head back to Illinois. During my stays in Minnesota, I found myself frequenting a café in Bemidji, the urban center of the local region. The town of Bemidji sits on the southwestern shores of Lake Bemidji, and the café is situated conveniently near to the home of the friend with whom I stayed when conducting fieldwork. By chance, the café is also located very near to the Paul Bunyan Park in downtown Bemidji, home to one of the most iconic images in town: the statue of Shaynowishkung, better known as “Chief Bemidji.” Up until June of 2015, the statue on display consisted of a cartoonish figure of a Native American man with long black hair, wearing a tan shirt and brown pants, holding onto the barrel of a long rifle as if using the gun as a prop to steady himself, and raising one hand above his brow in order to shield his eyes from the sun as he gazed out over the lake. On the June 6<sup>th</sup> of 2015, the old statue, which had stood since 1898 (although it was renovated in 1952), was replaced with a new, realistic bronze statue of the man based on a photograph from late in his life. The new statue is rendered in much greater detail, and the new image of Shaynowishkung has him leaning on an ornate and twisting cane with one hand as he holds a traditional peace-pipe in the other.

The biography of Shaynowishkung/Chief Bemidji, represented in the symbolic imagery of the statue along with countless other visual representations throughout the town of Bemidji, as well as the written and spoken accounts of his life produced by local authors, communicates something very different to the non-Native residents of Bemidji than it does for, say, the Anishinaabeg residents of the Leech Lake Reservation (Shaynowishkung’s home prior to his migration to *bimijiigamaag* (Lake Bemidji)). His story is, by the standards of indigenous leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not a particularly unique or surprising one. He attempted to cooperate and coexist with the oncoming settler population, even made alliances and friendships with some, only to find that the broader economic, political, military, and cultural systems were all set against him. He experienced betrayal, broken promises, corruption, and posthumous veneration as a caricature of himself. Despite the commonness of Shaynowishkung’s tragic biography, its retelling during the transition from the old statue to the new has dragged into the light a network of historical, political, cultural, and racial conflicts that are deep-seated in the relationships between the Anishinaabeg of northern Minnesota,

the non-Native (mainly white) settler population, and the land itself. Lines between communities, ideological dispositions, old and new prejudices, and contradictory historical and political projects have suddenly appeared on the surface of the local discourse, where it seems that mere moments before they were stewing quietly but hotly below.

Social and political boundaries that define the connections and conflicts between people(s) are made visible through the slightest shift in the communication of a narrative, if that narrative sits close enough to the heart of the collective imagination. Narratives not only teach us what we know – although this is of course one of their primary purposes – they also shape events and relationships in the ongoing process of being communicated, appropriated, altered, reinforced, transferred, and claimed. The content of narratives is, in truth, merely one aspect of narratives that may be used to change the conditions of a social environment. Media, or mode of narrative communication, is of course another aspect with tremendous potential for influencing the impact of a narrative, but there are other aspects as well. Patterns of mobility, claims of ownership and authority, of authenticity, of truth, of meaning – all these aspects of narrative work to inform the relationships and interactions between people, and between people and objects. Through continued observation of these narrative aspects as they do their work on the local social environment, it becomes possible not only to describe what the narratives themselves are doing, but what these patterns of communication, consumption, and interpretation reflect about the structure of political and cultural collective identities, the intentions and perspectives of political actors and social movements, and the manifestations of colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial struggle that play out in the everyday lives of local residents.

The biography of Shaynowishkung is one of three narrative case studies I will be examining in the pages below. In the course of engaging with these narratives, I spoke with a variety of residents of the area between the Leech Lake and White Earth Reservations (inclusive), as well as other knowledgeable people in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Duluth, the Fond du Lac and Mille Lacs Reservations, in Thunder Bay (Ontario), and at universities in the US and Canada. My intention was to understand the roles of these three particular narratives within the larger context of narrative life shaping relationships and political or social dynamics between the Anishinaabeg and settler population of the region. My research covered the expressed perspectives of dozens of local, regional, and international residents, and also addressed those perspectives represented in textual and visual media circulating in the area. I have paid special attention to the circumstances in which these narratives are communicated, the locations and identities of the storytellers and audiences, and their presence (or

absence) in the collective body of narratives that informs the edges of social, cultural, and political communities in Minnesota.

## **1.2 Research questions and main goals**

When I began this research, I had no specific hypothesis in mind, but rather a general expectation rooted in the epistemological approaches of narrative sociology, that the patterns of movement of narratives throughout social and physical space would allow for the identification of certain overlapping and shifting collective identities and communities, complicating the structuralist perspective on social organization that would instead see a given population as divided into discrete and mutually exclusive social or political categories. The truth was, as the truth nearly always is, considerably more complicated than the initial expectation. Prior to engaging with the more nuanced and byzantine nature of the social reality, however, these following questions provided the sense of direction and focus at the beginning of the project:

- 1) What are the most important narratives defining Anishinaabe/Ojibwe identity as perceived by Anishinaabeg and non-Native people in northern Minnesota? What are the criteria that make a given narrative an influential force in shaping these perceptions, and do these criteria differ depending on whether the audience is Native versus non-Native, or whether they live on a reservation or not?
- 2) By what processes and means do these influential narratives travel from one physical or social space to another? Are their means of mobility determined by the content of the narrative, its origin, or the identity of the distributor?
- 3) What social, geographical, and political boundaries do the narratives cross in the course of their transportation from place to place, and which ones don't they cross? How can we identify the boundaries of a community by the patterns of distribution in a given narrative? What happens to the content of the narrative when it crosses borders between Native and non-Native social and political space, and does the level and type of change depend on the nature of the story?

## **1.3 What's the point?**

The benefits of this study are potentially significant and far-reaching, affecting the academic realm in a broad variety of ways by touching on issues that are central to numerous disciplines and investigating roles of narratives in a way that furthers the goals of both narrative sociology and transnational sociology through their connection to one another and by challenging standard Western disciplinary practice to reconsider its ignorance of the narrative as unit of analysis and its exclusion of

indigenous political entities from the concept of transnationalism. The benefits will also be significant and prompt in coming for the research participants themselves and the northern Minnesota region, ensured through collaboration with local organizations – most notably the Shared Vision Initiative in Bemidji, MN – to identify practical uses for the findings unearthed by the study in order to spread awareness of the importance of narratives in shaping the social and political climate of the area, and presenting direct challenges to the systems of misinformation and distorted identities that create continual problems and a hostile environment for the Anishinaabe residents of the area both on and off the reservations.

a. Scholarly benefits

This study will make scholarly contributions in three main areas, addressing topical, epistemological, and methodological concerns: the mutually beneficial synthesis of narrative sociology, transnational studies, and indigenous critical theory, wedding methodologies and literatures of all of the above; the introduction of indigenous methodologies and epistemologies into the body of mainstream sociological and anthropological literature; and, finally, the support of incorporating a greater degree of subject voice and control through the use of narrative sociology, hopefully bolstering the case for narrative methods as a means to bridge the gap from academic to applied social scientific work.

Studies of the role of narratives in social contexts are innately interdisciplinary, most frequently appearing in the overlapping realms between literary studies, anthropology, sociology, rhetoric, and (depending on the narratives in question) ethnic studies, religious studies, gender studies, and other academic fields aimed at understanding the conditions of life for particular populations. These overlapping areas have become so prolific and far-reaching in their impact as to form entirely new disciplines unto themselves – two of the most important for my own research being narrative sociology and cultural studies. Indigenous studies as well draws influence from a broad variety of canonical Western disciplines such as anthropology and history, often drawing from an array of standard social scientific and humanistic methods and epistemologies to critique the very disciplinary systems that spawned them in the first place. However, due in large part to continuing territoriality, as well (I suspect) as a lingering dismissal of indigenous identity and politics as unworthy or insufficiently important for major consideration within the larger fields of sociology and anthropology, the presence of indigenous issues (and even more of indigenous voices) within the sociological and anthropological canon has continued to be woefully light. This is particularly noticeable, and particularly troubling, in the field of transnational studies, which frequently addresses the impacts of

globalization and capitalist development around the world (see, for instance, Robertson 2003; Thrift 2005; Tsing 2005), but rarely gives any indication that transnational scholars consider relationships between colonial powers and indigenous subjects to be transnational, even when the indigenous subjects themselves have declared and demonstrated distinct national identities, exercised and fought for sovereign powers of self-determination within their own societies, and interacted (sometimes for centuries) with other state entities on a government-to-government basis. I would posit that the most likely reason for this omission in the transnational studies canon is the latent, perhaps unconscious belief among its practitioners that indigenous nations are not “real” nations in some sense, perhaps due to their conditions of subjugation to more powerful nations, perhaps due to their small size and relative political, economic, and military weakness. This is merely a speculation, to be sure, but a plausible one given both the persistent denigration and refusal of recognition to indigenous nationhood in colonial politics (Simpson 2014), and the logical tendency to search for the strongest example of a given phenomenon when studying it. Such a belief echoes a position that would say that American Indian problems in politics, economic self-determination, and health are insignificant due to the small number of people experiencing them relative to the total population of the settler state, ignoring that this position categorically relegates Native people to political, economic, and physical death (Tuhiwai Smith 2012).

The second intervention that this study intends to make to the scholarly canon and practice is also connected to the integration of indigenous critical theory into the social scientific mainstream, but while this integration will, as noted above, challenge the omission of indigenous people and their issues from within the scope of transnational sociological literature, it also stands to challenge another omission that is equally important and much broader in scope: namely, the ignorance of indigenous methodologies and epistemologies as tools of research design and data analysis.

Social scientific discourse has made great strides in recent decades toward incorporating the voices of the research subject and to reducing the ethnocentric Western gaze that epitomized the practice of social research for many (in some disciplinary cases, most) of its formative decades (Terri Smith’s *Island of the Anishinaabeg* (1995) is a good representation of the former; examples of the latter are unfortunately abundant, but ethnographies such as Johann Georg Kohl’s *Kitchi-Gami* (2008 (1860)) epitomize the older approach. However, understandings of the vast array of human cultural experiences are still more often than not chronicled in the social sciences through concepts, data-collection techniques, and epistemologies that are deeply rooted in that same history of Western intellectual ethnocentrism (Coulthard & Alfred 2014; Falzon 2012; Lionnet & Shih 2011; Tuhiwai

Smith 2012). One of the most important arguments put forward by indigenous critical theorists points out that while indigenous peoples have long been subjects of anthropological study and, in recent years, have been integrated more fully as partners in the research process (e.g., Dickert & Sugarman 2005; Walter & Anderson 2013; Wetzel 2015), the majority of social scientific research on indigenous peoples still takes little-to-no account of the importance and validity of alternative epistemologies and ontologies in the conduct of research. Instead, social scientists seek to describe indigenous life while relying on the same epistemological and methodological canon that characterized our disciplines a century ago, resulting in sometimes egregious cases of misrepresentation and intellectual and cultural appropriation (e.g., Callicott & Nelson 2004; Chagnon 2014; Hunt 2015; Nabokov 2015; controversy surrounding scholarly claims of indigenous identity (i.e., Ward Churchill, and more recently, Andrea Smith)).

Today, there are scholars with training in anthropology and sociology who are using indigenous ways of knowing in order to understand conditions of life for indigenous peoples (Basso 1996; Gross 2014; Lyons 2010; Simpson 2014; Spielmann 1998; Wetzel 2015), but they are generally doing so from outside the mainstream, lobbing stones at the cement wall of social scientific canon. This research project aims to make use of alternative epistemologies in both designing the research and analyzing the data, a practice which itself is unusual even today, and the results of the study will be designed for dissemination to scholarly audiences not only in the critical disciplines of indigenous studies or American Indian studies, but also in mainstream sociological and anthropological publications. It remains to be seen whether this contribution will be accepted and embraced, or derided and ignored, but the introduction of indigenous critical theory and Anishinaabe ways of knowing into the wider sociological discourse will be both novel and potentially significant.

The final scholarly intervention made by this study is in its demonstration of one of the key virtues of the study of narratives in social environments, and of narrative sociology within the larger field of sociological inquiry. The justifications for the value of narrative studies within sociology have largely been rooted in epistemological developments that narratives bring, ranging from reexamination of the construction of collective and individual identity (Brown 2006; Eisenstadt 1996; Somers 1994) to the encouragement of scholarly reflexivity (Frank 2010; Tuhiwai Smith 2012; Vizenor 2008). However, narrative studies as a key methodology within sociological practice also stands to provide a greater degree of subject voice – a crucial aspect of sociological research and writing if we are to bridge the gap between scholarly interest and practical applicability of our findings and conclusions for the benefit of the subjects and the wider social population.

Social scientific practice has made strides toward incorporating voices of dispossession into the scholarly discourse, but too often these voices are used exclusively as a methodological device rather than for enabling academic findings and conclusions to be returned to the communities from which they have been derived. This project aims to do just that, enacting a plan of data gathering and analysis that incorporates subject input in an iterative process of analysis and interpretation, ultimately concluding with the use of the findings for simultaneous scholarly and public benefit.

b. Public benefits

There are multiple avenues for intervention using data gathered on the uses of narratives to define Anishinaabe identity, from development of curriculum for educating children and adolescents on the power of stories, to identification of specific problems with historical and cultural narratives at public facilities, presenting opportunities for those narratives to be challenged and revised. In concert with the Shared Vision Initiative, a program has been tentatively proposed based on the findings from this project, involving development of presentations on the impact of different types of narratives on representing and misrepresenting Anishinaabe identity in particular, and Native identity in general. The Shared Vision organization is currently scheduled to give a series of presentations to audiences from business, state, and social organizations on the economic, political, and social conditions of Native people in the United States, with the central goal being the increased awareness of basic past and present facts about Native life and based on common misunderstandings and gaps in general knowledge that have served to create and support a whole array of stereotypes and mistaken beliefs among non-Native Americans. These misunderstandings and gaps in knowledge lead not only to a general climate of hostility, especially in areas with large Native populations, but to conduct by public and private individuals and organizations that maintains systems of structural disadvantage and colonial control over Native people. The findings from this research project will be used to create a series of follow-up presentations in the same vein as the original Shared Vision presentations with the goal of establishing the critical role that the mobility and mutable nature of narratives has on popular understandings of Anishinaabe and Native identities.

#### **1.4 Methodology & Indigenous Research Concerns**

The methodological approach for this study is derived from the intersection of a number of scholarly discourses, including narrative sociology, indigenous studies, collective identity, and political sociology. Each of the three narrative cases addressed in this dissertation involve different methods of data collection, given their divergent patterns of production, distribution, and consumption.



However, throughout the research process run common methodological assumptions that undergird the kinds of questions asked, the sampling strategies, and the modes of interpretation.

Narrative sociology's fundamental treatment of narratives as independent actors (Frank 2010) shaping the social, cultural, and political world, is the first basic principle upon which this study's methodological foundation rests. Narrative sociology is concerned with the relationship between narratives and their effects in the social world, examining the consequences that narrative communication may have for perceptions, relationships, and social structures at multiple levels of abstraction. This is supplemented, however, with the critical perspectives on academic knowledge production that stem from indigenous critiques of colonial scholarship (Boyer 1993; Morgensen 2012; Pérez 1999; Tuhiwai Smith 2012; Walter & Andersen 2013; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008). The absence in narrative sociology of considerations of power relations (see, for instance, Brown 2006; Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2011; Frank 2010; Somers 1994) is problematic, and as one of the foremost concerns of this study is the means by which narratives are employed as tools of power – either for the assertion of colonial power or anticolonial resistance and indigenous intellectual sovereignty – the incorporation of indigenous critiques is essential not only for shaping the axiological principles of the study, but the methodological grounding as well.

To this end, I attempted as much as possible to make this research accountable to the Anishinaabe communities whose social and political position I sought to describe. In the course of pursuing the standard, required approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Illinois, I became distinctly aware that existing institutional mechanisms of participant-protection would be insufficient to ensure the minimization of risk and maximization of reward for the indigenous communities with whom I would be working. I initially requested a full review of my application for IRB approval, citing the community-level risks of cultural and political academic work with indigenous communities, but when the IRB made the determination that the risks involved in such a study were minimal and the review process would therefore be expedited, I determined that additional mechanisms of structural protection would need to be devised on an ad hoc basis in order to provide a check against the cultural and political power of the position I would represent relative to the Anishinaabeg with whom I would be working, and whose communities I hoped to benefit with my research.

During the preparatory period prior to data collection, in the interests of determining the most effective way to facilitate community oversight of the project, I consulted with Anishinaabe scholar, Anton Treuer, at Bemidji State University – the author of several books on Minnesota Ojibwe history

and culture, and a well-known and respected cultural broker in the region. On his advice, I sought permission from the tribal councils at the Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth reservations, albeit with mixed results. The Red Lake council disallowed my research from being conducted on the Red Lake reservation, citing the history of Western academic appropriations and what they perceived to be a lack of need for additional social research, particular having to do with storytelling practices with which they were already familiar. Out of respect for their sovereign authority over their own lands and intellectual traditions, I have avoided conducting interviews within or concerning the Red Lake Nation. The White Earth tribal council unanimously approving my request to conduct research with White Earth residents.<sup>1</sup> The Leech Lake council's response lay somewhere (noncommittally) between the other two responses, with most of the council remaining silent on the issue, the Chairwoman (Carrie Jones) casually approving of the project while another council member (Penny Devault) explicitly disapproved, and the consensus seeming to emerge that the council was not empowered to decide whether individual members of the Leech Lake band could participate in the study or not. In the course of interviews, it became apparent that I had, as one respondent put it, "more respect for the council than most of us [tribal enrollees] do." Despite the often fraught relationship between the individual Reservation Business Committees and the enrollees of the individual bands, I attempted to abide by the decisions the councils handed down.

A second measure that was taken toward the cause of protecting intellectual sovereignty, and arguably the more important of the two, was the establishment of a small committee of local Anishinaabe elders and scholars with whom I consulted throughout the project, whose role was to review the information collected, and interpretations thereof, and help me to interpret and appropriately and accurately report the findings and conclusions. The role of this local committee was to guard against the kinds of scholarly appropriations, assumptions, misinterpretations, and misrepresentations replete throughout the history of indigenous studies research by non-Native western academic researchers (such as myself). The committee consisted of two elders from Leech Lake, Elaine Fleming and Bob Jourdain, and an elder from White Earth, Judy Fairbanks. Each of these committee members was identified through the recommendations of the RBCs, elders, scholars, and other community members. All three committee members, in addition to their positions as well-respected elders in their communities, are fluent in Anishinaabemowin, are professors at the local tribal colleges in their respective areas, and were able to provide important connections to other

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<sup>1</sup> This being said, it is worth noting that the tribal council at White Earth has changed substantially since this decision.

community members at Leech Lake and White Earth, leading to numerous important interviews with knowledgeable residents. In addition to these three elders, I also consulted frequently with Joseph Bauerkemper, a scholar in American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth with experience researching Anishinaabe culture and politics in Minnesota. Joseph's advice facilitated a connection between the insider perspectives of the local committee of elders and the wider scholarly community. The participation of these Anishinaabe elders, as well as Joseph's assistance in connecting the findings to concepts within the broader spectrum of indigenous scholarship, was invaluable in ensuring the respectful maintenance of the counter-colonial mission of this research.

The three narrative cases were studied separately, beginning with the Flood narrative, moving on to the Shaynowishkung biography, and finishing with the continuously developing Honor the Earth narrative, though participants were often asked about their familiarity and relationship with more than one of the narratives. Despite this strategy of temporally separating out the investigation of the three narrative cases, throughout the entire study, all instances of narrative production and consumption, and the shaping of the social and cognitive lives of the participants, were analyzed with a particular eye to the production of local meanings specific to the interpretive frame employed by the individual participant – something Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki referred to as the “humanistic coefficient” (Znaniecki 1986). This epistemological stance supported the indigenous critical approach of decolonizing the research process through the prioritization of participant meanings, although in keeping with other critical approaches to qualitative inquiry, I also included in the analysis process the recognition of my own position interpreting the data as an outsider, and engaged in a combined strategy of reflexivity and transactional validity through the checking processes described above.

## **1.5 Overview**

The following dissertation is divided into four main chapters: the first three chapters each address a particular narrative case, all three of which are influential in shaping perceptions of Minnesota Anishinaabe history, identity, politics, and contemporary life in northern Minnesota; the fourth and final main chapter involves a broader application of the findings and theoretical implications from the narrative case studies, delineating the central contributions that this study poses to sociological and indigenous studies literature.

For each of the narrative case studies, I will address how the narrative responds to the central research questions driving the study: How is the narrative communicated? How does the narrative interact with geographic and social spaces – where is it communicated? How does the narrative interact with social and political borders and boundaries? How does the narrative inform ideas for

Native and non-Native residents of the region concerning Anishinaabe history, identity, politics, and contemporary life? In short, how does the narrative influence the social and political environment and relationships between the Native and non-Native residents of northern Minnesota? Each of the three cases informs, through different messages and modes of communication, separate but overlapping (and occasionally contradictory) concepts of indigenous political and social identity, political projects, and the boundaries of Anishinaabe/Ojibwe/tribe/ band/reservation community membership. I will also address in each chapter the methods used in data collection and analysis. I opt for separate descriptions of methods rather than a single chapter on methods and methodology because, due to the differences in narrative type, modes of communication, and patterns of narrative travel across geographic and social space, the methods of sampling, the types of textual data sources, and the modes of analysis also differed for each of the three case studies.

Chapter 2 examines the traditional Anishinaabe story of Wenabozho and the Flood, telling of the flooding of the first world and the creation of the second world by the Anishinaabe folk hero Wenabozho, with the help of various animals, resulting in the world we currently inhabit. I begin with a short introduction to the narrative, although, as I note below, I do not go into detail about the particulars of the narrative in an effort to respect its sacred and protected status among the Anishinaabeg. I then discuss the means and patterns of communication, noting the ways in which this narrative crosses some border while butting against others. The chapter concludes with analysis of the implications of the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood in particular, and of traditional narratives in general, for shaping an Anishinaabe identity and polity that prioritizes culture and shared history over political geography and race in ways that directly challenge colonial processes of identity control and appropriation.

Chapter 3 engages with a narrative that also informs Anishinaabe political and social life in northern Minnesota, although in some very different ways. The (oft-fictionalized) biography of Shaynowishkung, a local cultural broker in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when white settlers arrived in the region around what would become the town of Bemidji, circulates and operates quite differently than the traditional story of the Flood. I begin this chapter with a description of the narrative itself, effectively relaying the facts of Shaynowishkung's life. I examine the much more localized way in which this narrative is communicated, by whom it has been claimed, and how these claims inform particular political projects and definitions of Ojibwe identity that contrast with and to some extent contradict those fostered through the telling of traditional narratives. I argue that the political

operationalizations of the Shaynowishkung biography point toward a postcolonial (as opposed to decolonial) movement in local politics and ethnic identity.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter 4, my analysis takes a fairly sharp turn, with the discussion of the recent and ongoing narrative of the contest between the Anishinaabe-based environmental action group, Honor the Earth, and the Enbridge Energy corporation in the latter's attempt to install a sizeable extension of their current pipelines in northern Minnesota – one which would, among other things, pass through one of the largest wild rice beds in the state and potentially threaten this staple of Anishinaabe economy, culture, and diet. This discussion involves engagement with multiple levels of narratives nested within narratives, as I will discuss how the story of Honor the Earth and their legal and political battles are presented in public and organizational media, as well as the way the organization makes use of narrative as a tool in engaging with their supporters. I outline the history of the organization, and give comparative views of how the organization presents its own narrative to the public versus how local and state media interprets this narrative. The overall organizational narrative is split into two competing accounts, the “procedural” and “cultural” narratives, each of which communicates a different set of criteria and reaches a different audience-base, ultimately shaping the quantity and quality of the influence the Honor the Earth narrative may have concerning perceptions of Anishinaabe identity and politics.

Chapter 5 will involve a synthesis of the theoretical contributions from the analyses of the three narrative case studies, and a discussion of their application to the literatures on indigenous nationalism and transnational studies, and narrative sociology. I will examine how the embodiment and practice of Anishinaabe identity and politics challenge dominant ideas of nationhood by engaging in plural and simultaneous political projects that both employ and reject – and in some cases simply ignore – colonial modes of political and racial categorization and mobilization.

In the Conclusion, I will end the dissertation with a summary of the findings and analysis, and some tentative proposals for ways that the research could be extended and supplemented with further study.

## **1.6 A Note on Terminology**

Throughout this dissertation, I will use a variety of terms to refer to the indigenous people with whom I have been working and studying, but for the most part I will be using *Anishinaabe*

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<sup>2</sup> The term “postcolonial” employed throughout this dissertation will be explained in greater detail below (see pages 89-90), but in brief it is being used to political structures and projects that serve to reify an integrative and at least partially assimilative approach to settler-indigenous relations and the conditions of indigeneity within the settler state.

(singular noun or adjective) or *Anishinaabeg* (plural noun) as the default nomenclature. This is the term used by most of my indigenous participants to describe themselves and other indigenous people in the area, and is generally used to refer to any indigenous person, or a member of the indigenous culture group historically known as the Anishinaabeg, traditionally speaking dialects of *Anishinaabemowin* (a member of the Algonquian language family), belonging – somewhat loosely speaking – to the tribes most recently known as the Ojibwe (“Chippewa”), the Odawa (“Ottawa”), and the Potawatomi. The only term used more frequently by both Native and non-Native participants was “Indian,” and while this term is a common and generally accepted part of the local parlance, I will for the most part be refraining from its use. “Anishinaabe” is the term more frequently used by those consciously asserting a decolonial identity, and I am interested in supporting that effort.

This same group of indigenous Minnesotans are also known as the Ojibwe (variously spelled) and, for official legal purposes, the Chippewa. The former is a pre-colonial tribal designation that took on greater significance during the colonial era; the latter is a derivation of the former, used to create an official label and political designation for the Anishinaabe residents of Minnesota (as well as the neighboring states) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Meyer 1994; Vizenor 1984). I will occasionally use these terms when referring to political circumstances in which they are leveraged as tools of identification (i.e., the “Minnesota Chippewa Tribe” as the central governing council for Anishinaabeg in the state), but generally the terms Ojibwe or Chippewa will be used to refer to political entities rather than individual Anishinaabeg or as adjective identifiers.

For more information on indigenous and political terminology, see the Glossary.

## Chapter 2: The Sacred Story of Wenabozho and the Flood

### 2.1 Introduction

The first of the three narrative cases examined in this dissertation is the traditional Anishinaabe narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood. This narrative holds strong significance for the Anishinaabeg, as it outlines a seminal event in the Anishinaabe spiritual history, and speaks to the nature of the relationship between humans and animals, and the ethical and ontological root of the world. The narrative itself is outlined further below. Anishinaabeg from different family and cultural backgrounds place varied levels of importance on the Flood narrative, ranging from those rare few who are mostly unaware of the narrative, or at least the details thereof, to those elders and members of the Midewiwin Lodge for whom the narrative describes the factual history of the recreation of the world in which we live following a global flood-event. People belonging to these two extremes tend to be relatively few; for most Anishinaabeg (at least in the region in which this study took place), the narrative constitutes a kind of parable, communicating a metaphorical history (albeit often assumed to be based on a factual historical event in which a massive flood washed over the land), acting as a vessel for normative information and, together with other traditional narratives, informing the concept of *mino-bimaadizjwin* – the “good way of living.” It is, for the Anishinaabeg, similar in form and function to the biblical Flood narrative for Christians: widely varied in interpretation and application, but believed by most to be a narrative statement of foundational ethics informing the proper way to think about the world, about the nature of human responsibility, and how to interact with the rest of Creation.<sup>3</sup>

During the designing of this study, I determined that in order to understand the relative effects of different kinds of narrative information, and the influence that narratives played in an environment with varied political and social perspectives, the narrative case studies themselves would need to represent to the extent possible this diversity of perspective. In general, the three broad categories of narratives with which I intended to start were (1) traditional stories, (2) histories, and (3) news stories or current events. The narratives chosen for particular cases needed to represent these types, to have some level of observable impact on the local population, and to have demonstrated some measure of circulation in both Native and non-Native social spaces. After considering a number of traditional

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<sup>3</sup> The differences between these two seemingly quite similar spiritual histories speak volumes regarding the position of humanity in the wider spectrum of natural life assumed by Anishinaabeg and Christians: where Noah cuts down immense quantities of forest in order to construct an unprecedentedly enormous ship, with which he saves the representatives of the rest of the animal world, Wenabozho manages to climb aboard a log, and is ultimately saved by the heroism of the meekest of the remaining animals. This divide, found widely between Christian and Native American spiritual beliefs, speaks to the root of the human exceptionalism that defines the former religious tradition, and the human dependence on nature which defines the latter (Deloria 2003).

narratives with strong salience to the Anishinaabeg and some traction in non-Native spaces as well, the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood was selected.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional narratives, for the Anishinaabeg, are the primary learning tool used in precolonial (and decolonial) pedagogical practices. They provided knowledge and entertainment, but their foremost sociological purpose was in the instruction of social and moral norms that shaped the concept of *mino-bimaadiziwin*. Through these narratives, adults created means of understanding cultural values that were accessible to young children, and further, the narratives would serve as points of reference for explaining the appropriateness of certain actions throughout day-to-day life. Certain renditions of the Flood narrative, for instance, tell that the flood itself was the result of the violence, greed, and other misdeeds of the people living on the Earth, which angered Gichi-Manidoo, and – like its biblical counterpart – the narrative thus communicated the importance of living in ways that are in accordance with traditional moral and ethical values.

Broadly speaking, in many indigenous cultures in North America including the Anishinaabeg, a kind of ontological pluralism undergirds belief systems that is wholly different from the rigidity of Western Enlightenment thinking (Deloria 2003). The centrality of the Midewiwin and the associated spiritual history which its members transmitted to the rest of the tribe was first challenged by the Jesuit missionaries during a period which is referred to as the “fifth fire”<sup>5</sup> in Anishinaabe tribal history (Benton-Banai 2010). The Jesuits were the first, but hardly the last Christian group to challenge the primacy of the traditional Anishinaabe religion. In northern Minnesota, the most influential sects have been the Catholics and the Episcopalians (Kugel 2012), both of whom have experienced widespread success in converting large segments of the Anishinaabeg population through a variety of institutional mechanisms, including boarding schools, the placement of missionaries and other religious officials in positions of power over the Anishinaabeg, and the association of religious conversion with the

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<sup>4</sup> Other possible narratives which were considered, but not selected for focused analysis, included the story of Wenabozho’s birth, the story of Wenabozho and the Ducks, and the story of how Wenabozho assigned names to the animals and plants of the Anishinaabe lifeworld. Renditions of these stories and others can be found in the Oshkaabewis Journal (Bemidji State University 1979-2011), in Anton Treuer’s *Living Our Language* (2008), and in various other texts predominately produced by Anishinaabe authors (Coatsworth & Kagige 1980; Coleman, Frogner, & Eich 2011; Hindley 1885; McLellan 1989-2012; Reid 1964; Vecsey 1983).

<sup>5</sup> The “Seven Fires Prophecy” is a spiritual and historical narrative of the Anishinaabeg that is said to have been given to the people some hundreds of years ago, when the Anishinaabeg lived on the northeastern coastal lands of North America. “Each of these prophecies [one from each prophet] was called a Fire and each Fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future” (Benton-Banai 2010:89). The “Fifth Fire” foretold of a time when the Anishinaabeg would be visited by a false prophet promising joy and salvation, and the ones who followed this false promise would bring about the near destruction of the Anishinaabeg as a people. The arrival of the Jesuit missionaries is believed to have been the beginning of the Fifth Fire era.



concept of “competence,” which would determine a great deal about the life-chances for individual Native people (Brower, Hill, & Lewis 1911; Meyer 1999).

The pluralistic allowance of multiple coexisting perspectives in the Anishinaabe worldview also facilitated extensive integration of Christian and Anishinaabe beliefs and practices, which continues today (US DHHS n.d.). This integrative approach to cultural innovation and the assimilation that the Anishinaabeg experience has proven invaluable as a way of perpetuating the survival of traditional knowledges and practices; rather than undergo complete conversion, the Anishinaabeg in many cases adapted their practices to include Christian ceremonies and prayers, which were typically practiced at certain limited times and places per Christian tradition, yet continued to offer tobacco throughout the course of daily activities, participate in ceremonies including funerals and naming ceremonies, and pray to Gichi Manidoo [the Great Spirit]. Linguistic adaptations were also made, depending on the particular church and the attitudes of the missionaries, including the translation of many Christian prayers and hymns into Anishinaabemowin (McNally 2009; Meyer 1999).

In the edited collection, *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies* (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2011), stories are positioned as the core material around which Anishinaabe cultural continuity, resurgence, and resistance is built. The editors collect the essays into seven sections based on the broad functions that stories and storytelling serve for the Anishinaabeg, including the fostering of a sense of history and ancestral continuity, making space for cultural and spiritual innovation, helping to interpret and weather colonial struggles, and creating an internal and reflexive dialog within Anishinaabe communities. This collection makes clear that storytelling is not only important to the process of continued survival, to cultural and spiritual health, and to political empowerment, but is in fact the foundational methodology of Anishinaabe survivance. The collection also speaks to the importance of the Flood narrative in particular, as it opens with a characteristically irreverent account of this narrative by Nawash Chippewa scholar John Borrows, in which Nanaboozhoo begins the story at a laptop, distracted from writing by his voracious hunger, and experiences Great Flood after falling through the hole in an outhouse toilet, along with various animal companions, each of whom goes diving not for dirt with which to remake the Earth, but for stories with which to remake the Anishinaabeg.

This centrality of storytelling as a tool of resistance and resurgence in indigenous lifeways has been well-documented by scholars in indigenous studies, and applies not only to the Anishinaabeg (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2011; Pomedli 2014; Simpson 2011; Vizenor 1984), but to many indigenous

peoples – perhaps all, considering the universality of narrative and historical erasure as part of the “logic of elimination” (Wolfe 2006) that drives colonial projects (Allen 2002; Archibald 2008; Basso 1996; Bauerkemper 2008; Goeman 2013; Henry, Soler, & Martinez-Falquina 2009; Justice 2006; King 2003; Konkle 2004; Moore 2003; Morrow 1995; Nabokov 2002; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999; Vizenor 2008; Webber, Johnson, & Lessard 2011; Womack 1999).

During interviews, I also learned of a significant number of Anishinaabeg who have rejected Christianity and turned toward Anishinaabe spiritual traditions, though most seem to do so in an effort to improve their own health and spiritual wellness,<sup>6</sup> rather than as an explicitly decolonial political gesture. For many of these participants, traditional narratives have been integral to the process of reengaging with Anishinaabe lifeways, as these narratives not only contained the foundational knowledge informing Anishinaabe spiritual traditions, but are themselves representations of Anishinaabe epistemological practices. The capacity of the traditional narrative to both communicate the knowledges and ways of interpreting and interacting with the world, and to demonstrate in the course of telling the core Anishinaabe pedagogical and epistemological practices, makes it a mechanism of tremendous sociological importance in understanding the Anishinaabe experience of colonialism and survivance.

In this chapter I will outline the first of the three narrative case studies, the methods of data collection and analysis, and the findings pertaining to the ways in which the narrative moves through the social and political spaces of northern Minnesota and the influence the narrative holds over perceptions of Anishinaabe identity. Using these findings, I will draw out some of the theoretical implications of the patterns of communication, addressing how the first case study responds to the central research questions driving this study. Throughout this chapter (and subsequent chapters), I will be referring to the interview participants as falling into three specific categories based on their relationship to the narrative in question or to storytelling in general. I will discuss these categories in greater detail in the “Methods” section of this chapter, but in short, they are as follows: (1) storytellers, or people who produce or shape the content of the story, and communicate it to others; (2) story distributors, who facilitate storytelling through the provision of storytelling media (newspapers, books, radio, libraries, bookstores, etc.); and (3) story consumers, who are the recipients in storytelling instances. These categories will often overlap, particularly considering that the final category includes

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<sup>6</sup> Many Anishinaabe interview participants reported turning to Anishinaabe spiritual traditions and ceremonial practices later in life, after the “wild years” of youth were done, as a way to combat alcoholism, drug abuse, or habitual criminality – a strategy which, at least for these participants, has yielded tremendous benefits to their health and well-being.

all participants, and indeed, all human beings. The reader should note that these categories are not identities as such (although they may inform the identity of the individual participant), but rather actions, and are therefore not at all in conflict with one another for the given person.

Specifically, the “Discussion of Theoretical Implications” section will be divided into two main subsections, discussing first how the narrative interacts with the divisions between communities based on ethnic, cultural, and racial divisions, and second, how the narrative interacts with Ojibwe political identity and community, and reinforces what I refer to as a “decolonial” national polity. The theoretical discussion of this narrative case, and of the other two involved in this study, focuses primarily on the third research question – in short, how the narrative interacts with various borders and boundaries in order to shape the social and political dynamics of the region. The first research question, addressing the relative importance of different specific narratives and narrative types in shaping these dynamics, will be addressed more fully in Chapter 5 (Theoretical Synthesis), while the second research question, on the patterns of distribution of the various narratives and the mechanisms by which these patterns are determined, are addressed in the findings of each chapter.

## 2.2 Story synopsis

“In the Ojibwe mindset, it’s not about whether a character like Wenabozho is a person or not a person, it’s about whether he is animate or not, and those aren’t synonymous categories (in other words animate  $\neq$  person). The concept isn’t translatable. The dichotomy of fact/fiction doesn’t exist in traditional Ojibwe history. “Person” doesn’t necessarily mean an individual, it could mean a community or group of communities, because it’s about animacy” (interview fieldnote excerpt, Sept. 13, 2014).

“These spiritual leaders believe that we’re dependent on all this other life, we came after them, and we’re the puniest, most pitiful of all of them. They don’t need us, but we need them, and that’s the point of a lot of these stories” (Participant, Jan. 12, 2015).

“We had been talking about Wenabozho; I told him what [another participant] had said about maybe picking a different story because this one is maybe more sensitive and ceremonial than some of the other stories. [He] didn’t really think that was necessary; if I’m going to look at a Wenabozho story, this was an appropriate one. “Some things are sacred, but nothing is secret” – he said this, meaning that everything is meant to be shared. You have to be careful about when, how, and with whom, but there’s nothing that shouldn’t be shared. This was an interesting thing to hear from someone so traditional” (interview fieldnote excerpt, Jan. 16, 2015).

Wenabozho is known by a great many names. For people in northern Minnesota alone, he is Wenabozho, Nenabozho, Nanabush, Nanabozho, Nanaboozhoo, Nenabozha,<sup>7</sup> and almost certainly additional variants that are present but were never mentioned by the participants of the study. Outside of the local region, the variations on the character's name expand widely, including different names for analogous characters among other Anishinaabeg tribes, such as "Manabozho" among the Odawa, "Wisahkecahk" among the Cree and Oji-Cree, or "Glooscap" among the Wabanaki. As will become clear in the course of the coming chapters, this aversion to standardization which is the hallmark of the cultural attitude in the region is one of the most important conceptual findings in this study, supported by past ethnographic and historical work among Anishinaabe communities (Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark 2013; Smith 2012; Spielmann, 1998; Treuer 2008; Valentine 1995).

Wenabozho is the central folk hero of Anishinaabe traditional stories, appearing in a great variety of forms and roles, but always serving the apparent function of explaining how the important things in the Anishinaabe lifeworld came into being, got their names, and developed their primary roles. Wenabozho is, in short, a vehicle for explaining how the world came to be this way, invariably through an entertaining, often crass and funny series of events (Coatsworth 1979; Hindley 1885; Leekley 1965; Reid 1964). Wenabozho himself, although he is actually a *manidoo* (spirit), is eminently human, embodying the primal drives of hunger, lust, and humor. Wenabozho is forever hungry, enacting his most devious trickery in the pursuit of food, often fooling animals into sacrificing themselves to sate his empty stomach.<sup>8</sup>

The stories of Wenabozho's exploits serve to explain how the world came to be the way that it is, from where things derived their names, and how to properly interact with the world. Elder participants were emphatic that I recall that he is a shapeshifter – a *person* in the Anishinaabe sense of the concept (that is, having a spirit), but not necessarily all human, not necessarily all animal, not necessarily all spirit. This flexibility of form extends also to the representations embodied by Wenabozho, for he is not necessarily good nor evil, though he contributes (as most beings are assumed to) to the balance of good and evil, and of the natural world. Gerald Vizenor describes him thus: "The trickster is comic in the sense that he does not reclaim idealistic ethics, but survives as a part of

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<sup>7</sup> Most of these are present in various written sources (i.e., Gross 2014; Hindley 1885; Ramraj 1994; Reid 1964; Treuer 2008), although the "Nenabozha" is a phonetic approximation of a pronunciation by a participant.

<sup>8</sup> A wide variety of these narratives can be found in the *Oshkaabewis Journal* (1979-2011), published by the American Indian Resource Center at Bemidji State University. The individual narratives are authored by an array of Anishinaabe storytellers, often orally-recorded and transcribed for print in Anishinaabemowin and English.

the natural world; he represents a spiritual balance in a comic drama rather than the romantic elimination of human contradictions and evil” (1984: 4).

In the subsequent sections involving the second and third narrative cases – namely, the Shaynowishkung biography and the Honor the Earth campaign narratives, respectively – I will provide a more detailed accounts of the narratives themselves, chronicling the life-history of the central character in the former and the development, actions, and conflicts of the latter. The narrative case of Wenabozho and the Flood, however, presents a special challenge.

Throughout the history of engagement between Western academia and indigenous peoples, the practice of cultural appropriation has been not only common, but indeed a defining trait of scholarly work, particularly in the field of anthropology (among any number of prototypical examples, ethnographies on Anishinaabe communities have certainly been guilty of this – see, for instance, Dewdney 1975; Hallowell 1964; Hoffman 1891; Kohl 2008; Landes 1937). For the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota, the appearance of the white academic researcher raises significant red flags, with some Anishinaabeg (especially elders and others adhering to more traditional values and lifeways) flatly refusing to participate in any research project. During the process of getting advice from local experts on how best to conduct the project, the most significant and ubiquitous concern I encountered from the Anishinaabe community was that I would, intentionally or not, record their stories and publish them without permission. In order to respect the cultural and intellectual sovereignty of the Anishinaabe subjects, I refrained from recording any traditional stories told to me during interviews, including the Flood narrative. This particular story has been published in a variety of books authored by Native and non-Native writers, but I have not recorded its details or oral renditions, and I will not be reporting the story in its entirety here.

The Anishinaabe story of the Great Flood is similar to other Flood-narratives that exist in cultures around the world (including the widely-known Christian biblical story),<sup>9</sup> as it involves a world-wide flood covering and effectively erasing all the earth. In the wake of the flood, it is left to Wenabozho and the animals to recreate the world. With the animals’ help, Wenabozho remakes the world from a few grains of dirt and sand, mirroring the original creation of the “first world” (Benton-Banai 1988) by *Gitchi-Manidoo* (The Great Spirit/Creator).

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<sup>9</sup> A comparison made by numerous Native and non-Native participants. Interestingly, not all those who made this comparison were practicing Christians – on at least two occasions, self-described “traditional” Anishinaabeg who follow the indigenous spiritual tradition posited that the Anishinaabe and Christian Flood narratives described the same historical event, or were influenced by each other.

Wenabozho himself is the central figure of many Anishinaabe narratives, appearing as a manifestation of all that is best and worst about human beings (although Wenabozho himself is not strictly human, existing somewhere between the human and the divine). He is a trickster and shapeshifter, existing outside what a Western audience might think of as the good-and-evil spectrum, instead demonstrating himself to be a creature of fundamental drives – hunger, envy, humor, and the desire for comfortable life. In an allegorical sense, his life and doings might be thought of as an ongoing series of cautionary tales, though many of the more traditionally-minded Anishinaabeg see Wenabozho not as allegory but as a historical figure. This distinction points toward cultural concepts of the separation between reality and fiction (or lack thereof), which is a fascinating part of Anishinaabe indigenous ontology and epistemology, but a story for another time.

A full oral telling of the Flood narrative is relatively rare, taking place primarily in ceremonial settings, where it falls under the category of *aadizookaanag* (sacred stories). The Anishinaabe language lacks the male-female gender dichotomy of English and most other Western languages, instead dividing nouns and verbs into categories of “animate” and “inanimate.” The concept of “animacy” is a troubling one from a Western perspective that draws a fairly rigid distinction between the term “animate” and the term “alive.” In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, & Queer Affect* (2012), Mel Y. Chen discusses how the dividing line we draw between “animacy” and “inanimacy” shapes much in the social and political world, and that identifying a definition for animacy is a fraught project at best. “By writing that animacy ‘invest[s] a certain body...with humanness or animateness,’ [Mutsumi Yamamoto] implicitly rejects the idea that there is a fixed assignment of animate values to things-in-the-world that is consistently reflected in our language, taking instead the cognitivist approach that the world around us animates according to what we humans make of it” (Chen 2012:8). Although the Anishinaabe concept of animacy is not presumed to depend on human perception – in fact, this idea would be quite anathema to Anishinaabe ontology and ethics – the ontological construction of animacy being based largely in linguistics, as Chen addresses, is appropriate given that, for Anishinaabeg, the delineations of animacy and inanimacy are negotiated not only contextually, but narratively. In Anishinaabe ontology, these categories do not necessarily refer to movement, or even to life in the sense that someone familiar with Western ontology would think of it – rather, they have to do with the potential for a given object to be the embodiment of a *manidoo* (spirit) (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Geniusz 2009; Smith 2012), and from outside the culture, the things that may and may not have a spirit seem somewhat counterintuitive. In the case of stories, the *aadizookaanag* are animate and therefore are treated as having will, action, and consequences unto themselves, whereas

*dibaajimowinan* are inanimate stories. Typically, stories that have ceremonial significance are animate (*aadižookaanag*), and stories told in casual conversation, stories relating news, or stories told in an informal way (even those that might otherwise be told ceremonially) are inanimate (*dibaajimowinan*).<sup>10</sup>

On the exact distinction between the two categories of narratives, different Anishinaabe elders with whom I've spoken disagree somewhat on the nature of the difference, some attributing it to the narrative itself (Story A is *aadižookaan* while Story B is *dibaajimowin*), others to the context and method by which the narrative is communicated (Story A is *aadižookaan* when told in Anishinaabemowin and in ceremonial context, but is *dibaajimowin* when written in a book, mentioned casually in conversation, or told in a language other than Anishinaabemowin).

### 2.3 Methods

For traditional people<sup>11</sup> in the Minnesota Anishinaabe community, there is a season for storytelling, encompassing the time between when the first snow falls (usually in Autumn), and the last snow and ice melts (usually in Spring). This tradition has both practical and spiritual justifications. From a practical perspective, winter is the time when there is little outdoor work to be done. The prey animals have mostly gone into hibernation, the plants (including the staple wild rice) are mostly not providing sustenance or medicine, the sap in the trees has stopped flowing, and it is frequently too cold to spend much time outdoors. To pass the hours indoors, the elders would tell stories. This also provided a designated time each year for the wisdom of traditional storytelling to be passed along, similar in some ways to the Western education systems which are scheduled around the agrarian calendar despite the inapplicability of this structure for many if not most students today. Storytelling is a cultural practice that is taken quite seriously among the Anishinaabeg, although many of the stories themselves are humorous and often fanciful or even lewd and/or scatological in content.

The presence of snow covering the ground, and ice covering the lakes and rivers, relates to storytelling in another way by providing a period in which the *manidoog* can be safely talked about

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<sup>10</sup> For more (and increasingly comprehensive) information on the Anishinaabe language, particularly the dialect spoken in Minnesota, see the Ojibwe People's Dictionary at <http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/>.

<sup>11</sup> In the local parlance, Native people who follow practices, beliefs, and lifestyles associated with precolonial culture are generally referred to as "traditional people," by both Natives and non-Natives. In *The White Earth Tragedy* (1999), Meyer makes an argument that the term "traditional" implies something static and regressive, and chooses instead to refer to these lifestyles and beliefs as "conservative," casting this group as a separate ethnicity from the "mixed-blood" ethnic group informed more heavily by Christian, capitalist, and assimilationist values and beliefs. I am sympathetic to this argument, and to an extent I agree that the term is problematic as Meyer notes. However, it seems to me that the term "conservative," with its connotations of preserving some part of the past in perpetuity, is not less problematic in this way than "traditional," and given that the latter term is how most Anishinaabeg (and non-Natives) with whom I spoke referred to this cultural/ethnic perspective, it is the term I will be using throughout this dissertation.

without risking their ire or retribution. During the winter months, most of the animal and plant spirits are believed to be asleep or trapped under snow and ice, and therefore not in a position to take offense if stories about them are shared among the Anishinaabeg. For spiritual reasons, the *aadizookaananag* are especially sensitive when it comes to the seasonal traditions.

Although the practical restrictions would not be a hindrance to my particular project, nor do I adhere to the spiritual beliefs of the traditional Anishinaabe ontology, one of the most important elements of this research project was to respect the intellectual sovereignty of the Anishinaabe participants – a task which calls for some level of conformity to the traditions and restrictions entailed in the Anishinaabe way of living and way of knowing. For the purpose of my research, I therefore restricted my interviews on the subject of the Flood narrative to the winter months, between the first snowfall and the last snow-melt.

For investigating this narrative, I used a strategy of theoretical sampling, driven by a concept of the various influences and locations of communication of the Flood and other narratives – an approach which evolved over the course of the study as new information came to light concerning the identities of storytellers and story distributors, and the ways in which the narratives influenced the perceptions and relationships of story consumers. This approach involved a combination of purposive and snowball sampling for recruiting interview participants, and supplemented the information in the interviews with textual data collected from written accounts of the Flood by Anishinaabe and other authors, including anthropologists studying the Anishinaabeg (Hindley 1885; Kohl 1860; Schoolcraft 1979), Anishinaabe authors producing works of fiction and folktales (Benton-Banai 1988; Kawbawgam & LePique 1895) as well as non-fiction historical and popular-cultural accounts (Ferguson 2001; Johnston 2004; Peacock & Wisuri 2002; Tanner 1992), and various authors who included the Flood narrative in books of children's stories (Coatsworth 1980; Reid 1964). This textual data also provided a backdrop against which to situate the accounts from interview participants, as their own recollections of the narrative differed, and many (particularly among non-Native participants) knew the narrative primarily from written accounts.

In identifying interview participants, I began with recommendations from local Anishinaabe scholars, and from the Reservation Business Committees at the Leech Lake and White Earth reservations. At the end of each interview I would ask participants for recommendations regarding other people with whom I might want to speak. This sampling method was helpful in identifying people who were knowledgeable about the Flood narrative, although contained a significant flaw in that it led me away from the population of mostly non-Native people living in the area who knew very



little about the story, and were generally ignorant of – and sometimes denigrating toward – traditional Anishinaabe culture. I attempted to balance this somewhat by contacting members of local community and business organizations having little or nothing to do with Anishinaabe culture, engaging in impromptu conversations with people in restaurants, parks, and other public places, and generally targeting people outside the scope of the traditional and/or tribal organizations and institutions where the knowledge of the Flood narrative was clearly stronger. This diversified strategy yielded diverse results, allowing for an examination of patterns of difference in the communication and functioning of the traditional Flood narrative.

Interview participants, for the Flood narrative as well as the two other narrative cases, were categorized into three overlapping designations: (1) *storytellers*, or those who produced and/or directly communicated the narratives, such as oral storytellers, authors, educators, or visual artists using narrative media; (2) *story distributors*, or those who facilitate and distribute the narratives of storytellers, such as publishers, people working in public media, librarians, bookstore owners, and school administrators; and lastly, (3) *story consumers*, or people who are exposed to the narratives through listening to, reading, or seeing them being communicated. All participants – and, indeed, all people – are story consumers, and to an extent are storytellers and distributors as well, considering that people are constantly relating narrative information or facilitating spaces for others to do so (Niles 1999). However, the first and second designation only apply to some participants where the particular narratives in question are concerned. Hence, all participants received the questions about narrative consumption, and a smaller selection received additional questions about their roles and experiences as storytellers, story distributors, or both.

The questions for story consumers probed their knowledge of the particular narrative or narratives about which we were speaking (in broad chronological terms, the order of the chapters in the dissertation follows the order in which I investigated the three narrative cases, although many interviews involved overlapping lines of questioning about multiple narratives), and the way in which this particular narrative, or others like it, influenced their perceptions of and interactions with Anishinaabe culture, history, and politics. The interview guide also contained questions about the extent of the participant's knowledge about local history – particularly Anishinaabe/settler history – and their perceptions of Anishinaabe/Anishinaabe identity.

For storytellers and story distributors, the additional questions pertained largely to how they saw their own roles in the narrative life of the region, the process by which they made decisions regarding what information or version of a narrative to include or exclude, and discrepancies between

intended and actual audience as well as intended and actual impact. Story distributors were also asked about the geographic and social provenance of the stories they distribute, and how much leeway or creative license is given to the storyteller in determining the exact content of a given narrative that is to be distributed.<sup>12</sup>

In order to analyze the content of the interviews, detailed transcriptions of interview recordings were taken, including direct quotes and notes on tone of voice, as well as additional material on body language, locations, and other information about the circumstances of the interview based on written and recorded fieldnotes. These transcriptions were scrutinized for common themes, phrases, and sentiments, and analyzed for repeating patterns associated with particular subsets of the interview sample and with related observations made in the course of ethnographic fieldwork. In cases where respondents were interviewed more than once, responses to particular questions were also compared the previous statements on similar and related subjects to help identify discrepancies, uncertainties, or changes of perspective over time.

The approach to qualitative analysis involved in this study, particularly concerning the first two narrative case studies, focuses particularly on the influence of the identity, positionality, and experiences of the individual participants in shaping their perceptions of both the narratives themselves and the social and political environment which they interpret through these narratives. This approach is similar in function to the employment of the “humanistic coefficient” (Znaniecki 1927; 1986) that Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki recommended in interpretive social science research. Znaniecki theorized the humanistic coefficient as the connection between the lived context of the informant and their perceptions of the social world, and in this, the concept is similar to my own approach, in that each respondent’s relationship to the collective bodies of narratives they share within their overlapping communities is necessarily informed by their own sense of identity and experiences. The concept of the humanistic coefficient is made yet more useful here through its rejection of the pursuit of a single objective truth in qualitative research, in favor of a plurality of “truths” which are *informed by* empirical reality, but which are also filtered through the humanistic coefficient to create something that is highly variable between individuals (Znaniecki 1986:7).

The sampling of textual sources of data regarding the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood primarily involved a detailed spatial analysis of the locations of Flood narrative sources throughout northern Minnesota and elsewhere. In order to identify the paths of travel for the narrative, I began

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<sup>12</sup> For the full interview guide, see Appendix A.

by determining the titles of as many books and other text sources that contained the narrative (or fragments thereof) as possible. I then took inventory in bookstores, public and academic libraries, archives, museums, and other text repositories throughout towns between the Leech Lake and White Earth reservations, including but not limited to Bemidji, Cass Lake, Walker, Grand Rapids, Longville, Solway, Mahnomen, White Earth, Park Rapids, and Detroit Lakes. I also inventoried books, magazines, and pamphlets at select locations in Duluth, Fargo, and the Twin Cities in order to determine the extent to which certain local renditions of the Flood narrative traveled outside the immediate vicinity from which they were produced.

On a broader level, I also performed a detailed spatial analysis of the locations of the particular texts pertaining to the Anishinaabe Flood narrative by taking inventory of the presence and absence of these texts in academic and public libraries and library systems throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ontario (the primary states and province which are the present-day location of the Anishinaabeg), as well as certain sites outside of this region in order to be able to draw conclusions about the impact of distance from the narrative source, of national and state boundaries, of tribal differentiation, and other factors on the availability and prevalence of the Flood narrative. The locations of appearance for the Flood narrative were translated into visual media in the form of maps depicting the spread of the Flood narrative and the density with which it appears at particular locations (see Figures 1 & 2).

## 2.4 Findings

“When asked about the particular significance of the Nanabozho story, [the participant] says quickly that Nanabozho is the Everyman; he’s sometimes the protagonist, sometimes the antagonist, sometimes the hero, sometimes the fool, but he’s the center of many stories because he’s how people learn things. His life tales are how people got taught things. [The participant] has a harder time saying whether the stories have influenced him in that way, because most of the references he hears to Nanabozho are these isolated, tangential references (because he’s an older adult and he hasn’t been in many of the circumstances when those stories get told). Example: at a meeting to decide what to do about the wolf hunting, someone brought up the relationship between Nanabozho and the wolf, that wolf taught Nanabozho the names of things. So that’s how [the participant] gets exposed to the character. Nanabozho affects his understandings and his actions, but not because of a particular story” (interview fieldnote excerpt, Jan. 14, 2015)

“The Ojibwe have to make some adaptations and changes as far as storytelling is concerned, because the people and their circumstances have changed and are changing, and those stories need to be accessible; on the other hand though, too much change is a damaging thing. If you make the stories too easy to access, so that people

can just go around the elders instead of going to them; so that they can take the easy path to the stories instead of the harder but more rewarding one, something is lost” (Participant, Jan. 16, 2015)

#### **a. Modes of Communication**

Among Anishinaabe participants, Wenabozho is a near-ubiquitous character, known among traditional and non-traditional people alike, although carrying a much greater weight of significance within traditional Anishinaabe narrative culture. The story of the Flood isn’t universally known, but there are “narrative fragments” that circulate much more widely than the full narrative. These fragments consist of symbols, characters, discrete events or other elements of the narrative that act as mnemonic devices, referring back to the narrative as a whole, or to particular meaningful parts of the narrative that hold relevant significance for the circumstances of their evocation. References to the diving muskrat, to Wenabozho floating on a log, or to Turtle Island allow the speaker or writer to refer to specific themes and concepts of the narrative without having to engage in a full storytelling act – an especially useful communicative device when dealing with stories that carry certain loaded spiritual meaning and/or specifications concerning the circumstances of their telling. The narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood is told, in its complete form, most often in ceremonial contexts, in which the telling is very different from when a storyteller might tell it to a group of children in a more casual social context.

Outside of the ceremonial context, Anishinaabeg encounter Wenabozho, and fragments of the Flood narrative, throughout the course of their lives, beginning when they are children. During childhood, stories like these are more frequently communicated whole, becoming less frequent and more fragmented as children enter adolescence and adulthood. Some Wenabozho stories are more specifically designed for entertainment value and are told more frequently in casual situations (Treuer 2008). The Flood narrative holds particular ontological and ethical significance and contains relatively little humor by comparison to many other Wenabozho tales (depending on the telling), and so its appearance in informal conversation and storytelling sessions is rare. The story has been told and retold in numerous written sources from both Native and non-Native authors (Coatsworth 1980; Hindley 1885; Warren 1885), including the *Mishoomis Book* (1988) by Eddie Benton-Benai, a book which has some popularity among Anishinaabeg in Northern Minnesota. During interviews, when Anishinaabe respondents indicated having read the story in text, this was invariably the source. In spite of the many written accounts, most Anishinaabeg seem not to have encountered the story of the

Flood in these text sources, nor do they express much interest in reading what was traditionally an important Anishinaabe oral narrative.

By stark contrast, knowledge of Wenabozho (and especially of particular narratives such as the story of the Flood) among the non-Native population in northern Minnesota is extremely scarce, despite his cultural and spiritual significance for the large indigenous population residing in the area. Those non-Native people who are familiar with this (or another) Wenabozho narrative have most commonly encountered the character in books, or through mention of his name(s) in conversation with more knowledgeable Native friends, family, or coworkers. Non-Native participation in the formal oral tradition of Anishinaabe culture is extremely rare. However, despite the lack of first-hand experience or direct or teaching of the Flood narrative or other traditional narratives, there are opportunities through text and other forms of interaction for non-Natives to encounter the narrative, and even learn a great deal about the characters, the place of the particular narrative and traditional narratives in general, and the significance of these stories in Anishinaabe life. The broad ignorance of these things among the non-Native population is not a matter of access, but rather of interest, active engagement, and modes of communication. These elements create significant divides between local residents, resulting in broadly differential levels and qualities of knowledge between the separated narrative communities.

#### **b. Geographic/Social Patterns of Distribution**

From a spatial perspective, the story of Wenabozho and the Flood is widespread, following the dispersed population of Anishinaabeg living on the reservations, in Bemidji and other smaller towns, and in rural non-reservation areas. It is geographically diffuse, even to the extent that it has gone global (if on a relatively non-influential way) given the broad distribution of books containing retellings of the original narrative (see Figure 1). The story of Wenabozho and the Flood is not associated with any particular space that would be recognizable by the standards of Western political thought. The Flood was considered to be a global event, and the new world which was created on the back of a turtle is often considered to be North America, but the absoluteness with which Shaynowishkung is associated with Bemidji, Cass Lake, and Inger (which I discuss further below), is absent from the Flood narrative. It is notable, however, that the universality of the flood itself, and the sense of attachment between Turtle Island and the Anishinaabeg indicate that while this narrative is detached from political geography, it is not at all detached from physical space.

The attachment of narratives and narrative communities to particular physical spaces borrows in particular from the concept of “imaginative geography” coined by postcolonial scholar Edward Said (2014:49-72), and draws as well on the near-identically named by conceptually distinct “imagined geographies” of Thomas Biolsi (2005). Although Biolsi’s work on imagined geographies is written in reference and response to Anderson’s “imagined communities” (2006), it shares some useful similarities with Said’s theory as well. In *Orientalism* (2014), Said writes of the perceptual imposition of the “Orient” as a geographic space: “A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call ‘the land of the barbarians.’ In other words, this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can* be entirely arbitrary” (54, original emphasis). Said clarifies that these spaces need not be agreed upon by the people who inhabit them, as they are entirely a cognitive artifact in the minds of the designators. In the course of determining what is included within the borders of the space which is “ours,” and what is relegated to the space that is “theirs,” we are also asserting particular sociological, cultural, political, and of course geographic boundaries between people – in a sense, creating “peoples” from what might otherwise simply be termed “people.” This is also, we may note, an assertion of identity, both for the self and the other.

In an article published in *American Ethnologist*, Biolsi discusses how indigenous spaces in the United States, and the understandings of the political significance and ownership of those spaces, challenge dominant concepts of nationhood – a discussion we will return to in Chapter 5. By rooting the concept of American Indian identity in certain spatial geographies, it becomes possible for indigenous people to redraw the boundaries erected between segments of their own population through colonial mechanisms of membership. Biolsi points out that this can come with certain drawbacks, as much of the redefinition of identity is racially-based, which holds a host of dangers, but most of these efforts to exercise sovereign control over indigenous identities argue for the primacy of ancestry and precolonial tribal citizenship. The core of Biolsi’s argument lines up neatly with Said’s view of geographies (and their associated identities) as imaginary – not in the sense of being somehow fake, but rather existing fundamentally in the mind: “This narrative of imagined Native geographies suggests that spatializations are constitutive of subjectivities. To have or to claim particular rights – that is, to be a political subject of any kind – is necessarily to inhabit particular forms of imagined or achieved – even if unstable or contested – political space” (Biolsi 2005:253).

It is my contention, drawing on the concepts of imagined or imaginative geography (and imagined or imaginative identity or community à la Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006)), that the ways that various narratives and narrative types move through the geography of northern Minnesota, as well as the ways in which they *don't* move or are rooted within the confines of particular social and political spaces, can tell us much about how these narratives go about their work of informing the identities, social positions, and patterns of conflict and cooperation of the Anishinaabeg living in the region.

The primary mode of communication of the Flood narrative in northern Minnesota appears to be through oral communication, either in a ceremonial context, or in the course of casual discourse. The narrative has also been written, in part or in whole, in a surprisingly large array of books, book chapters, and articles, but while these sources have a much wider geographic reach than the oral narratives, they also appear (at least in the local context) to be a significantly less common way of encountering the narrative. I will address each of these modes of communication and their spatial implications in turn.

#### *Ceremonial communication*

“There are certain things you do before you tell spiritual stories, and some of them take a really long time, some lasting for hours. It's a teaching tool, teaching the storyteller and the audience patience, perseverance, and respect. A story is a teaching. In college, they tell you to go look at the title, go through the book, look at the stuff in it, and form some questions, but what they're really telling you is to figure out what you want from that story, what you want that story to teach you. Take what you want to learn” (Participant, Sept. 13, 2014).

The most protected mode by which the Flood narrative is communicated is in particular traditional Anishinaabe ceremonies, and this is therefore the mode of communication about which I am able to say the least. In speaking with Anishinaabe elders and members of the Midewiwin at Leech Lake and White Earth, I was informed that the Flood narrative, or at least some mention of its narrative components (Wenabozho, muskrat, the flood itself, the turtle on whose back earth was rebuilt, and so on) occasionally appears in funerary rites, and the implication was made that there are other ceremonial settings in which the narrative is told, but the elders were for the most part uninterested in going into detail on the subject, and I opted not to press the issue. What was made quite explicit on repeated occasions was the fact that the ceremonial telling of the Flood narrative – the narrative as *aadizookaan* – is necessarily in Anishinaabemowin, and the narrative could not and

would not be told in English in any kind of official or ceremonial way. To do so would be patently offensive to the storyteller, the audience, and the spirits spoken of and residing in the narrative.

During interviews, elders and other “traditional people” generally would not talk about the story in detail, avoiding using the names of characters, talking in some cases about where they might have heard the narrative or what significance it might hold, but even in this they were generally circumspect, preferring to allow me to come to my own conclusions. This kind of careful vagueness and reticence to interpret the narrative is commensurate with the old cultural taboo among some Anishinaabeg against determining the path for another being, whether it be the right interpretation of certain information or interfering with the natural habitat of an animal member of the local ecosystem (Gross 2014; Spielmann 1998).

The ceremonial telling of the Flood narrative is, perhaps more than any other context of communication, constitutive of certain clear and, to many Anishinaabeg’s minds, inviolable borders. The ceremonial telling of this and other similar narratives is told (A) only in certain social contexts that are culturally exclusive, (B) in a language very few people (and almost no non-Anishinaabeg) speak fluently, (C) pertaining to a set of archetypal characters and concepts that speak uniquely to the complex system of references and double-meanings that characterize Anishinaabemowin as a language (Gross 2014; Spielmann 1998; Valentine 1995). I should note that, although the settings where the narrative is communicated in this way are as I said culturally exclusive, that is not necessarily to say that they are *racially* exclusive. As Meyer (1999) does in her study of the White Earth Reservation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, I am here drawing more of an ethnic distinction than a racial or genetic one. The people who attend these ceremonies – indeed, the people helping to conduct the ceremonies and tell the stories – are not eligible to do so based on their blood quantum or genetic heritage, but rather their knowledge and position within the cultural and social structures of the local Anishinaabe community, and/or the Midewiwin. However, the many restrictions and requirements placed on the traditional oral telling of the narrative does create a clear distinction between not only Anishinaabe and non-Native, but between those who attend certain types of traditional ceremonies and understand the language, and those who do not.

Despite the small size of this particular cultural in-group, the strictness of the boundaries the narrative and traditional ceremonial storytelling in general establishes between the in-group and everyone else is matched by the force and clarity with which it breaks other boundaries. All Anishinaabeg with whom I spoke, without exception, participated to some degree in Anishinaabe ceremonial and spiritual events.



Whether a person “goes to ceremony” appears almost exclusively dependent on three things: (1) personal identification as Anishinaabe (usually including non-Ojibwe Native people living in the area); (2) possession of personal relationships with people, especially parents and grandparents, who go or have gone to ceremony; (3) “traditional” lifestyle, including partial-to-full subsistence based on hunting, foraging, and small-scale agriculture, observance of traditional rituals such as the use of tobacco, and at least partial adherence to Anishinaabe spiritual beliefs. These determinations are *influenced* by the presence of arbitrary boundaries of reservation and blood quantum, insofar as those who qualify under criterion #1 generally identify “Anishinaabe” or “Indian” as a racial marker as much as a cultural one, and those who qualify under criteria #2 and 3 are generally more likely to live in the kinds of insular Anishinaabe communities that are most common within the reservation boundaries. That being said, the participation in ceremony transcends racial and political boundaries, demonstrating a challenge to colonial divisions through engagement with indigenous modes of social action.

Despite the inclusiveness of the general category of “ceremony,” there are certain types of ceremonies and rites that are considerably more exclusive. In circumstances when more directed spiritual action is taken (e.g., ritual healing), the participants may be kept solely to members of the Midewiwin, itself further differentiated by ordered ranks which in part determine participation or exclusion where a particular rite is concerned (Hoffman 1891; Landes 1968; Vecsey 1983). About these ceremonies and rites I have no information, and cannot speak to the specific use of storytelling, except to say that stories (and, indeed, all spoken language) in this context are of critical importance and it is through language (among other things) that the power of *manidoog* is exercised.

The Flood narrative in particular, and traditional narratives in general, as a foundational component of the Midewiwin represents the greatest degree of institutionalization of this narrative type. Mide ceremonies are comprised in large part of storytelling acts, which are believed to request and invoke the participation of the spirits embedded in the stories themselves, as well as to reinforce social norms and moral values, and directly aid in communal and individual healing (Brown & Brightman 1998; Landes 1937; Pomedli 2014; Vecsey 1983). Thus, the traditional narratives themselves in both form and content help to shape the structure, purpose, and effect of the ceremonies and the Midewiwin Lodge itself. To some extent, these traditional narratives are constitutive of other Anishinaabe cultural and social institutions, most notably the institution of family, considering that many of the instances of traditional storytelling occur when elder family members tell the stories to children during the winter (as discussed below).

*i. Casual oral communication*

“If the white people have been around Indians, it doesn’t matter how you tell the stories. There are some stories you hold back if you’re talking to some white people, because their ignorance will make them question it or fail to understand it” (Participant, Sept. 13, 2014).

*1. Intentional, directed storytelling*

Outside of formal ceremonies, the Flood narrative being told in its entirety is far less common, particularly among Anishinaabeg themselves. There is relatively little use in one Anishinaabe storyteller telling another Anishinaabe listener the tale, as the narrative in English is stripped of its spiritual power as well as the linguistic-conceptual nuances embedded in the language when told in Anishinaabemowin, and most Anishinaabe adults are already familiar with the narrative. The Flood narrative might in some cases be told to Anishinaabe children during the winter, but it is far more common for elders and storytellers to relay one of the more overtly entertaining and less ontologically and pedagogically weighty stories about Wenabozho’s exploits, including “Wenabozho and the Ducks” in which the hero tricks a group of ducks into becoming his dinner, or the more recent “Wenabozho and Paul Bunyan,” in which Wenabozho saved the northern forests from the great lumberjack folk hero.<sup>13</sup>

In certain cases, narratives of this type have been used by Anishinaabeg to explicitly and intentionally, albeit usually gently, educate non-Native people who are living, working, or otherwise regularly interacting with the Anishinaabe community. Often, in interviews with non-Native people who had either moved to the area for work, or had for another reason suddenly begun spending a large amount of time in Anishinaabe social or professional settings, I would be told that in the early days of their experience, an Anishinaabe elder or simply a knowledgeable friend would occasionally tell these non-Native entrants into the Anishinaabe community traditional stories. These storytelling events were not impromptu or random, instead usually pertaining to some topic of discussion or particular circumstance, but were invariably noteworthy to the listener as this mode of narrative communication is highly uncommon in dominant settler society. A person acculturated in the settler society has only to imagine the seeming strangeness of speaking with another similarly socialized

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<sup>13</sup> There are many excellent sources for such stories, but none better than the *Oshkaabewis Journal*, published by Bemidji State University. The journal contains articles, poetry, and stories on a variety of subjects, but its primary function is as a bilingual (English/Ojibwe) record of transcribed oral storytelling by local Anishinaabe elders.

person who regularly illustrates their points by telling folktales in order to understand how an event like this would stick in the mind of the listener.

This practice of acculturation of the settler to the indigenous social environment has been practiced by figures in the local Anishinaabe community who might be called (to borrow a phrase from Melissa Meyer (1999)) “cultural brokers” – knowledgeable and progressive members of the Anishinaabe community who carry on traditional knowledges and lifeways, but who believe in sharing them as a means of facilitating open communication and improved relations between Native and non-Native people. In his study of Potawatomi nation-building, Chris Wetzel (2015) refers to these knowledgeable people as “national brokers,” although his characterization of these national brokers’ position – and even Meyer’s characterization of the cultural brokers at White Earth during the allotment period – implies something more formal than I observed in the course of my conversations with northern Minnesota residents. To be a “cultural broker” is, as it appeared in my interviews, to occupy an important but distinctly ad hoc and fluid position. The Anishinaabeg relaying these stories to particular non-Native coworkers and friends were doing so less as official representatives of a particular political or social body, and instead more as individuals acting on their own sense of the proper way to respond to the circumstances of the moment.

When these stories were shared, the storyteller would typically refrain from supplying the listener (who we might, in these instances, usefully think of as the “student”) with an explicit way of interpreting, understanding, or applying the story. Rather, the responsibility for interpretation and application was left to the listener/student, who would (or would not) use the story in whatever way they might need at the time. I myself have experienced this mode of teaching a number of times from some of the Anishinaabeg who have been kind enough to talk with and help me in the course of my research, and found it to be both an effective pedagogical tool for addressing acute issues in interpretation, as well as a useful way of deepening my own understanding of Anishinaabe epistemology. This kind of teaching-through-storytelling, relying on the flexibility of interpretation that narrative allows, is commensurate with traditional Anishinaabe pedagogical styles.<sup>14</sup> In *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* (2014) Lawrence Gross describes not only the practice of storytelling as a means to teach core concepts of the Anishinaabe perspective, but also the intentional omission of directed interpretation which Gross, borrowing from Jack Weatherford (2010: 156), refers to as

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, it is also similar to the socialization-through-narrative that Keith Basso (1996) described in the course of his work with the Western Apache, wherein even mentioning the name of a particular narrative conjures a host of related moral and ethical concepts designed to gently remind the listener of the proper course of action in a given situation.

“respectful individualism” (Gross 2014: 251). Traditionally, Gross explains, there has been a taboo among the Anishinaabeg against directing the course of another being’s life, and this includes deciding what another person needs to know or when they might need to know it. This might seem counterintuitive given the intentional use of storytelling as a teaching tool, but respondent storytellers insist that the telling of a particular narrative at a particular time is not about deciding what the listener needs to know, but rather recognition that the narrative itself (which, we may recall, is generally considered to be a living being) needs to be told at that moment.

The non-Native listener did not always remember the details of the story. In fact, with only one exception, non-Native respondents who had heard the Flood narrative could not remember the story in any detail; the same was true of other traditional Anishinaabe narratives that they had been told. However, there were two elements of the experience that invariably made a lasting impression on the listener: the particular meaning that they took from the narrative and, perhaps more importantly, the act of generosity and cross-cultural goodwill that the storyteller exhibited in the act of telling the story in the first place. One of the primary sources of cultural and racial animosity between the indigenous and settler populations of northern Minnesota is the sense, pervasive on both sides, of a boundary between the two groups (almost only ever referred to as “white people” and “Indians”), on the other side of which one is not welcome. To the extent that my interviews have revealed something of both sides of this imagined boundary, I have observed significant evidence to suggest that the boundary and the hostility always assumed to be lurking on the other side is more illusory than both indigenous and settler residents expect. Moreover, the boundary seems to be, to a degree, self-creating and self-enforcing; this is to say, to the extent that hostility on either side of the boundary does exist, it results largely from perceptions (justified or not) of being unwelcome on the other side.

To the non-Native listener, this act of friendly teaching through storytelling, as both a sharing of information and a recognizable Anishinaabe cultural ritual, signifies a gesture of welcome that is often unexpected and has a significant impact on the perceptions of the listener concerning the attitudes of Anishinaabeg toward local white residents and outsiders in general. In this, it serves to break down – or at least make permeable – some of the cultural boundaries that might be established by the traditional ceremonial storytelling. This does not instantly render the listener comfortable or welcome in all Anishinaabe spaces. However, it does have the effect for these select listeners of interrupting certain internal barriers, making the listener more likely to, for instance, attend a public

powwow or another more informal social gathering taking place in Anishinaabe social space.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the Flood narrative and other traditional Anishinaabe narratives, when told in their entirety in semi-formal ways, can facilitate cross-cultural contact while also providing introductory glimpses into Anishinaabe ways of thinking that rely on narrative information to connect and interpret concepts relevant to a given situation or problem.

Interestingly, when engaging with this type of traditional Anishinaabe narrative, Anishinaabe and non-Native respondents demonstrated markedly different styles of both narrative memory and interpretation. Where Anishinaabe respondents thought or spoke only rarely about particular complete narratives (i.e., the Flood narrative) and attached a complex network of shifting and flexible meanings to the broader body of traditional narratives, non-Native respondents familiar with such narratives frequently identified particular, complete narratives that they had heard (i.e., the Flood narrative or how Wenabozo gave names to the animals), and attached very specific and usually moral or ethical messages to them. These messages were generally simple and universalistic. For instance, one respondent said of the Flood narrative (and other related narratives), “These spiritual leaders believe that we’re dependent on all this other life, we came after them, and we’re the puniest, most pitiful of all of them. They don’t need us, but we need them, and that’s the point of a lot of these stories.” This sentiment was repeated, not only by non-Natives but by some Anishinaabeg during interviews – a representation of the capacity for these narratives to communicate indigenous ethical systems across cultural barriers.

However, the specificity of the sentiment, and its attribution to a singular, complete narrative, was unique to non-Native audiences. The implications of these differences in interpretive style and focused or diffuse narrative memory are complex and will be addressed in greater detail below, but broadly speaking, they suggest a form of differing narrative habitus between Anishinaabe and non-Native respondents that persists even after respondents have crossed other cultural boundaries.

## *2. Casual accounts and references*

Because of the more diffuse approach to traditional narratives demonstrated by Anishinaabe adults, the instances of communicating a traditional narrative like Wenabozho and the Flood in its

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<sup>15</sup> Powwows are frequent in northern Minnesota, and although many of them are open to anyone who wishes to attend, non-Native attendees are relatively rare at most powwows, and on many occasions white respondents repeated the same sentiment: there is a difference between being “allowed” to attend, and being “welcome” to attend. As it turns out, very few Anishinaabeg with whom I spoke expressed anything other than sentiments of welcome toward white attendees at powwows, leading me once again to conclude that expectations of hostility and fear of discomfort are perhaps the greatest barriers to intercultural contact in the area.

entirety are rare. It is much more common that the narrative will come up casually in the form of narrative fragments that are conceptually loaded and refer back to certain key elements of the narrative. These fragments act as mnemonic devices, and may be combined with fragments of other narratives, used to supplement the telling of a more complete narrative, or connected to a particular topic of conversation from which something can be learned when viewed through a perspective informed by the concepts attached to these particular narrative fragments.

A prime example of such a narrative fragment took place during an interview with a Leech Lake elder, Jim.<sup>16</sup> I met with Jim at a halfway house and rehabilitation center north of Cass Lake, where he works, and we spoke in a large meeting and recreation room. Jim sat across a linoleum-covered table, working his way slowly and circuitously from topic to topic, speaking carefully about the importance of particular sacred objects, particularly drums, and about certain elements of cultural history that are the same for people around the world. In speaking on this subject, Jim uses the example of the Great Flood to illustrate the commonalities we find among peoples from wholly disparate cultures and locations, as well as the universal moral responsibility that people have to respect and maintain their environment, lest the Creator decide to punish us for our misdeeds.<sup>17</sup>

Among Anishinaabe adults, these sort of narrative fragments are a much more common element of conversation (though they are still primarily found in written rather than oral accounts, as I discuss below), carrying none of the formality or spiritual responsibility of the more official acts of either ceremonial or pedagogical storytelling. The most intentional and institutionalized use of narrative fragments might be represented by the Western Apache, as documented in Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996). In this ethnographic study, Basso describes the intentional use of narrative fragments – in this case, generally the names of particular narratives or characters – as a tool of socialization. This kind of direct and intentional use of narrative fragments is not systemic or common in northern Minnesota, but in the course of making a particular point, an Anishinaabe speaker might, for example, reference the muskrat as a representative of perseverance or the potential in even the seemingly weakest members of society, or (as Winona LaDuke so often does in her capacity as speaker

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<sup>16</sup> Names of individual respondents have been changed to protect their confidentiality, unless they are referred to in their capacities as public figures.

<sup>17</sup> Here we see some interesting mixing of the Anishinaabe and Christian narrative traditions: in most renditions of the Flood narrative, the cause of the Great Flood is not the anger of *Gichi-Manidoo* (the Great Spirit or Creator), but rather a retribution against Wenabozho by certain water *manidoog*, in the ongoing feud between the two parties. However, it is entirely possible that on another occasion Jim might tell this latter version of the narrative; the flexibility of certain elements of the traditional narrative is crucial to its role as an adaptive pedagogical tool, and fundamentally characteristic of the Anishinaabe oral tradition.

for Honor the Earth, discussed in Chapter 3) the prophesied “scorched path” as representation of the risk of environmental devastation. Narrative fragments in such situations are designed to provide cultural context, logical support, and conceptual depth to arguments in a way that draws on traditional knowledges and rhetorical techniques. In many cases, the function of these insertions of narrative content appears to be to ground a discussion or debate in Anishinaabe identity, history, and knowledge; in other words, it is a form of survivance (Vizenor 1999; 2008), or active assertion of continued cultural life in the face of the kinds of historical and rhetorical erasure that might otherwise take place in spoken discourse without the inclusion of this kind of narrative content.

In his ethnographic and linguistic account of his time among the northern Ojibwe of Pikogan, Quebec, *You're So Fat!: Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (1998), Roger Spielmann points out that not only are the stories themselves used to communicate Anishinaabe conceptual content, but the act of conversational, casual storytelling itself is foundational to Anishinaabe communicative culture. This element of Anishinaabe communicative tradition was also noted earlier by Lisa Valentine in *Making It Their Own: Severn Ojibwe Communicative Practices* (1995). This being the case, the inclusion of narrative fragments in everyday conversation and other instances of communication where storytelling isn't made explicit or formalized implies a kind of discursive compromise between the forms of casual conversation that are common among the settler population, and the turn-by-turn casual storytelling that Spielmann describes.

Based on the findings outlined above, it becomes possible to determine a short list of specific mechanisms by which the distribution of oral accounts of the traditional Flood narrative are spread, and the patterns of that distribution determined. (1) First, the transmission of oral accounts of the Flood narrative depends on the presence of Anishinaabeg themselves. The narrative is rarely or never communicated in exclusively non-Native social spaces. (2) The communication of the oral narrative is also more common and more complete in more traditional social spaces, including ceremonial spaces as well as simply those communities which contain a substantially higher proportion of Anishinaabeg who observe traditional lifeways. (3) Casual communication of the Flood narrative in its entirety (as opposed to fragmented form) is also largely dependent on the presence of either (a) children, or more commonly (and somewhat paradoxically), (b) non-Native people. The most common instances of the oral narrative being communicated from start to finish tends to be in encounters between knowledgeable Anishinaabe elders and relatively ignorant but culturally open non-Native people, and the communication generally takes place in Anishinaabe places (homes, schools, workplaces, etc.). (4) As partial consequence of the tendency for the narrative to be

communicated in Anishinaabe places, as well as the paucity of Anishinaabeg living in the more urban areas relative to the rural areas of northern Minnesota, the Flood narrative is also rarely communicated in urban spaces.

*ii. Text narratives*

*1. Books*

Far more common, pervasive, and geographically diffuse than the oral accounts of the Flood narrative are the accounts that have been written in part or whole in children's books, various forms of popular non-fiction on Ojibwe or American Indian history, culture, or lore, and academic (usually ethnographic) texts. An exact figure is difficult to determine, as some of the texts are fairly obscure, but the total number of titles containing either full or partial accounts, or even references to the Anishinaabe Flood narrative in particular is at least 64. This number was determined by using a variety of popular and scholarly search engines as well as archival sources to identify all texts containing references to Wenabozho (variously spelled),<sup>18</sup> and searching within these texts for references to the Flood, to Wenabozho's recreation of the world, or to muskrat (who dove successfully for the dirt and sand with which the world was created). Such a search depends on the sources being identifiable either online or through the other physical locations surveyed during the course of the study, so it is possible that additional text sources do contain references to the flood, but in such cases the texts would not circulate widely and would therefore have little analytical value in determining the flow of the narrative through geographic, political, and cultural spaces.

Texts containing full versions of the Flood narrative make up a little less than half of the overall number of identified sources, although interestingly, only one relatively obscure book (Goble 1996) has been produced which solely addresses the Flood narrative exclusively; instead, texts with full accounts of the narrative are compilations of different narratives (e.g., Coleman, Frogner, & Eich 1971; Ferguson 2001; Leekley 1965), or ethnographies or other non-fiction texts containing a variety of cultural information (e.g., Benton-Banai 1988; Kohl 1860; Vizenor 1981). The narrative itself is not long, and one would generally not expect stories of this length to warrant their own books, but even among children's books which often contain a single short story, this particular Narrative is

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<sup>18</sup> Variations on spelling were used, including Waynabozho, Nanabozho, Nanaboozhoo, Nanabush, Nenabozho, Nenabush, Wenaboujou, Manabush, Manabozho, and Manaboujou, as well as the Oji-Cree variations of the analogous character Wisahkecahk.



almost entirely absent, despite the existence of an entire line of children's books dedicated to the character of Wenabozho and his exploits (the *Nanabosho* series (1989-2012), by Joe McLellan).

Among the sources that contained full narratives as well as those containing partial versions or fragments of the Flood narrative, non-fiction texts about Ojibwe/Anishinaabe culture, (colonial) history, and spirituality were both most numerous and most popular, with less popular genres including general nonfiction about American Indian history, compilations of indigenous or global myths, legends, and folktales, and children's books about Wenabozho. Given the American literary penchant for folklore (Toelken 2013), we might expect these books to be more popular relative to other genres. The obvious popularity of historical and cultural nonfiction is suggestive of a strong preference among readers for information that can be considered "factual" where indigenous history and culture is concerned – a trend which is striking in the context of the traditional flexibility in Anishinaabe epistemology (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Gross 2014), and given persistent patterns of difference among participants' prioritization of either empirically verifiable or conceptually rich narrative content.

It is also noteworthy that, although only 16 of the 64 identified sources on the Flood narrative are authored by Anishinaabe writers, the most popular texts containing the Flood narrative, particularly among those with narrative fragments or partial accounts, are those authored by Anishinaabeg. This may indicate a higher content quality in those books authored by people with personal or familial experience with the culture, a preference by readers for information perceived to be "authentic," or a bias among larger publishers with broader regions of distribution toward Anishinaabe books by Anishinaabe authors. It is difficult to say for certain the reasoning for this trend, but the explanation is likely some combination of the above.

Geographically speaking, there are a number of salient findings that need to be addressed. One of the central aims of this study is to determine how these narratives interact with social and political borders, and the patterns of distribution among the written Flood narratives are probably the most telling data collected on the subject. There are six distinct patterns discovered in the data, which I will address in turn, the collection of which will suggest a number of general determinants of access to written sources on the Flood narrative.

A. First, political borders *within the United States* appear to make little to no difference in determining the distribution of the Flood narrative or related texts (see Figure 1). State borders, city borders, and even the borders of particular reservations have no discernible effect on whether a given source is likely to be present. This is not to say that the same text sources are available in all states, all

cities and towns, or all reservations – indeed, there are vast differences between different spaces and locations. These differences are not, however, due to the presence of arbitrary political boundaries. Some political boundaries do have influence, which will be addressed further in the third central finding, but these intranational borders, according to the evidence, do not.

B. Second, one thing that does have a strong impact on the spread of the narratives (as well as their content) is the geographic distribution – both historical and contemporary – of the Anishinaabe population; indeed, the written accounts of the Flood narrative seem especially strongly tied to the Ojibwe tribe in particular (as opposed to the Odawa or Potawatomi who also identify as Anishinaabeg (McDonnell 2015; Treuer 2014)<sup>19</sup>). As shown in Figures 1 & 2, while the size of the particular repository (i.e., library, bookstore) can make for some extremely wide variations in the comprehensiveness of the selection, repositories of comparable size in areas (in the US) with large Anishinaabe populations have meaningfully higher availability of literature on the Flood narrative than those in areas with smaller or nonexistent Anishinaabe populations. On the local level, this can be easily seen in the density of Flood narrative sources in Bemidji, Cass Lake (on the Leech Lake Reservation), and Mahanomen (on the White Earth Reservation), as opposed to the relative paucity in other nearby but overwhelmingly white towns such as Park Rapids and Detroit Lakes (south of White Earth), or Walker (just over 20 miles south of Cass Lake). On the national level, the pattern is similarly obvious when comparing the availability of Flood narratives in, for instance, Minneapolis, MN, as opposed to Seattle, WA.

There are notable exceptions to this pattern, however. South Dakota is one such example, with the South Dakota Library Network housing 49 of the 64 identified titles containing information on the Flood narrative. Similarly, the Online Dakota Information System (ODIN) library consortium in North Dakota houses 44 Flood narrative sources. By contrast, the Des Moines Library System in Iowa – the largest library system in the state, houses only 4 of the 64 titles, only one of which is a full account. In spite of the relatively low Anishinaabe population in all three of these states, there is clearly a marked difference in the level of access the state residents have to information on Anishinaabe culture and history. I would suggest that the disparity is attributable, in these cases, to two factors: first, the presence of a much larger Native population in the Dakotas than in Iowa, and

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<sup>19</sup> The reader may note, in viewing Figure 1, that there are two markers indicating library systems in Kansas and Oklahoma, and that these systems contain very few Flood narrative sources. These are the library systems closest to the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Oklahoma, and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. Although both of these groups are included culturally and historically among the Anishinaabeg, their political and cultural identities are distinct (Wetzel 2015), and the dearth of Flood narrative sources in these locations attests to the narrative community divisions that occur even within the Anishinaabe population.

second, the specific histories of Native people(s) in the Dakotas and Iowa, and the relation of those histories to the history of the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota. Although the diaspora of the Dakota extends southeast into Iowa, the state has only one small reservation of the Sac and Fox, and an otherwise relatively low Native population (U.S. Census Bureau 2015b). Both North and South Dakota have comparatively large Native populations, and the history of the Sioux (particularly during the colonial period) is strongly tied to the movements of the Ojibwe. Other locations with high Native populations, but few Anishinaabeg (i.e., the northwest coast) show a somewhat larger presence of Flood narratives, although these collections too are small compared to most major repositories in northern Minnesota (see Figure 2), and, as I discuss in more detail below, their collections of Flood narratives are much more considerably concentrated in select large repositories.

C. Despite the findings mentioned above, the third salient pattern is the influence of the border *between the United States and Canada*. A significant portion of the Anishinaabeg in North America resides in Canada, from Manitoba through Ontario and into parts of Quebec. We would therefore expect to see many, if not most, of the same sources on this traditional Anishinaabe narrative present in Canadian libraries and bookstores. However, as shown in Figures 1 & 2, cities of comparable size, proximity to the Anishinaabe region of residence around the Great Lakes, Native population, and so on, demonstrate higher density of Flood narrative sources on the US side of the border than the Canadian side. For comparison, we may look at the city of Surrey, British Columbia, in which the library system houses 8 of the possible 64 titles, while immediately across the border, the Seattle Library System houses 17.<sup>20</sup> In Thunder Bay and Ottawa, both in Ontario and in the general region of Anishinaabe residence, we would expect to see high volumes of books on Anishinaabe culture including references to the Flood narrative, but these cities' library systems show only 18 and 12 sources, respectively. Thunder Bay is particularly striking, being right across the border from the slightly smaller city of Duluth, which itself houses 24 of the total 64 sources, or Superior WI (abutting Duluth's east side), which houses 21. The difference on either side of the border is not drastic, but it is persistent enough to suggest that Canadians generally have less access to written accounts of the Flood narrative than similarly situated Americans.

In speaking with sales and administrative representatives from some of the publishing houses from which the Flood narratives are originating, it seems that the explanation (perhaps unsurprisingly)

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<sup>20</sup> The cities of Surrey, BC, and Seattle, WA are of comparable size, although notably, despite the lower number of Flood narrative sources in the Surrey library system, the Aboriginal population of Surrey, at 2.4% (Statistics Canada 2014), is significantly higher than the Native population of Seattle, at 0.8% (U.S. Census Bureau 2015).

is rooted primarily – though not exclusively – in financial and logistical concerns. For any given publishing house, marketing and shipping are unavoidable costs of doing business, as is the further complication of dealing with sometimes numerous layers of intermediary agents in the chain of contact between the producer (publisher) and the consumer (book-readers). For smaller publishers, such as the Minnesota Historical Society Press, these complications tend to be greater, as their own capacity to perform steps in the process is limited by their size. An example is instructive: one of the most popular books containing the Flood narrative is Johann Kohl’s classic ethnography, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway* (2008 [1859]). This book, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, is distributed fairly widely throughout libraries in Minnesota and Wisconsin, somewhat more sparsely in Michigan, and appears in large library collections in other states, but not a single copy is listed in the many branches of the Ontario Library Consortium. In spite of the logical appeal that such a book might have in Ontario, in order to get the book to consumers there, the MNHS Press would need to spend time, money, and labor marketing the book to Canadian audiences, hiring a new and larger distributor who is better able than their current distributor to ship across the Canadian border, and navigating the legal hurdles involved in the process of international sales and shipping. In addition to these other concerns, the local or regional appeal of both the book and the publisher also play a role – in this case, the MNHS Press generally caters to Minnesotan or at least upper Midwestern audiences (although their Native American titles tend to distribute more widely), and the book itself pertains specifically to a region of the northwestern shore of Lake Superior. These factors to some extent limit both the real and expected demand for the book outside the local region, which influences to some degree the patterns of distribution.

D. Unsurprisingly, yet still important to note, the strongest collections are found in (A) academic library systems, and (B) in urban areas. In the local context, this is best demonstrated by comparing the volume of Flood narrative-related sources housed at the local college and university libraries with the public libraries and bookstores in the same locations. The urban impact, resulting in a larger collection of texts, is also quite evident in this same local context when comparing the collections of regional urban hubs (i.e., Bemidji, Grand Rapids) with bookstores and libraries in the more rural regions. (For specific points of comparison, see Figure 2.) It is also striking to note that these bookstores and libraries almost exclusively occur in urban areas – a rational placement given that the greatest efficiency of text distribution is for the books to be where the people are. However, people living in rural areas, of whom a higher proportion are Anishinaabe (U.S. Census Bureau 2012), are therefore less able to access text narratives.

Large academic library systems and also certain large regional library systems outside the main area of residence for the Anishinaabeg in some cases have extremely high density of Flood narrative sources, far beyond what would be expected given either the proximity-to-Anishinaabeg or proximity-to-indigenous-peoples explanations. The I-Share Library system, a consortium of Illinois academic libraries from throughout the state, houses a collection boasting a staggering 59 of the 64 total identified sources. Similarly, the “Prospector” library system, serving colleges and universities in a wide region around Denver, CO, houses a vast collection of literature on Native American information, including 61 of the 64 identified sources on the Flood narrative. Illinois has no Native reservations, although there is a moderately sized urban Native population in Chicago (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel 2012), and while Colorado is home to two reservations, both are located in the southwest corner of the state, far from the region served by the Prospector library system (which covers the northeastern part of Colorado and a tiny portion of southeastern Wyoming).

E. Among the largest text repositories for sources on the Flood narrative are certain wholesale online vendors such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Book World. This is, of course, unsurprising given the corporate size and material volume of such vendors. It is perhaps more unexpected to find that certain library systems rival (and in some cases best) the collections on such vendor sites. Amazon holds, at the time of inventory in late May 2016, 61 of the 64 titles pertaining to the Flood narrative. Barnes & Noble holds 59, and Book World – a regional vendor serving Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the northern peninsula of Michigan – holds 37. The latter vendor is topped by most major library systems with fairly comprehensive collections, and even the mighty Amazon.com is rivaled by the Prospector system in the Denver region (with 61) and the I-Share system in Illinois (with 59). The dominance of sites like Amazon and Barnes & Noble, however, and the comparative paucity of Flood narratives in the region-specific Book World collection, suggest some interesting interactions between capitalism, the internet, and the boundaries of narrative community.

It is true that in both online and offline repositories, access to resources with which to acquire books for sale or for lending is a significant determinant of the size of the collection. However, this factor holds a much stronger impact among online repositories, as they are far less subject to the eccentricities of local prioritization. For online booksellers, the impact of capitalistic success, far more than any particular local interest, drives both the size and content of the collection. This is also demonstrated to some extent with the major research libraries and library consortia, which have vast

and less region-specific collections of text, exhibiting a similar prioritization of comprehensiveness in their collections over the specificity of the smaller venues.<sup>21</sup>

The global nature of online vendors also facilitates the challenging of artificial political boundaries of reservation, state, or nation – not to mention the racial boundaries of colonial societies – by affording access to traditional narratives without (much) regard for location. The exception that must be noted, of course, is politics that exercise some degree of intentional control over internet access and content for citizens. It is unlikely, for example, that a citizen in North Korea would be able to either intentionally or unintentionally find a rendition of the Anishinaabe Flood narrative. However, in the two countries in which the overwhelming majority of Anishinaabeg and people who interact with Anishinaabe culture reside – namely, the US and Canada – access to online booksellers is uninhibited (at least where federal, state, and provincial laws are concerned). The limitation in these countries are therefore dependent more on access to the internet in general than on access to particular sites.

This issue of access to the internet is, however, important to acknowledge in its own right. Because people in poor households and people in rural areas generally have scarcer and lower quality access to the internet (Perrin & Duggan 2015), the transnationalizing quality of sites like Amazon concerning the formation of narrative communities is necessarily a class and geography-specific phenomenon. In other words, the narrative community boundaries of those living in poor, rural areas (a circumstance which describes much of the Minnesota Anishinaabe population) are far less permeable and more geographically and politically fixed than those living in affluent and/or urban areas.

F. The sixth and final point derived from analysis of the data has a different approach and level of focus. The piece of salient information I would like to address here is this: people on and near the Leech Lake reservation have access to a *far* greater variety of written sources on the Flood narrative (as well as other sources having to do with the Ojibwe or Anishinaabeg in general<sup>22</sup>) than people

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<sup>21</sup> This concentration of text narratives in larger repositories, both online and offline, occurs more and more frequently as the impact of local interest drops. We see this represented here in terms of Amazon and Barnes & Noble having much larger and more comprehensive collections than smaller vendors, including regionally specific ones such as Book World, but it is also a stark pattern in the offline repositories as well. Examining libraries and library systems, it becomes visibly evident that the closer to the region of interest (in this case, the Great Lakes and especially the region around Lake Superior), the more diffuse the distribution of a given narrative; and by contrast, the farther from the region of direct interest, the more the presence of the same narrative (in this case, Wenabozho and the Flood or its variants) is concentrated in the largest libraries and systems in a particular region (see Figure 1).

<sup>22</sup> Despite this pattern, the White Earth Tribal and Community College's collection on Ojibwe/Anishinaabe matters has a much higher proportion of texts using the "Ojibwe" spelling variant (250 sources, compared to Leech Lake Tribal

residing on or near the White Earth reservation. To be sure, there are no large-scale libraries on either reservation. However, where the Cass Lake library houses 6 of the sources on the Flood narrative, the Mahnomen library houses only 3, and even within the regional consortiums, the KRLS system serving the Leech Lake reservation holds 20 of the titles, compared with the LARL system serving White Earth, which has only 12.

The reasons for this disparity are difficult to determine with certainty, given the sheer volume of differences, large and small, between the two reservations. In the common knowledge of the region – that is to say, the general beliefs informed more by casual experience, observation, and rumor rather than systematically-gathered evidence – White Earth is known to be the most politically integrated of the Ojibwe reservations, and is considered to be somewhat more socially open to non-Native people. Leech Lake is considered to be somewhat more politically volatile than White Earth, with significant factioning among the reservation residents and other Leech Lake enrollees over various political and cultural issues. The histories of the two reservations also show vast differences in many areas, including but not limited to the particular Anishinaabe bands that came to form the reservation communities, the ways in which (and goals for which) the reservations were created, the relationship between the Reservation Business Committees (RBCs) and their own constituents as well as with the surrounding towns and the state of Minnesota (Kugel 2012; Meyer 1999; Treuer 2010; 2011; Whipple 2015; Wingerd 2010). The poverty rate is high on both reservations, and they are also both “checkerboard” reservations, having gone through allotment of lands under the Nelson Act, the overwhelming majority of the reservation land being currently owned by non-Native farmers and companies (Schumacher 2014; WEEDO 2000). Libraries and bookstores are scarce on both reservations, and funding is limited.

For both reservation communities, access to written narratives of all kinds, including traditional narratives such as the story of Wenabozho and the Flood, depends primarily on either going to a larger urban center outside the reservation (i.e., Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Detroit Lakes, Park Rapids), or ordering books online. As mentioned above, internet access is an issue for many people living in poverty on the reservations (or in other rural areas in northern Minnesota), but, based on observation and interviews, this issue of access is not a significantly higher problem at White Earth than Leech Lake. The access to urban centers where books are plentiful, however, is quite different for residents of the two reservations.

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College’s 162), while LLTC has a higher proportion of text using the “Ojibwa” variant. This is likely a lingering linguistic trace of the different bands that made up each reservation community (Meyer 1999; Treuer 2011).

At Leech Lake, immediately to the west of the reservation is Bemidji, which has the largest collection of bookstores and libraries in northwestern part of the state, and to the east is Grand Rapids, which is also home to at least a small number of bookstores providing Native content. Grand Rapids also hosts the Itasca Community College, which has its own library with significant Native content in its collection. Lastly, where White Earth sits squarely inside of the Lake Agassiz Regional Library system, Leech Lake is on the eastern edge of the Kitchi-Gami Regional Library system, bordering the Arrowhead Library system serving the northeastern corner of the state. Hence, people on the eastern side of the Leech Lake reservation have ready access to two separate library systems. White Earth is, geographically speaking, in a very different situation. Depending on the specific location within the reservation, it can be between 1.5-3 hours to get to Bemidji from White Earth, and approximately as long to reach Fargo. The closer urban hubs are Park Rapids and Detroit Lakes, but neither of these towns has a noteworthy Native collection, housing only 2 of the 64 Flood-related titles in a bookstore at Park Rapids, and 5 titles at the Detroit Lakes Public Library – the only book repository in the town open to the public.

During interviews with educators at both Leech Lake and White Earth, certain attitudinal patterns emerged that shed some light on the possible consequences of the differences between the two reservations' access to traditional narratives and cultural history through text. Despite similar issues faced by both reservation education systems – poverty and problems of transportation featuring prominently at the fore – educators and administrators in Leech Lake schools expressed a more strongly optimistic attitude toward the growth of Anishinaabe traditional knowledge in the younger generations, and the overall improvement of opportunities for children today over the generation of their parents. By contrast, White Earth educators were less optimistic. More than once, I heard from teachers in White Earth schools (as well as parents of young children there) that although efforts are ongoing to preserve the language and traditional knowledges among the children, the quality of the education they receive and the opportunities available to students are not meaningfully improved from years past. In communities throughout both reservations, there are numerous Anishinaabe elders who continue the cultural and historical education of young people through more traditional pedagogical methods, but the fact remains that most Anishinaabe children are expected to spend a significant portion of their time in school, and even their cultural education is necessarily impacted by the availability of educational resources – including, crucially, books.

To recap, the primary mechanisms by which the distribution of written Flood narratives appears to be determined in this region of northern Minnesota (and in some cases on a broader scale)



are: (1) proximity to the current and historical area of residence for most Anishinaabe communities, as well as the presence of Anishinaabeg today – an effect which seems particular to the Ojibwe tribe, specifically; (2) the presence of other indigenous communities, particular those who have historical interaction with the Anishinaabeg; (3) the US-Canadian border, which appears to keep the narratives at least somewhat confined to the American side – an impact which appears to be more or less absent from US state borders; (4) the presence of academic library systems or other large (urban) repositories; (5) the pervasiveness of internet access; (6) the presence of money in the community, either for facilitating bookstores and libraries, or for enabling individuals to purchase books. There is also some evidence that, in certain cases, the locations and general social network of the authors themselves may to some extent determine the patterns of distribution. This is particularly the case when the author has some level of name-recognition in a particular region that extends beyond the influence of their writings and is instead attached to their character. Exemplars of this tendency include Anton Treuer, one of the most prominent experts on Ojibwe life and history in Minnesota among the non-Native population, Jill Doerfler, a White Earth enrollee who has been involved in recent political and social movements in the area, and Basil Johnston of the Cape Croker First Nation in Canada, who is a respected elder and teacher of traditional Anishinaabe culture in the Lake Superior region. For each of these examples, their writings tend to predominate particularly within areas where the authors live, work, or are especially well-known figures.

## 2. *Online Sources*

In addition to the book sources on the Flood narrative, there are also thousands of references to the narrative online, although the exact number of separate accounts is difficult to determine, given that many websites use the same accounts. The online sources provide entirely different patterns of transmission and communication, not being bound to the particular physical spaces to which the narrative is otherwise attached. Other differences exist as well, including a seemingly much higher proportion of the individual accounts being distributed online having been produced by non-Native authors (or at least distributors), as evidenced by the frequent appearance of the narrative as a small part of larger compilations of international flood narratives, collections of “fairy tales,” and online exhibits created by formal and informal educational institutions. There are Anishinaabe-authored renditions of the story, but these are much fewer and farther between than among the text narratives that circulate more closely within and near the territory of the Anishinaabeg, in the upper Midwest and into Ontario.

Most of the versions online, as with the offline versions, refer to Wenabozho (or “Nanabozho,” the much more common iteration) as an Ojibwe or Anishinaabe narrative figure, although there are instances where the character shows up in explicitly Odawa, Menominee, and even Pequot versions of the Flood narrative. Also, while written sources on the Flood narrative are far more likely to appear in the US, particularly in the states west and south of Lake Superior (the area occupied by the Southwestern Ojibwe or “Chippewa”), Canadian renditions of the Flood narrative are fairly numerous online, including a large number of oral accounts made available through online video and audio recordings. A final pattern indicates that, whereas most of the written accounts of the Flood narrative contain the same general tone of seriousness and narrative details (with certain notable exceptions), the online versions of the Flood narrative demonstrate a much greater variability in the details of the narrative arc, the causes and consequences of the Flood itself, the role of Wenabozho and/or the animals in the recreation of the Earth, the resemblance to other global flood narratives (most notably the Biblical version), and even the overall tone, which is more prone to humor, melodrama, and subjective editorial commentary.

Ultimately, there is relatively little to say about the online versions of the Flood narrative with regard to this study. At no point during interviews did any of the participants mention coming across the narrative in this medium; this does not necessarily mean that none of the local residents encounter the narrative online, but if they do, its effect on their perceptions of the narrative itself or its implications for Anishinaabe cultural or historical identity seem minimal-to-nonexistent.

### **c. Influencing Perceptions of the Anishinaabeg**

“Anishinaabe are more associated with the animals than with Nanabozho, he’s a supernatural being, so he’s something different. He’s more of a force” (Participant, Jan. 21, 2015).

“To me, Christian Indians are no more Indian than I am [(participant is a white non-Native Bemidji resident)]. Ojibwe identity is about the culture that existed before white people arrived. Culture evolves, but there’s a lot to the idea that if God is related to nature, and nature to land, then this land is about spirituality, and who better to learn that spirituality from than the people who have lived on it for hundreds, thousands of years?” (Participant, Jan. 9, 2015).

When I began fieldwork in the fall of 2014, I was told by a local expert in Anishinaabe history that, when I asked people about their understanding of the nature of Anishinaabe, Native, or Ojibwe identity, I could expect to find as many different responses as people willing to hazard an answer at the question. He also presented an interesting notion that, as far as the Anishinaabeg themselves go,

he imagined that I would find their perceptions of Anishinaabe identity to be based largely on the strengths of their own local community. For instance, in towns with high density of traditional people, I could expect to hear that the essence of Anishinaabe identity could be found in spiritual beliefs, or in language. Anishinaabeg in urban areas, living less traditional, more assimilated lifestyles, he told me, would probably say that the essence of their indigenous identity was in their racial distinctiveness. To some extent, these predictions proved prescient. Indeed, each response from a new participant yielded a different piece of the varied and ever-shifting puzzle that is Anishinaabe identity. However, the findings deviated somewhat from these expectations, and were in general far more complex.

*i. Nebulous identifications*

When interviewing non-Natives, we would come to the subject of Ojibwe/Native/Anishinaabe identity, and the most common characteristic of the responses, by far, was a hesitation to make assertions about the nature of this identity. Unanimously, those who exhibited this hesitation were also quick to note that distinct identity was of great importance to the local Native population, identifying “pride” in their heritage, history, and culture to be a key feature of the Anishinaabe people in northern Minnesota. Neither the reluctance to comment nor the insistence on “pride” as a feature of the Anishinaabe community are altogether surprising in and of themselves. Non-Native residents in the area have largely been trained in the art of political correctness, a key component of which involves refraining from making sweeping generalizations about groups of people. It is acceptable and even encouraged to note and praise the importance of identity to the Other, but less so to categorically define that identity. However, the confluence of these two statements seems paradoxical: if Anishinaabe identity itself is something in which the considerable indigenous population of the area takes an active interest and pride, one might expect that even the non-Natives in the area would be able to describe some of its features.

It would be inaccurate to characterize the lack of a definite response to the same question from Anishinaabeg respondents as “reluctant” or “hesitant” per se. None of these respondents indicated the same kind of nervousness at answering the question that I witnessed in non-Native interviewees. However, in all my interviews with Anishinaabeg, the only ones among them who answered the question directly and decisively were those who could be classified as experts on the subject – educators, writers, and elders whose positions specifically enable them to speak on the subject with authority. Notably, even among those who fit this description, many did not give a

definitive answer, instead describing a variety of cultural and historical circumstances that speak to a more complicated response than simply, “Anishinaabe identity is \_\_\_\_\_.”

To some extent, my early informant’s prediction proved true, or at least the same perception of Anishinaabe identity as defined locally by the strengths of particular communities was repeated by other experts on the subject throughout northern Minnesota. However, while the core of different Anishinaabeg respondent’s perceptions of their own identity did indeed seem strongly influenced by their own personal experiences of life as Anishinaabeg – experiences which are certainly informed by the qualities of the communities in which they live, work, and socialize – their descriptions of Anishinaabe identity were always more multi-faceted than the experts predicted, and always more strongly acknowledging of the plural and location/experience-dependent nature of that identity. From my perspective as an outsider and observer, while Anishinaabe identity did include the myriad of qualities to which respondents attributed it, it is also often characterized by a higher level of “sociological imagination” (Mills 2000) than the average non-Native person in northern Minnesota might exhibit. It frequently entailed, even for non-educated and/or non-expert Anishinaabeg, a distinct awareness of the array of social and historical forces at work in shaping (and differentiating) and constantly re-inventing Anishinaabe identity.

In general, exposure to the Flood narrative in and of itself did not necessarily have a strong impact on the perceptions of Anishinaabe identity by listening or reading audiences. However, exposure to this and other traditional narratives, and Anishinaabe traditional culture in general (including oral culture) has an extremely strong impact on informing the content of people’s perceptions of this identity, the confidence with which they are able to speak about it, and the manner in which they communicate their thoughts on this identity.

For many Anishinaabeg, a core component of their own identity, and of how they characterize the broader idea of Anishinaabe identity in general, is observance of tradition. This includes ritual and ceremonial participation, knowledge of the language, spiritual belief, and – critically – maintaining indigenous Anishinaabe knowledges, of which the narratives of the oral tradition are a significant part. For some of the more traditionally devout Anishinaabeg, the way that these knowledges are learned is almost as important as the possession of the knowledges themselves, although this appears to be very much a generational phenomenon, with younger traditional people allowing a greater flexibility in the means of pursuing traditionalism. In spite of generational differences in pedagogical standards, traditional narratives remain as critical a part of Anishinaabe experiences of indigeneity for young people today as for elders, and despite the modern prevalence of school and book learning, young

Anishinaabeg still most often seem to hear these traditional narratives from their parents, grandparents, and other elders in their lives. The continuity of the oral tradition as a component of Anishinaabe life in northern Minnesota is itself an important part of Anishinaabe identity – a facet noted by non-Natives as well, who spoke frequently if hesitantly of the Anishinaabe pride in having survived the difficulties of colonial history as part of what makes them who they are.

*ii. Diffuse & particularistic narrative interpretations*

The content of the narratives also has had significance in self-identity and collective identity for many of my Anishinaabeg respondents, though the ways in which Anishinaabeg apply and analyze the content of these narratives in terms of identity differ substantially from non-Native respondents. As noted previously, the character of Wenabozho is, for all intents and purposes, ubiquitous among the Minnesota Anishinaabeg population, and in general their knowledge of the character does not stem from a single narrative, but rather from an entire body of traditional narratives and narrative fragments that are a constant presence in Anishinaabe life, particular in families and communities with at least some level of adherence to tradition. Not only are a wide variety of Wenabozho stories communicated to Anishinaabe children, but a whole world of traditional narratives and narrative styles feature in the Anishinaabe cultural landscape in a way that is all but entirely absent from non-Native homes and communities. Consequently, while there is certainly a wide array of moral, ethical, cultural, and political messages attributed to traditional narratives by Anishinaabe audiences, these messages are rarely singular, explicit, or attributed to individual narratives. They are instead associated with Anishinaabe life, culture, history, and tradition, and insofar as they are attributed to traditional narratives in particular, it is to the entire body of narratives rather than to a particular tale that a listener or reader found singularly meaningful.

By contrast, those non-Native respondents who have thorough knowledge of the particular Flood narrative (or other similar Anishinaabe traditional narratives) seem to place a great deal of importance on the story in its entirety, identifying a very clear central message that speaks to their own experiences and connecting that message explicitly to their own perspective on their social, political, and natural environment. The messages that were derived from these narratives generally spoke to a set of easily identifiable themes that the respondent associated with Anishinaabe culture and identity: the importance of connection/relationships with nature; the consequences of disrespect for the environment; the ontological position of human beings in relation to the rest of the animal/natural world. Interestingly, the messages that non-Native audiences generally seemed to derive from these

narratives were almost exclusively applied, in the real-world context, to issues of environmental protection and ecological harmony. The moral of the story was almost never explicitly applied, according to non-Native respondents, to the relationships between groups of people, to the realm of politics, or other areas of pressing concern to which Anishinaabe respondents in many cases applied the lessons of traditional narratives.

This pattern of distinct, singular meaning attributed to traditional narratives (observed as well in other Anishinaabe stories than the Flood known to particular non-Native participants) may be reflective of a cultural difference in the patterns of narrative consumption between Native and non-Native people in northern Minnesota, or it might simply be attributable to the abundance of traditional narrative information circulating in the life-worlds of Minnesota Anishinaabe (especially those living in “traditional” families) versus the rarity of these traditional, explicitly message-driven narratives in the lives of non-Native area residents. In either case, the power of the Flood narrative and other Anishinaabe traditional narratives to communicate indigenous ethical and social information to non-Native audiences is perhaps promising, raising certain interesting possibilities for intellectual decolonization through indigenous storytelling practice.

## **2.5 Discussion of Theoretical Implications**

Based on the findings outlined above, I would like to outline a number of theoretical claims that address the central research questions of the study, contributing to our understanding of how narratives move through geographic, cultural, and political spaces, the effects they have on changing the beliefs, perceptions, and knowledges of their audiences, and the potential for using these narratives to define the borders of communities. The traditional Anishinaabe narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, as it appears in text, is a fairly rare and culturally specific tale, allowing for some fairly stark spatial comparisons to be made between those text repositories and regions where the Flood narrative is abundant, and those where it hardly appears at all. The principal findings concerning the narrative’s modes of communication, perceived significance and message, and patterns of its distribution can suggest some interesting possibilities regarding how indigenous and settler communities continually reconstruct (and deconstruct) their boundaries, how narratives interact with the twin and often opposing ideas of indigenous sovereignty and self-government, and the benefits and drawbacks of cross-cultural communication through narratives.

### **a. Recreates ethnic/cultural borders, breaks down racial borders**

“Hearing from Indians, especially from Larry Stillday [recently deceased Red Lake elder], the stories were told very differently from in books – “it’s more humanistic.” Some of the things he learned changed the way he looked at the stories of Nanabozho, the seven grandfathers, the medicine wheel, and so on. Before, he thought they were interesting and quaint, substituting animals instead of humans to get a life message across; the more he learned, the more pertinent he thought the stories were to his life, even over “our” [white, Christian] stories do. In listening to Christian stories, he noticed that they’re all about people, never plants, animals, nature, etc., and that’s where he started turning toward Native stories for learning about the right way to live” (fieldnote excerpt from interview with non-Native resident near Leech Lake, Jan. 12, 2015).

The narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, with its cultural specificity including its ubiquity among the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, its tendency to be told primarily and in most detail in Anishinaabemowin during closed ceremonies, and its fairly marked geographic region of circulation, suggests a significant (albeit fuzzy-edged) border around the Anishinaabe narrative community, at least insofar as traditional narratives are concerned. Or, it may be more appropriate to say, it creates a series of boundaries between people based on access to the narrative and the significance the narrative may hold for them. These plural boundary-systems can then be understood as parts of a whole, and used to approximate the outer borders of the Anishinaabe narrative community.

The boundary-making mechanisms involved in the communication of this narrative are many, and the lines they draw between individuals, communities, and spaces overlap frequently. Boundaries are, for instance, created through the exclusivity of attendance at ceremonies where the narratives are told; knowledge of Anishinaabemowin and the system of conceptually loaded narrative elements in the Flood narrative; the ubiquity of Wenabozho as a known character among Minnesota Anishinaabeg and the almost total ignorance of this character among the white settler population. The communication of this particular narrative also marks a boundary not only between the Anishinaabeg and settlers, but between particular indigenous tribes, *including* tribes who are themselves Anishinaabeg, but who don’t necessarily have the same access (or at least the same means of access) to the narrative that the Minnesota Ojibwe experience.

The ways in which the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood is communicated suggest a narrative community-making endeavor that is ethnic, but not explicitly racial. The standard concepts of “ethnicity” and “race,” understood in sociology as related but distinctly defined by their connections to shared geographic and cultural heritage and to arbitrary divisions of biological characteristics (respectively), are complicated somewhat in the case of indigenous communities like the Anishinaabeg whose racial and ethnic identities have been conflated from the moment of colonial contact (Fabian

2010; Fitzgerald 2007; Meyer 1999). The association of incompetence, aggression, and other undesirable traits with the possession of certain (extremely overdetermined) physical traits associated with indigenous racial identity was integral for the justification of various colonial programs of eradication or assimilation, and resulted in a series of racialized cultural divisions within indigenous communities, based on the different social and economic capital that would have been available to an indigenous person, and the consequent changes to their lived experiences, based on their (often arbitrarily) designated race.

This complication is one which has been noted by previous scholars of indigenous political history in the United States (e.g., Deloria & Lytle 2013), including by Melissa Meyer in *The White Earth Tragedy* (1999). In her work, Meyer distinguishes two particular “ethnic groups” among the Anishinaabeg during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the “full-blood” and “mixed-blood” factions. Despite the racialized terminology (which was in popular use at the time), the distinction had more to do with lifestyle and level of investment in either the traditional Anishinaabe cultural lifeways or assimilation into Western capitalist lifeways. Similar dichotomous relationships are described by Deloria & Lytle (2013) on a broader scale, delineating a divide between the “tribal Indians” and “ethnic Indians,” where the former tended to hold more traditional beliefs and stronger tribe-specific identities, and the latter tended to be more thoroughly assimilated and held identities that understood “American Indian” to be an ethno-racial group alongside African Americans, Latinos, and other minority American populations.

The kind of distinction that Meyer describes is very much present in the Anishinaabe community in northern Minnesota today, and is an especially critical distinction to make in understanding the internal political rifts that divide the Anishinaabeg – rifts that become particularly evident in conversations with “traditional people” about the state of tribal governance or other institutional leadership. To some extent, the patterns of communication of the Flood narrative follow the kind of division Meyer attributes to the “full-blood”/“mixed-blood” dichotomy, insofar as knowledge of the narrative and the level of importance a person attributes to it has to do (to a degree) with their adherence to traditional Anishinaabe lifeways and rejection of the value-set rooted in capitalist/colonial ways of thinking. However, despite her insistence that to be “full-blood” one need not actually have exclusively Anishinaabe genetic heritage, Meyer stops short of saying that non-Native people could be full-bloods themselves, indicating that these categorizations are in some way racialized. This is where the patterns of communication of the Flood narrative, and the dichotomy I draw below between ethnic and racial boundaries, break away from the categorizations of Meyer or



Deloria & Lytle. Experience with and significance placed on the Flood narrative, and other particular traditional narratives, is not racially exclusive, but it is ethnically particular. This is to say, the narrative is known and significant to a number of non-Native people, but those for whom the narrative holds particular significance (beyond a basic literary curiosity) almost invariably participate in other Anishinaabe ethnic traditions including but not limited to participation in the “yearly round” of subsistence living according to the seasons, attending certain open ceremonies, offering tobacco, and even speaking Anishinaabemowin, and are thoroughly integrated into various Anishinaabe social and institutional networks.

This pattern runs strongly against the grain of popular sentiment and social communication in northern Minnesota, which operates on the basis of a strongly racialized language by both Anishinaabeg and non-Native residents. Problems of cultural misunderstanding, selective policing and profiling, and general hostility in the region, as well as the programmatic and governmental efforts to address these issues, are framed in the public discourse in terms of a strict “Indians versus whites” dichotomy, to the exclusion of other racial, ethnic, national, or cultural modes of identification. During interviews, in fact, the only times when consideration of populations outside this dichotomy occurred were mentions of the social problems associated with urban black populations (invariably attributed to the Twin Cities), brought up either to demonstrate how little media and popular attention Native issues receive by comparison with black politics (usually by Anishinaabe respondents), as a means of clarification of the kind of prejudice that exists in the region (usually by white respondents).

Among some of the Anishinaabeg respondents, particularly among the older generations, there was not infrequently a sense of casual racism directed toward various groups, manifesting itself in a variety of ways. These expressions of prejudice were never spoken with a tone of hatred or malice, however. Instead, these employments of perceived innate physical, mental, and cultural differences between races more often came in the form of off-color jokes, or ruminations on biologically-based explanations for various social and cultural differences. These sentiments, notably, were never far from what one might hear in a rural white community, and indeed, these sentiments I eventually found to be present among white residents as well, but in my conversations with Anishinaabeg respondents, it became clear that Native people, particularly elders, felt less burdened with the need to conform to politically correct niceties, or to cover their true opinions or thoughts. Indeed, the tendency to say one thing and mean something quite different is a quality many Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota critically attribute to white people.

The conformity with the racial logic of colonial relations demonstrates what Anishinaabe elder Bob Jourdain refers to as the “colonized mind” (2016, personal communication). Indigenous theorists and historians have thoroughly described and critiqued the process by which indigenous people have been racialized in the colonial United States (Alfred 1995; Byrd 2011; Meyer 1994; O’Brien 2010; Vizenor 1984), a process which took a particularly institutionalizing turn during the creation of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934. In the process of defining the membership of American Indian tribal and reservation communities for the purpose of determining allocation of federal and tribal benefits, the most efficient method for colonial purposes became the establishment of degrees of racial belonging through “blood quantum” (Deloria 2002; Deloria & Lytle 2013). The official racialization of tribal membership – of *Indianness* – increasingly became the primary means of identification and organization as far as governmental affairs were concerned; a process which has been as true for most tribal governments as for colonial ones (Gover 2010).

Despite the importance of legislated race in colonial practice, the *language* of racialization long pre-dated this policy, and in many ways has been more pervasive even than its legal counterpart. In *The White Earth Tragedy* (1999), the conflict that Melissa Meyer discusses within Indian communities in northern Minnesota, beginning decades before the IRA, is between “full-blood” and “mixed-blood.” Although Meyer is explicit and thorough in demonstrating that the actual meaning of these terms is far more cultural and political than racial, she fails to adequately address the explicit racialization in the terminology itself. This kind of conflict between those considered “mixed” and “full” blooded is not unique to northern Minnesota (Deloria & Lytle 2013). The use of racial terminology to describe ostensibly non-racial social concepts cannot help but create a systemic and growing reliance on racial logics as the basic standard of cultural and political differentiation – a fact which is demonstrated by the continuing (dichotomous) modes of racial categorization used by residents, Anishinaabeg and settler alike, in northern Minnesota today.

Communication of the Flood narrative within Anishinaabe communities that are comprised of individual Anishinaabeg of various legal-racial statuses, and between Anishinaabeg and non-Native audiences, interrupts the tenacious racial logics of social organization that continue to characterize the dominant portion of relations between Native and non-Native residents in the area. Given this continuing racial organization, and the strong segregation of racial communities both socially and spatially, the ethnic/cultural borders of Anishinaabe narrative community life that are created through the communication of traditional narratives do latently reinforce racial divisions – the more Anishinaabe family members one has, the more likely one is to be familiar with the tale, and the

opposite is true for increasingly non-Native families. This, combined with the ongoing reinforcement of racial language and logics of organization means that the communication of traditional narratives alone will never be sufficient to successfully combat racialization in colonial relations, but it does represent one means by which Anishinaabe communities can continue to exercise control over the locations and movements of their own community boundaries, electing through acts of storytelling (or silence) unsettle and move the boundaries through selective inclusion and exclusion.

The exclusivity of the ceremonial occasions in which the narrative is told, and the trappings associated with such occasions, such as the monolingual use of Anishinaabemowin to tell the story, and the particular “correct” words, phrases, and details which various elders have been adamant must be included in a proper telling of the Flood narrative, all serve to influence the locations of the boundaries of the narrative community as well. There are a couple of different ways of understanding these nested boundaries that are created when a subgroup within a larger narrative community has their own exclusive body of shared narratives. This subgroup might be understood, on the one hand, as a narrative community of its own – certainly a viable interpretation, given that the nature of narrative communities as narrative sociologists have understood them is inherently shifting and overlapping (Bamberg & Andrews 2004; Brown 2006; Frank 2010; Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992; Somers 1994; Webber, Johnson, & Lessard 2011; Wertsch 2008). However, I believe it is more analytically productive to consider these subgroups as occupying a nucleic position within the larger narrative community.

This interpretation would not necessarily be applicable for other narrative subgroups whose body of shared narratives operates as a less central and formative core of the larger community within which it is nested, but in the case of a traditional Anishinaabe narrative like Wenabozho and the Flood, the participants in the ceremonial telling (i.e., certain segments of the Midewiwin) are not simply sharing a narrative that is different from those shared outside the ceremonial context; they are engaging in an act of narrative norm-creation. The story that they are sharing – the *aadizookaan* version of the Flood narrative – must be told according to a particular set of criteria which have been passed down through generations, and which create and recreate the prototypical narrative toward which all other renditions of the narrative are meant to refer. This is, in large part, the reason why wanton and careless tellings of the narrative, even in casual circumstances, offend many of the traditional Anishinaabeg: these tellings do damage to the *living, animate core* of this critical spiritual history narrative.

*i. Successful (if somewhat problematic) cross-cultural communication*

The breaking down of colonial borders through successful cross-cultural communication of indigenous knowledge is an intriguing and promising role for traditional narratives like Wenabozho and the Flood, although these forms of cross-cultural contact are not without political dilemmas for the Anishinaabeg.

Narratives of this type are well suited to the kind of cross-cultural communication that we see taking place with particular non-Native people working, living, and socializing with Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota. The narratives, at least in their English language renditions, are generally entertaining and engaging, containing narrative components that an American audience would expect from folktales (i.e., central protagonist, peripheral characters, a problem to overcome, etc.) – in this, they appeal to the American enthusiasm for folktales, legends, and mythology, although this tendency might also be considered part of our colonial culture of appropriation (Toelken 2013). The narratives contain easily identifiable morals and themes, which are often vague or general enough to be flexibly applied to a variety of relevant issues familiar to the listener or reader. In the case of Anishinaabe narratives to which non-Native audiences so often attribute environmental and ecological ethical lessons, they are particularly well suited to life in northern Minnesota, which often involves a great deal of interaction between the individual resident and the natural environment, whether it be in the form of fishing, hunting, braving the snow in winter and mosquitos in summer, or navigating the complexities of resource management and exploitation that are common in the north woods.

Where the Flood tale in particular is concerned, the narrative parallels with the Christian biblical narrative of Noah and the Great Flood also helps to turn the Anishinaabe Flood narrative from a folktale of a culturally foreign people into something relatable to the predominately Episcopal, Lutheran, and Catholic faith of most of the non-Native residents of the region (Pew Research Center 2015). This parallel facilitates not only cross-cultural communication, or the learning of Anishinaabe cultural heritage by non-Native settlers, but also a sense of cultural commonality and unity between the settler and indigenous peoples. A small but distinctively present proportion of respondents, both Anishinaabeg and non-Natives, suggested that the Flood narrative was evidence of a shared global history in which a massive flood event was experienced by all peoples of the world. Such an interpretation is supportable through the spiritual histories of both indigenous and settler populations, as well as the secular scientific perspective which would suggest that these shared narratives are legacies of flooding associated with the natural course of global climate change epochs (Salvador & Norton 2011). The possibility of shared material and religious history, combined with the obvious similarities in narrative practice that is integral to the heritage of both Anishinaabeg and settlers alike, creates a

bridge across certain barriers created by systems of past and present colonial oppression and segregation.

Despite the positive potential of narratives like Wenabozho and the Flood to bridge cultural and political divides, the commonalities between the Anishinaabe and Christian Flood narratives opens the door to a deeply problematic interpretation as well. On more than one occasion, I was privy to the supposition that the similarities in the narratives are likely due to the adoption of certain Christian narratives and traditions by the Anishinaabeg during the course of colonial contact; in other words, the Anishinaabe Flood narrative is actually a bastardization of the older Christian Flood narrative, adapted for use in Mide ceremonies and other forms of traditional oral storytelling and embellished with culturally-specific details and narrative stylings. These suggestions were made, strikingly, by non-Native *and* Christian Anishinaabeg respondents. When they suggested this possibility, respondents did so not by way of demeaning the importance of the Anishinaabe Flood narrative, but as a means of demonstrating that colonialism has been a process of cultural sharing, and that the Flood narrative acts as an effective cultural bridge in part because it demonstrates that the two communities – “whites and Indians” – have always had much to learn and gain from each other.

The positive overtones of these suggestions indicated an enthusiasm for cross-cultural communication, cooperation, beneficial relations, and peace between Native and non-Native peoples, which is of course a laudable goal. However, as numerous indigenous scholars have argued, this kind of liberal multicultural positivity is almost always one-sidedly beneficial, allowing settlers to express a mindset that (they feel) puts them above guilt and reproach, while relegating colonial oppression to a permanent past tense that fails to recognize the ongoing structures of domination that continue to have often devastating effects for indigenous communities (Barker 2011; Byrd 2011; Coulthard 2014; Melamed 2011; Povinelli 2011). The problem in this case becomes, the interpretation of the Flood narrative as indicative of a shared global history is a short stone’s throw away from the much more dangerous assumption that the two Flood narratives (Anishinaabe and Christian) come from the same (European) source.

#### **b. Decolonial nationhood**

“The Flood story is about relationships with the animals, their sacrifice, their bravery, and the people maintaining who they are – the flood was sent because they weren’t. Go back to that which makes you who you are” (Participant, May 22, 2015).

“Interesting question [the participant] posed to me: he asked if, by the end of this project, I thought I would know who Wenabozho was. I didn’t know how to answer,

and I said I didn't think so because I don't think I know who he is now. I talked about the linguistic gender distinctions, and human/animal distinctions. He told me about how some years ago Cass Lake decided they wanted to honor the Indians, and decided to put up twin statues of Paul Bunyan and Wenabozho. This was of course an awful idea, and when they finally came to ask [the participant] about it, he told them so. He said if they wanted to do it, they should put up twin statues of Wenabozho and Jesus Christ, because that's a proper equivalency. To me, I don't know if [the participant] was telling me that Wenabozho was a human man exactly, but he was definitely telling me that he was an historical figure with shapeshifting powers. He even told me that Wenabozho lives on this particular island at Bois Forte, and if the Anishinaabeg really need him he comes to them" (interview fieldnote excerpt, Jan. 16, 2015)

In the course of crossing, creating, and erasing political and cultural boundaries, the Flood narrative does something extremely important: it ignores the artificial colonial boundaries of reservation borders, and of tribal enrollment (i.e. blood quantum). Whether a particular individual is likely to have heard the Flood narrative, or similar traditional narratives, is not at all dependent on their legal status based on their racialized identity determined through blood quantum, nor is it dependent on whether their residence is within reservation borders or not. The narrative follows the Anishinaabeg across these colonial modes of categorization, segregation, and control, informing a narrative community that is rooted fundamentally in traditional, pre-colonial, and de-colonial knowledges and practices.

There is no direct translation into Anishinaabemowin for the word "nation." Ironically, the word was originally used by colonial powers to describe the indigenous polities, fitting them (poorly) into a political category that conferred recognizable legitimacy within the discourse of colonial politics, which in turn allowed the colonial powers to claim the same legitimacy in their agreements with indigenous peoples (Vizenor & Doerfler 2012). Prior to colonial contact, the structure of Anishinaabe societies was determined through *doodeman* (clans), by which families were associated with particular social roles passed down through maternal lineage. These clans loosely divided Anishinaabe communities and leaders into those associated with political leadership, military leadership, and spiritual guidance. This structure was further complicated by tribal divisions on the macro scale, such as the members of the "Three Fires Confederacy" of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi tribes, as well as the distance between smaller communities living in particular locales on the micro scale (Peacock & Wisuri 2009; Warren 1885).

Today, the Ojibwe polities in Minnesota are divided in ways that are unrecognizable by pre-colonial standards, yet no less complicated. Older indigenous concepts of tribe, clan, and community have been largely overwritten by the colonial concepts of nation, band, reservation, and town, along

with the concurrent political structures and positions that accompany them. Ojibwe political concepts remain important elements of contemporary Ojibwe identity in Minnesota, but hold relatively little influence in the everyday practice of politics. Political practice is instead defined primarily through national constitutions based on the template created by the US federal government for use by American Indian tribes during the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934. Each of the Ojibwe reservations has its own tribal council, including Chairperson and representatives, and it is this body which makes legislative decisions for the reservation and the “band” (population of enrolled members).

Among the Minnesota Ojibwe polities, the language of nationhood has been appropriated as a tool of anti-colonial resistance, assertion of indigenous sovereignty and autonomy, and continued active survival. That said, the manifestations of indigenous nationhood are not uniform in their content nor in their objectives, often supported by disparate segments of indigenous populations and serving contradictory ends. In *Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies* (2003), Holm, Pearson, and Chavis suggested that the notion of “peoplehood” first advanced by Robert K. Thomas (1990) be taken as the central core assumption of American Indian Studies – in other words, the limited ontological belief upon which to build all other understandings of American Indian (and possibly global indigenous) realities in the contemporary world. The ‘Peoplehood Matrix’ was proposed as a way to identify and distinguish indigenous communities – a process which uses four primary and interacting concepts: Language, Sacred History, Place/Territory, and Ceremonial Cycle. The concept bears some striking resemblance to the kind of nationhood advocated by the Flood narrative, and more generally by understandings of indigenous politics that explicitly deny imposition of colonial political models. In some ways, peoplehood as described by Thomas (1990), Holm et al (2003), and others (Corntassel 2003; Holm 2000; Wallerstein 1987; Washburn & Stratton 2008), is the purest fulfillment of the kind of cultural and political project that traditional narratives and other modes of decolonial and cultural community-building undertake, and we might rightly be curious whether the nationhood concept is useful at all from a decolonial perspective.

I would suggest that while the ‘Peoplehood Matrix’ is indeed a valuable theoretical base upon which to construct much research and writing in indigenous studies, and particularly for pairing with concepts of apolitical cultural survivance (i.e., Vizenor 2008), the establishment of decolonial nationalism remains both possible and imperative. As noted by interview participants, while there is something appealing about the idea of completely denying or refusing colonial politics in the long run, the immediate reality demands a certain level of pragmatic engagement with those same political

systems. In order to decolonize Ojibwe politics, peoplehood may function well as a tool for cultural survivance, but by appropriating the language of nationalism, the Ojibwe community is able to enact political self-determination in a way that is tangible to the settler-state against which this autonomy is set. In this way, peoplehood and nationhood are more compatible and complementary rather than redundant, as they might at first appear.

In the much-read book *Imagined Communities* (2006), Benedict Anderson suggests that the nation, rather than something that exists in the physical world and defined by political borders, geography, demographics, and so on, is a shared concept in the minds of citizens. It is, in short, an entirely intellectual and cultural phenomenon. Following this line of theorizing, I would suggest then that the nation is as much a body of shared narratives as anything else – its shape, characteristics, and meaning all informed by the stories that we tell each other and ourselves about it. The traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, I contend, informs a particular imaginary of Anishinaabe nationhood that is inherently challenging and destructive to the colonial nation-state, and constitutive of a distinctly decolonial narrative community.

The Flood narrative ignores and disrupts ideas of reservation-based nationhood by seamlessly crossing reservation borders, finding the boundaries of its distribution much more significantly determined by links to precolonial Anishinaabe cultural roots. Communication of this narrative is used explicitly and implicitly as a means of connecting to indigenous Anishinaabe concepts of history, origin, spirituality, place, and ecological cooperation and dependence. This is distinctly different from the kind of political project informed by, for instance, the biography of Shaynowishkung, which I will address in detail in Chapter 2. Where Shaynowishkung's biography relies on fairly straightforward recitation of factual events, facilitating a type of multicultural storytelling that is relatable to both Euro-American and Ojibwe storytellers and audiences, the story of Wenabozho and the Flood exists in a uniquely Anishinaabe cultural space in which *fact* is not necessarily equated with ontological truth, relying on Ojibwe ways of knowing in ways that contradict dominant colonial ontology and epistemology (Gross 2014). Where Shaynowishkung's narrative carries actions and events that are capable of being incorporated by Ojibwe and settler national narratives simultaneously, the Flood narrative holds nothing of value for a colonial reading of history, and great value for indigenous people holding onto and actively asserting their cultural heritage and continuity.

The Flood narrative supports Ojibwe nationhood in a way that is fundamentally about cultural survivance (Vizenor 1994; 2008), and has absolutely nothing to do with reservations, enrollment, or the settler-state. The national community described by this shared narrative is one that transcends



geopolitical borders and political status, ranging from the upper Midwest through southern and eastern Canada, and elsewhere according to the diaspora of the narrative community that is the Anishinaabe population (see Figures 1 & 2). The spread of the narrative is, as discussed above, partially interrupted by certain colonial barriers such as the US-Canadian border, the concentration of text narratives in urban and Western academic repositories, and the power of economic capitalism to determine the availability of narrative information. However, the oral tradition persists in Anishinaabe communities throughout the US and Canada (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Smith 2012; Spielmann 1998; Treuer 2008; Valentine 1995), and traditional narratives continue to maintain their central importance to the intergenerational communication of cultural information, history, and identity. Moreover, the nation informed by the communication of the Flood (and other traditional) narratives is not even explicitly Ojibwe in its population, and while its cultural politics are explicitly indigenous, its population may not be, just as the populations of other nations include immigrants whose personal histories may have little to do with the heritage of the nation itself. Everything about the communication and distribution of the story of Wenabozho and the Flood interrupts and challenges colonial and postcolonial notions of nationhood.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

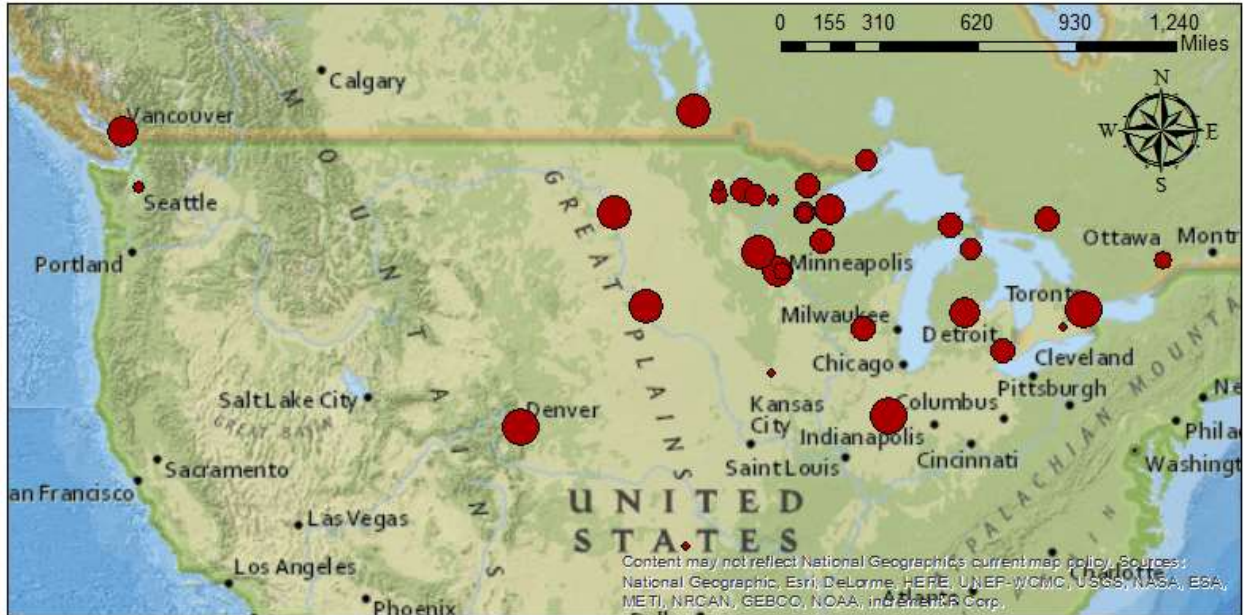
In this chapter, I have addressed the patterns of communication and distribution of the traditional Anishinaabe narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, an integral tale within the spiritual history of the Anishinaabeg. Although the narrative has been appropriated for colonialist purposes in some cases, including the ethnographic objectification of the Anishinaabeg (Coatsworth 1980; Coleman 2011; Hallowell 1964; Hoffman 1891; Kohl 2008) as well as the erasure or subsuming of Anishinaabe spiritual history into a liberal multicultural narrative of Euro-centric human oneness, it has overwhelmingly acted as a tool of survivance, decolonial pedagogy, and empowerment of the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota to control the boundaries of their own cultural and political community. Through traditional storytelling and selective silence where certain narratives, audiences, and storytelling circumstances are concerned, Anishinaabeg storytellers and writers are capable of continuously shaping and reshaping their own narrative community, and enacting a form of cultural and national consciousness that precedes, ignores, and/or directly critiques the dominance of the settler state.

In the coming chapter, I will examine the role of the biography of the local historical figure, Shaynowishkung, investigating its patterns of distribution, communication, and influence in direct

comparison to those of the traditional Flood narrative. The subsequent chapter on the ongoing efforts of the Honor the Earth environmental activist organization will take a somewhat different tack, but the findings and theoretical conclusions from each of the three narratives will be addressed and synthesized in order to produce the broader substantive responses to the research questions with which this dissertation began.

## 2.7 Figures

Fig. 1. Density of Flood narratives in books – regional, college/university, and major urban libraries



Score calculated according to number of individual titles containing the Flood narrative at each location, depending on the level of detail per title; full account of the narrative = 1, partial account = 0.5, brief mention = 0.1.

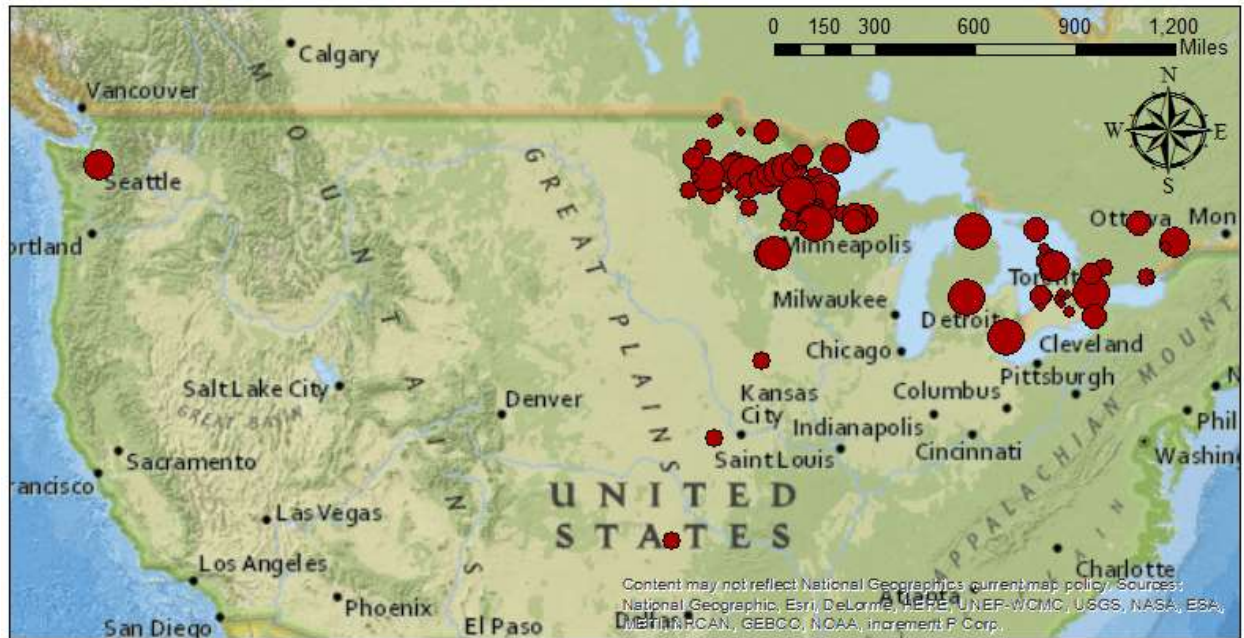
### Legend

#### Flood Narratives

##### Score

- ◆ 1.700000 - 2.200000
- ◆ 2.200001 - 8.300000
- 8.300001 - 13.200000
- 13.200001 - 16.600000
- 16.600001 - 22.300000
- 22.300001 - 26.300000
- 26.300001 - 30.600000
- 30.600001 - 41.600000

Fig. 2. Density of Flood narratives in books – local library branches



Score calculated according to number of individual titles containing the Flood narrative at each location, depending on the level of detail per title; full account of the narrative = 1, partial account = 0.5, brief mention = 0.1.

### Legend

#### Flood Narratives

##### Score

- 0.500000
- 0.500001 - 1.600000
- 1.600001 - 2.500000
- 2.500001 - 3.100000
- 3.100001 - 5.100000
- 5.100001 - 9.100000
- 9.100001 - 12.200000
- 12.200001 - 32.000000

## Chapter 3: Shaynowishkung, a.k.a. “Chief Bemidji”

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be examining the biography of Shaynowishkung, also known as “Chief Bemidji,” who played an important role in local history, and whose name and image have been used by the city of Bemidji for over a century as a symbol of hospitality and goodwill, as well (as I will discuss below) as other more subtle political purposes. In recent years, interest in the biography has grown in the local region, due primarily to the actions of the “Shaynowishkung Statue Committee,” a group of Anishinaabe and non-Native local residents, community leaders, and descendants of Shaynowishkung himself, who banded together with the goal of replacing the old wood-and-fiberglass statue of “Chief Bemidji” with something more respectful of the man and the complicated history he experienced.

For most of the history of the town, Shaynowishkung’s biography has served as something of a local curiosity – a bit of quaint north woods flavor lending a sense of lingering indigeneity to what is otherwise an area overwhelmingly run by the settler population. The narrative was stripped of the majority of its historical context, except for those details which communicated a sense of welcome, of friendship between the Anishinaabeg and non-Native settlers, and of the humble and honest roots of the town. With the reengagement with the narrative in recent years, however, many members of the local community have become invested in the production and distribution of a *counter-narrative* version of the biography – one which reconnects Shaynowishkung’s actions with the broader social and political circumstances in which they were made, and actually prioritizes an account that focuses on recognition of colonial domination and dispossession rather than the more whitewashed standing account of friendship, cooperation, and mutual benefit.

The Shaynowishkung biography is here being employed as a representation of the historical narrative type. The sociological significance of historical narratives in northern Minnesota is strong, particularly for older non-Native residents of the region, as well as rural populations. For communities throughout northern Minnesota, historical heritage is an extraordinarily powerful factor in determining cultural identities, as well as attachment to space and place. This is true for both Native and non-Native residents of the region, although despite improvements in the comprehensive scope of public education and the quality of tribal schools, Native histories remain extremely marginalized throughout educational institutions.

Non-Native residents and institutions in northern Minnesota use historical narratives as a means of both education and entertainment, and much of the substantial tourism in the region centers

around historical narratives (as well as ecological narratives, which will be addressed in the next chapter) (Gardner 2004; Holland 2012; Pohlen 2003; Rathmann 2006; Shapiro 2013). The dominant historical narratives throughout the region address the arrival of the French voyageurs (Nute 2008), conflict between the US and the Dakota (Westerman & White 2012), logging and iron mining lifestyles in the north woods (Aby 2002), and the arrival and heritage of the various European ethnic groups that comprised the settler population of the region (Conzen 2014; Holmquist 2003; Lewis 2009; Qualey & Gjerde 2014). The residents of northern Minnesota are also prolific producers of historical narratives themselves, with many local authors writing and often self-publishing histories of particular towns, landmarks, or events (Angell 1978; Chester 2007; Ehrlick 2008; Fedo 2014; Jenkinson 2002; Jorgensen 2013). Historical narrative production and consumption is, put simply, integral to the settler lifestyle of this part of the state.

The centrality of historical narratives within the logic of colonial expansion and hegemonic domination has been written about extensively (Berkhofer 2011; Byrd 2011; Cook-Lynn 1996; Dayan 2013; P. Deloria 1998; V. Deloria 1995; Ellingson 2001; Garcia 1978; Huhndorf 2001; King 2003; Konkle 2004; Mayer 2002; Melamed 2011; O'Brien 2010; Rasmussen 2012; Webber, Johnson, & Lessard 2011), and as these authors have noted, these colonial histories serve a variety of functions that cumulatively support the legitimacy of the settler state, and facilitate the assimilation, elimination, and erasure of indigenous histories, traditions, and peoples. Narrative appropriations of indigenous identities serve to dehumanize indigenous people and legitimize their destruction or indoctrination (e.g. Deloria 1998, Huhndorf 2001); in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, liberal-multicultural narratives, both fiction and non-fiction, have often served to facilitate the relegation of indigenous struggles to a permanent past, erasing the reality of ongoing struggles (Byrd 2011; Coulthard 2014; Melamed 2011; Povinelli 2011); perhaps most insidiously, omissions of indigenous peoples, cultures, and agency from all manner of colonial storytelling function as a means of excluding indigenous peoples from the narrative community formed through the sharing of these narratives, and denying the influence that indigeneity itself has had on the formation of identity within that very community (e.g. O'Brien 2010).

While individual historical narratives (like the Shaynowishkung biography) are frequently used as tools of colonial domination, the general field of history itself should not be thought of as a tool of colonialism, for historical narratives are equally essential to projects of decolonial resistance and indigenous intellectual sovereignty. For our purposes, historical narratives as a general type are better conceptualized as an arena in which this kind of narrative conflict takes place. (This is, to some extent,

distinct from the traditional narrative which, by definition, facilitates the legitimacy and survivance of a particular people, in the local region acting as a tool of indigenous resurgence and self-identification for the Anishinaabeg, as discussed in Chapter 2.)

The assertion of indigenous histories as a means of combating whitewashing and historical erasure has been similarly well-documented and discussed (Allen 2002; Archibald 2008; Bamberg & Andrews 2004; Büken 2002; Cook-Lynn 1993; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Fitzgerald 2015; Geniusz 2009; Goeman 2013; Gross 2009; Howe 1999; Heath Justice 2006; King 2012; Konkle 2004; Moore 2003; Morrow & Schneider 1995; Nabokov 2002; Nelson 2008; Pulitano 2003; Rader 2011; Reder & Morra 2010; Schedler 2011; Silko 2012; Simpson 2011; Vizenor 1981; 1999; 2008; Weaver, Womack, & Warrior 2006; Womack 1999). Many of the functions of narratives and storytelling practice for indigenous peoples respond directly to the ways in which narratives have been used against them by colonial powers (Moore 2003; Goeman 2013; Rader 2011), but their uses are not exclusively reactive. For many indigenous peoples, storytelling (usually through oral tradition) has been integral to cultural practice, the management of social relationships, and establishment of moral values since long before colonial contact ever took place (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Morrow & Schneider 1995; Nelson 2008) – thus, continuing to prioritize the constant communication of indigenous narratives (of all types) functions as an active engagement with traditional identity, and an assertion of cultural continuity in the face of colonial elimination (Archibald 2008; Gross 2009; Vizenor 1999; 2008). In interviews with numerous Anishinaabe elders and historians, I listened to repeated insistence that knowledge of the full truth of colonial history and recognition of the injustices of the past that precipitated those of the present would be absolutely necessary before any real healing could take place.

The structure of this chapter will largely follow that of the preceding chapter, facilitating the comparison of the patterns of distribution and functions of the two narratives as well as the identification of ways that the Shaynowishkung biography operates in ways entirely different from the traditional narrative of the Flood. I will begin with an overview of the biographical narrative itself, for which I draw primarily on the counter-narratives produced in recent years in response to the older and less detailed dominant narrative account.<sup>23</sup> I will then include a section on the methods used for data collection and analysis. The findings from this case study have been structured similarly to the

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<sup>23</sup> To be clear, the data from which the version of the narrative written here was derived has primarily been the counter-narrative accounts of Elaine Fleming (2015) and Patrice & Mike Jones (2013). Interview participants sometimes shared information about Shaynowishkung, but the accounts shared during interviews generally lacked sufficient detail to inform a thorough retelling of his biography.

previous chapter, although the particular results from the study are quite different. I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of what implications these findings may have for sociological and indigenous critical theory, how they interact with the literature, and how they interact with the theoretical implications of the Flood narrative.

### 3.2 Story synopsis<sup>24</sup>

“Saddened by his wife’s death, Shay-now-ish-kung moved with his family and all his possessions to the south shore of Lake Bemidji in 1883. He was the first to greet the Carson brothers when they arrived to establish a trading post in 1888. He was reputed to be very soft-spoken and friendly to all. In times of Indian unrest, settlers like John Steidl trusted him as a friend and protector” (Introduction to “Chief Bemidji,” in *Images of America: Bemidji* (2013), by Cecelia Wattle McKeig).

“The figure is too strong. It’ll be ‘Chief Bemidji’ forever” (Participant, Sept. 11, 2014).

Shaynowishkung (approx. 1834-1904) was born near what is today the town of Inger on the Leech Lake Reservation in north-central Minnesota. He would be mistakenly named “Chief Bemidji” by the white settlers to the area, based on their misunderstanding of Shaynowishkung’s naming of the lake on which they settled, *bimijigamaag* (traverse-lake / lake where the water moves along the shore, referring to the flow of the *michi-zhībii* (Mississippi) river through the lake). His true name translates loosely to “the one who rattles,” referring to the Anishinaabe belief that a traditional rattle, when used in ceremony, will shake away negative feelings (i.e., anger, sadness, resentment, hate, pain).

In 1847, the Pillager band of Ojibwe signed a treaty ceding a large swath of land in central/northern Minnesota to the federal government in exchange for what was, in relative terms, a very small sum in supplies. The Pillagers believed that they were simply lending the land to the government in order to establish a place for the Ho-chunk and the Menominee from Wisconsin to relocate, which would establish a buffer zone between the Ojibwe and the Dakota. However, when the Ho-Chunk and Menominee declined to relocate, the federal government auctioned off the land to white settlers instead – a decision made in bad faith, and one for which the Pillagers were never properly compensated. All of this took place in the early years of Shaynowishkung’s life, and even

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<sup>24</sup> The information in the “Story synopsis,” unless otherwise noted, comes from a combination of sources referred to later in this chapter as the Shaynowishkung “counter-narratives,” including Elaine Fleming’s series of radio programs on the Shaynowishkung biography (Fleming 2015), the interactive chronology slideshow on the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe website (Jones & Jones 2013), as well as the “dominant narrative” biography of Shaynowishkung included in the beginning of Cecelia McKeig’s local interest history book, *Bemidji* (2013).



during this time he continually demonstrated his commitment to peaceful and just relationships between the Ojibwe and the United States.

In the summer of 1850, as part of their overall strategy of Indian Removal, the federal government rendered a series of instructions changing the schedule and location where annuity payments were to be provided to the Lake Superior Anishinaabeg. 5,000 Anishinaabeg from Wisconsin and Michigan, as well as bands from northern Minnesota, migrated from their homes to receive these annuity payments. After settling temporarily at the remote location of Sandy Lake in northern Minnesota and waiting there through the fall and into the winter, the Lake Superior band was informed that the government would not be sending the promised supplies. Between the disease of crowded camps, starvation due to the undelivered supplies, and the necessity of returning home in a much-weakened state in winter, hundreds of Lake Superior Anishinaabeg died as a direct result of the federal government's duplicity and neglect, not including the unknown proportion of the roughly 1,500 Ojibwe from the northern Minnesota bands who died during the return journey and were never counted. The extent of this tragedy largely killed the removal effort as far as the Ojibwe of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan were concerned. Shaynowishkung would have been in his teenage years during the time when this occurred; it's not known if he was among the people who made the trip to and from Sandy Lake, but there is no doubt he was aware of and affected by this tragedy.

The Sandy Lake Tragedy was the most egregious example of this kind of fatal duplicity in the history of the relationship between the Anishinaabeg and the American colonial government. This event represented a tipping point for many Anishinaabeg, beyond which they would never again trust the federal government. Particularly for the traditional people among the Anishinaabeg – those who continued to practice the traditional lifeways, rather than assimilate to the values and practices of colonial capitalism – the Sandy Lake Tragedy played a significant role in convincing many Anishinaabeg that annuity payments and government hand-outs could not be relied upon, and that the seasonal round of subsistence living needed to be maintained as a central feature of Anishinaabe survival.

Among the most pervasive criticism the Anishinaabeg of Minnesota receive today are the claims that they have no real right to or need of the usufructuary rights that they hold through 19<sup>th</sup> century treaties. In responding to these criticisms, it is useful to point not only to the treaties themselves (since the critics often have little to no respect for the legitimacy of the treaties), but also to the conditions that made those treaty rights a necessity in the first place. In this, the Sandy Lake

Tragedy is part of a larger indigenous counter-narrative history – a history to which the counter-narrative account of the Shaynowishkung biography also belongs.

In the years between 1853 and 1857, the settler population of Minnesota exploded, rising from 40,000 to roughly 150,000 in the course of these few years. The consequence of this boom, and the resulting urban expansion, involved systemic clear-cutting of the northern forests and the construction of reservoirs and dam systems that would flood vast areas of essential hunting and gathering lands. From 1854-1871 was the period that Elaine Fleming describes as the “Reservation and Treaty-Making Era,” during which the overwhelming majority of Ojibwe lands in Minnesota were ceded to the federal government and the Ojibwe were concentrated onto very small reservations, with the agreement that they would maintain usufructuary rights allowing them to continue hunting, fishing, and gathering on the ceded lands. During the 1850s, Shaynowishkung traveled upriver with his father and other family members to Lake Bemidji and Lake Irving in order to hunt, fish, and gather berries there. In 1855, the Mississippi, Pillager, and Winnibigoshish bands signed a treaty establishing separate reservations for each; at Cass Lake, Leech Lake, and Lake Winnibigoshish respectively. In 1860, Shaynowishkung was married to Kaaggiigi’anaquodokwe, also from the Pillager Band.

When the Dakota conflict began in 1862, Shaynowishkung was 28 years old, and was knowledgeable about the roots of the conflict and events surrounding the relationship between the US and the Dakota, which had been exacerbated by repeated exploitation and outright theft by American traders, and the callous dehumanization of the Dakota by the traders and federal officials. The Dakota went on to lose the war, and in December of 1862, 38 Dakota were hung in Mankato, MN, in what remains the largest mass execution in United States history. The Dakota had invited the Ojibwe to go to war with them against the United States – an action which might have changed the outcome of the war, and for which *Bagone-giizbig* (Hole in the Day) the Younger, a powerful (and largely self-made) leader of the Minnesota Ojibwe, had been eager. Shaynowishkung counseled the Ojibwe in his region against conflict, and ultimately the Ojibwe throughout Minnesota refrained from intervening. According to historian Elaine Fleming in one of her radio addresses on Shaynowishkung’s life, the following text was included in a 1904 issue of the *Blackduck American*, on Shaynowishkung’s role at the time:

“Bemidji was a famous orator among the Indians, his fame resting on an address to the assembled braves in 1862, when by his reasoning he prevented the Chippewas from joining the Sioux in the historic New Ulm Massacre. He told them that they

were foolish to listen to the Sioux. The rifles of the white men reached far and would make their land run red with blood. The bones would bleach in the land of the Dakotas, and the Great Spirit would be angry with them for joining their ancient enemies. He recounted the victories they had won over the Sioux, and waxed bitterly sarcastic over the enmity which had always existed between his people and the Sioux” (Fleming 2015).

In 1863, the Dakota were expelled from Minnesota and their reservations were terminated. In 1867, the White Earth Reservation was established in northwestern Minnesota, and the Ojibwe in Minnesota were put under tremendous economic and political pressure to relocate to this “removal reservation” (Meyer 1999). Shaynowishkung was now in his 30s, and had become one of the leaders of his people. It was during this same period when Bagone-giizhig the Younger was assassinated by Leech Lake Pillagers (Shaynowishkung’s band, though Shaynowishkung himself had nothing to do with this action) in the employ of a cabal of mixed-blood traders and a local Indian agent who required the elimination of the significant economic and political obstacles that Bagone-giizhig had placed in their way with his own history of extremely successful and shrewd strategies among both settler state and Anishinaabe political systems (Treuer 2011).

From 1871-1934, the “Assimilation Era” was underway. During this period, the primary policy of the settler state with regard to the Ojibwe involved negotiated, sometimes coerced, and sometimes forced assimilation to western agrarian culture, Christian religion and values, and the English language. The act of assimilating a marginalized population into the dominant American cultural ideology was framed as an act of benevolence. In spite of the rhetoric, the assimilationist practices of the United States were part of what Patrick Wolfe called the “logic of elimination” (2006). In his formative article on the various manifestations of this logic of elimination, Wolfe theorizes assimilation not as a necessary component of a colonial project per se, but one of many alternatives in the pursuit of eliminating indigenous peoples – a logic which can be extended to the elimination as well of undesirable immigrant and slave cultures (Anderson 2015; Gordon 1964; Omi & Winant 2014). Assimilation became the dominant cultural policy in the United States when genocide, slavery, and exclusion were no longer available or palatable options to the white American public. Notably, there are still authors writing in recent years who argue in favor of assimilation in the US as a means of combatting prejudice and discrimination born of intercultural conflict (c.f. Anderson 2015) (e.g. Huntington 2004; Shaw-Taylor 2012).

Willingness to assimilate, and interest in the lifestyle being peddled by the United States was mixed among the Anishinaabeg, though the consequences of assimilation policies (and the federal lack of follow-through on assimilative assistance) was disastrous for all the Anishinaabeg, albeit often in different ways. Throughout the first decades of the Assimilation Era, northern Minnesota experienced a series of environmental disasters which bore heavily on the lives of the Anishinaabeg. In 1877, there was a locust plague, and the Ojibwe people experienced epidemic starvation. There were raids on government stores. In 1880, they began the construction of the Mississippi River reservoir system on Leech Lake, causing massive flooding in the region. Between 1881 and 1884, there were three dams built without Ojibwe consent.

Following his wife's death in 1882, Shaynowishkung moved with his family and approximately 50 members of his community to the south shores of Lake Bemidji, where he would establish the first permanent settlement on the lake, and spend the subsequent 13 years until his forced removal to an allotment ten miles to the east. During the later years of his life, Shaynowishkung became a respected local elder and a leader in his community. He also became well-known, well-liked, and influential among the white settlers coming to the area who arrived around 1888, acting as something of a local ambassador and assisting in the building of new homes and the establishment of the town of Bemidji. Following the Nelson Act of 1889 (the Minnesota legislature's implementation of the federal Allotment Act passed two years earlier), Ojibwe tribal lands were meant to be divided into individual allotments and meted out to Native families, with the remainder of the land being appropriated and auctioned by the state of Minnesota. The Ojibwe (with the exception of the Red Lake band) were strongly encouraged to relocate to the White Earth Reservation, where they were meant to take up agricultural lifestyle and thus be "civilized." Shaynowishkung was reluctant to relocate. Despite his own experience in working a farm, he had did not have the means to establish a new farm himself, and knew that many of the Ojibwe would lack not only the resources but the know-how required to survive at White Earth. At the Leech Lake council in 1889, leaders elected to defy the Nelson Act until the empty promises of earlier treaties had been fulfilled. The council elders engaged in heated talks with the Minnesota Chippewa Commission, a panel of three Minnesota state negotiators headed by Henry Rice. Rice blamed the Ojibwe's situation on their own negligence in demanding their dues from the federal government sooner, and insisted that if they would not submit to the Nelson Act, the Commission would leave and they would be left with nothing – no right to their land, no protection from the state, no remuneration for their lands, and nowhere to resettle. Facing complete destitution,

they were ultimately forced to accept. Through his gains from years of work, Shaynowishkung and his family managed to retain land in the town of Bemidji, though their success would not last long.

In 1893, Shaynowishkung's daughter, Bahgowmashikwe, married M. E. Carson of the local trading post. Shaynowishkung lived in Bemidji through the development of the city, its incorporation into the new Beltrami County, the arrival of the railroads, etc. In 1898, the railroads planned routes through Shaynowishkung's property, but he continued to stay in Bemidji. The "Battle of Sugar Point" also took place in 1898 between the Leech Lake Band and the federal government over the illegal sale by colonial companies of timber from the reservation. Shaynowishkung reputedly warned the people of Bemidji of the danger, once again earning their trust and gratitude, and resulting in the creation of the first statue of Shaynowishkung, made by a local settler artisan. This battle was to be the last substantial armed conflict between American Indian people and the US government until the armed protest actions of the 1960s and 70s (McKeig 2008).

In 1899, Ojibwe squatters illegally settled on allotment land on the railroad tracks near Cass Lake were ordered to remove, and the newspapers predicted violence against settlers. However, Shaynowishkung came to the newspaper and tried to disabuse them of that notion. Despite Shaynowishkung's close relationship to the settler population, trouble continued to brew in the area between the white settlers and the Ojibwe population. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, white settlers began arriving near Cass Lake, squatting on lands that they expected to obtain following the division of previously tribal lands into individual allotments, mirroring the actions of the Ojibwe squatting on allotment land. Concerns began to circulate that the Ojibwe and "mixed-blood" merchants who remained in the area would become hostile to the whites squatting on their lands, a sentiment which was bolstered when the state ordered white squatters off the reservation lands in 1899. Caught in the middle of the building conflict, Shaynowishkung counselled peace to both sides. In the new Cass Lake Times, he was quoted: "Look at me, whites; I am an ugly looking man, but I have a good heart. I heard in Cass Lake today what the paper said about trouble again. I am not one that is going to fight; I don't want to fight" (included in and retrieved from the text of the plaques accompanying the new Shaynowishkung statue).

In 1898, the railroad survey had begun plans for infrastructural development that would require Shaynowishkung and the other residents of his village to be removed to the Cass Lake reservation. Shaynowishkung was, in 1900, assigned an 80-acre allotment between Kitchi Lake and Big Rice Lake, and despite years of attempting to keep his home in Bemidji – a process during which he attempted unsuccessfully to claim his Bemidji property by renouncing his tribal membership – in

1903 he was forced to relinquish his property in Bemidji and relocate. He passed away the following year.

Shaynowishkung's funeral, held in Bemidji, was reportedly attended by hundreds of people, remaining the largest funeral in the town's history. For his friendly relations with the settlers, his residence in the area that would become the town of Bemidji, and the marriage of his family into the settler families of the town, Shaynowishkung posthumously became an icon and grandfather-figure in local lore (Jones & Jones 2013). Despite the settler affinity for Shaynowishkung, like many American Indian historical figures, the details of his life have been largely stripped away, leaving for most local residents only the stereotyped figure of "Chief Bemidji." He was also, however, a controversial figure among the other Ojibwe communities due to his friendship with the settlers and his repeated attempts to convince the Ojibwe to remain uninvolved in the conflict between the US government and the Dakota.<sup>25</sup> This controversy over Shaynowishkung's place in history remains to this day.

### 3.3 Methods

Gathering data on the biography of Shaynowishkung involved some overlapping methodological strategies to those which proved useful in understanding the traditional story of Wenabozho and the Flood. Throughout the research process, regardless of the narrative in question, qualitative interviews retained a central location in the methodological approach. However, the identification of interview participants concerning the Shaynowishkung biography differed somewhat from that used for the Flood narrative, owing to three main factors: (1) differences in the geographic patterns of narrative distribution; (2) differences in the types of settings in which the two narratives were commonly communicated; (3) differences in relationship of various demographic groupings to the Shaynowishkung and Flood narratives.

Whereas the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood is geographically diffuse, quite the opposite is true of the biography of Shaynowishkung. While the Flood narrative is of central importance to the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, a part of the indigenous identity and spiritual history of the transnational community of Anishinaabeg, and a tool of cultural survivance and decolonial nationhood facilitate its ubiquity throughout the *Anishinaabe Akiing* [Anishinaabe Country/Territory],

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<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note that the bulk of military conflict between the Dakota and the US government took place well before the encounters between the white settlers and Shaynowishkung's community, suggesting that the story of his arguments for peace were retold well after the fact of their occurrence. The reasons for their retelling were never made clear to me, although I speculate that in the course of making himself a known and trusted figure in the settler community, telling the recently arrived settlers of his insistence on peace from decades past may have carried some significant weight.

the story of Shaynowishkung's life serves a variety of social and political functions, but almost exclusively within the territory in which he lived, most particularly within Bemidji. Thus, although interviewees were asked about their knowledge of Shaynowishkung outside the area, very few had even heard his name (or the more common moniker "Chief Bemidji"), much less many details of his life. Hence, the overwhelming majority of participants with whom I spoke about his life came from this region – I did not, for instance, seek interviews concerning Shaynowishkung's biography in Grand Rapids (to the east of the Leech Lake Reservation), or on the White Earth Reservation (some distance to the southwest of Bemidji), although I did inquire about familiarity with his biography among participants throughout the broader northern Minnesota region as one means of gauging the spread of the narrative.

In some ways, the communication of Shaynowishkung's biography is similar in setting and structure to that of the traditional Flood narrative. Both are more frequently told to young audiences, albeit through very different storytelling modes. Both are communicated most frequently not in their entirety, but in the form of narrative fragments scattered throughout the social and geographic range of their dispersal, though the former appears much more frequently in visual form, as Shaynowishkung's face (along with the name of "Chief Bemidji") is ubiquitous in Bemidji public spaces, particularly in the downtown area.

Despite their similarities, certain differences necessitated a change in sampling approach where the Shaynowishkung biography was concerned. The plans for the new statue had been underway for some time prior to my initial arrival at the beginning of the research project, and public discussion grew throughout the research period, reaching a peak at the time of the statue dedication in the summer of 2015. The statue replacement was a source of considerable local discussion and controversy (Enger June 6, 2015), as well as being driven by a large committee of local Anishinaabe and non-Native community members. Particularly given the snowball sampling method by which many participants were identified, I found myself speaking with a large number of visible public figures in the local arts industry, municipal politics, and the statue committee itself. Where sampling for interviews concerning the Flood narrative followed a path driven largely by recommendations of and referrals to key elders throughout the region who are knowledgeable in traditional lifeways, sampling for interviews on Shaynowishkung led again and again to a large but highly centralized group of public officials, media outlets, and community members with either personal connections to the biography itself (for instance, through blood relation to Shaynowishkung) or to community efforts toward intercultural communication and reconciliation.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the sampling was affected by a fundamental difference between the ways in which these two narratives related to the overlapping cultural and historical arenas of northern Minnesota and the communities living therein. As discussed above, the traditional story of Wenabozho and the Flood is one of deep spiritual and ontological significance for the Anishinaabeg. For this reason, the particular path followed from one respondent to the next in the snowball sampling method led me to one Anishinaabe spiritual leader after another – traditional storytellers, most over the age of 60, and many members of the Midewiwin society that forms the backbone of Anishinaabe religious and spiritual structure. By contrast, although there are ethical implications, the biography of Shaynowishkung holds no particular spiritual significance, instead communicating a personal narrative of recent history, itself providing interesting and valuable windows into the political, social, and material circumstances of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but not carrying the same sense of special cultural protection. Consequently, my sampling for the Shaynowishkung biography consisted much more seldom of spiritual leaders, and much more heavily focused on Native and non-Native community members who were and are active in the engagement with local history and politics.

Outside the scope of interview sampling, there were also certain differences in the data collection method between these first two of the three main narratives examined in this study. Like the traditional story of the Flood, the biography of Shaynowishkung has been written down in a variety of text sources, though here too, the distribution of the Shaynowishkung biography has a much shorter range than that of the Flood narrative. This is owed in part to the types of books and other texts in which these narratives were published – in addition to numerous sources produced by local and regional authors (Benton-Banai 1988; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Johnston 2004; Peacock & Wisuri 2002; Vizenor 1984), the Flood narrative (along with a vast number of other traditional narratives) was published in major ethnographic works (Dewdney 1975; Kohl 1860; McNally 2009; Parkman 1998; Wilson 1886) and appears in a broad array of locations online (Heo 2012; Koinonia House 2010; Ritzenthaler & Ritzenthaler 1983 Stone 2014). The biography of Shaynowishkung, on the other hand, has primarily been written and published locally, appearing in the Beltrami County History Museum, local tourist publications such as *Bemidji* (McKeig 2013), and on the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe website where a detailed historical account of the biography and surrounding social circumstances was produced by tribal historians (Jones & Jones 2013).

As noted in Chapter 2, the analytic approach used here closely resembles the recommended use of the so-called “humanistic coefficient” (Znaniecki 1927), in that taking into account the social



context and perceptions of the individual participants was crucial to understanding their relationships to these narratives, and how the respondents thought about (or didn't think about, as the case may be) the impact of the narratives on their interactions with the social and political borders and communities through which they moved.

### **3.4 Findings**

“I mention the apparent contradiction in the anti-colonial truth of Shaynowishkung's life and the seemingly celebratory colonial nature of his end-of-life story. [Participant] says that he was more than just anticolonial, he was a bit of a peacemaker. “There were situations where he calmed people down and brokered peace, and probably prevented violence because of what he said. Even though he was at times acting against the government policies, he was always acting in good faith, trying to make the best of a very difficult situation. And everyone likes a mascot, so after he died he was able to be put on a pedestal as a noble savage. Now he can be an icon of what we wish the Anishinaabe were.” (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Bemidji city official, May 20, 2015).

“All the research on “Chief Bemidji” (CB) was from newspaper articles written by non-natives who wanted the land, and created an icon of a local man whose story they could twist and use to justify their appropriation. He wasn't a chief, his name wasn't Bemidji, but the narrative could be used as a kind of creation story for the town. Elaine offered to research CB for the Beltrami County History Center after seeing the kinds of simplified narratives that they were using or planning to use. Her class did these posters on his life, but the committee decided they wanted to own the writing and to do the writing, and that they had to tailor what was included in the narrative to their audience (most of whom I now know are old white people), so Elaine stepped out, and now the story that is there is based on her research, but it's in the words and subject to the editing of the Historical Society, their board, and the Chief Bemidji committee.

She mentioned, as an aside, that people back then would call CB an ‘apple’ (meaning red on the outside but white on the inside). It was unclear to me if she meant the people during Shaynowishkung's life or rather people at the time she was working on his story” (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Anishinaabe historian and elder, Elaine Fleming).

#### **a. Modes of Communication**

While knowledge of the Flood narrative fell fairly strictly along lines of Anishinaabe indigenous identity, knowledge of Shaynowishkung's life follows a very different, and in many ways much more constrained, set of boundaries. Generally speaking, there is very little of what might be called “casual knowledge” of the biography. It is extremely rare for the average person living in the region – Anishinaabeg or not – to know much if anything about Shaynowishkung's life, with most

outside of Bemidji and Cass Lake knowing only his moniker of “Chief Bemidji,” and that the town of Bemidji was named after him. This latter perception is of course somewhat misleading, as both the nickname and the name of the town came from the Anishinaabe name for the lake, *bimijiigamaag* (Fleming 2015).

For all intents and purposes, there are two primary groups that can be distinguished by their level of knowledge of Shaynowishkung’s life: those who are personally, socially, or professionally invested in the narrative, whose level of knowledge ranges from moderate to highly detailed; and those who are not invested in the narrative, whose level of knowledge is typically very little or nothing at all. These patterns of communication, or lack thereof, are indicative of a narrative that is almost never incidental, but rather almost always purposeful; in other words, when Shaynowishkung’s biography is told, whether by oral storytelling or in text, it is almost always done so with a particular purpose or message in mind. The biography is rarely told – and even more rarely consumed – as a form of entertainment or idle interest, instead appearing in whole form when a specific lesson is attempting to be communicated. This stands in some contrast to the Flood narrative, of which the intended message is often unclear, particularly in instances where it has been included in partial form as simply one among many legends (Brown & Brightman 1988; Levine 2007; Johnston 1976; Peacock & Wisuri 2002; Vizenor 1984).

The exception to the overwhelmingly purposive telling of the Shaynowishkung narrative is found in the communication of its narrative fragments, which are almost exclusively consumed passively and incidentally. Here, too, there is a significant departure from the kind of communicative uses we see of the Flood narrative. The difference manifests in two ways. First, where the Flood narrative fragments were not infrequently employed, both in oral and textual storytelling, to supplement related points by connecting the spiritual, environmental, or cultural themes of the narrative to broader social, cultural, and political issues as well as historical overviews of the Anishinaabeg, Shaynowishkung’s biography almost never appears in this capacity. When narrative fragments are intentionally included in broader communicative instances, they only appear to do so in text, and they are almost never representative of conceptual information or used to supplement more complicated points being made, but instead typically appear either as simple examples (as in *The Four Hills of Life* (Peacock & Wisuri 2006), where “Chief Bemidji” is mentioned as an example of a local leader), or as mentions of a local curiosity in Bemidji (as in *Midwest Marvels: Roadside Attractions Across Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, & Wisconsin* (Dregni 2006)). These fragments also appear in the form of appropriations of the nickname “Chief Bemidji” or simply “Chief” by businesses including a local

theater (the “Chief Theater”), a brewing company (Chief Bemidji Lager), and an unsuccessfully trademarked varietal of strawberry (the “Chief Bemidji”). Second, where the Flood narrative fragments typically appeared as mentions of the Flood, of muskrat, of the “earthdiver,” and so on in various books (Barnouw 1977; Hodge 1907; Taylor 2006; Treuer 2011) and occasionally in conversation, the most common narrative fragment of Shaynowishkung’s biography is not linguistic, but visual: his image.

Shaynowishkung’s likeness is, for many people, the only part of his life that they know, though it remains unclear whether most people who have seen his face would recognize it if they saw it again. The foremost example is the recently renovated Shaynowishkung statue in downtown Bemidji. It is extremely rare to find someone who has been to Bemidji and not seen the statue, and most people who know the name “Chief Bemidji” associate it with this statue (as well as the name of the city). Given that it is not a spoken or written signifier, some might question the validity of using an image as an example of a narrative fragment, but the narrative capacity of images (in a variety of media) is well-established (Lankow, Ritchie, & Crooks 2012; Ryan 2004). Images, moreover, have been integral to colonial projects around the world (Bell 1992; Berkhofer 2011; Edwards & Mead; Mayer 2002; Thomas 1999), primarily for their capacity to communicate alternate realities of the colonial subject, facilitating historical erasure, cultural, sexual, racial, and political distortions, and dehumanization of indigenous peoples, all of which require the transmission of visual indexes referring the viewer back to familiar colonial narratives. They are also, of course, used by indigenous peoples as well in the pursuit of counter-colonial visual storytelling (Martineau & Ritskes 2014; Rader 2011; Siebert 2015). In the case of Shaynowishkung, both his dominant narrative as a voice of peace and cross-cultural cooperation, and the counter-narrative represented by the consequences of his cooperation with settler colonization and the subsequent appropriation of his likeness and biography, are conjured by different uses of this visual narrative fragment.

There are a number of different parties invested in the continued transmission of the Shaynowishkung biography, and to each there are distinct but overlapping audiences as well as means of communication. The invested parties I have identified have been grouped primarily according to their relationship to the narrative. These are (A) the city of Bemidji, including its municipal government and local non-Native organizations including the institutions involved in local media, arts, education, and history; (B) The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, including the RBC and its associated media and educational organizations; (C) The Shaynowishkung Statue Committee involved in the 2015 replacement of the older statue with a newer, more realistic likeness accompanied by interpretive

plaques; (D) independent Anishinaabeg historians such as Elaine Fleming and Patrice Jones; lastly (E) independent non-Native historians such as Cecelia McKeig, and Bruce White. I will briefly outline the ways in which each of these parties approach, exercise ownership of, and help to distribute the narrative of Shaynowishkung's life.

i. *The city of Bemidji and other settler institutions*

“‘They say if you know your neighbor, you don't fear your neighbor.’ Get to know people, work together on committees, play together, go to school together, do things together socially. [Participant]...has been brave enough to say, ‘this is a good idea. Let's do it!’ And sometimes, if you stand up and say something like that, other people will say ‘huh, I guess she thinks it's okay, maybe it isn't impossible.’ So she thinks we just need more people to be leaders” (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Bemidji city official, May 22, 2015).

Bemidji has a small number of businesses and public organizations that distribute the Shaynowishkung biography, including the Beltrami County History Museum, the visitor center along the main road through town, and various local news and media sources including the main newspaper (the Bemidji Pioneer) and the local public access television station (Lakeland Public Television). In complete form, Shaynowishkung's life story appears in the Beltrami County History Museum, and in local news sources (Enger June 6, 2015; Wesley June 7, 2015). These narrative sources tend to cater to disparate audiences, with the main body of visitors to the History Museum being tourists and school groups, while the news sources primarily engage with local adult residents. According to Dan Karalus, the director of the History Museum, Native visitors are exceedingly rare, despite efforts in recent years to increase the quality of the exhibit on Anishinaabe history, including the installation of a much more detailed telling of Shaynowishkung's biography. By contrast, many Anishinaabeg are consumers of local media, although broadly speaking there is a clear and widely-held distrust of news organizations by the Anishinaabeg, many of whom strongly believe that these organizations harm the public's perceptions of Native people by exclusively reporting on crime, addiction, and poverty among the Anishinaabeg population.

Interestingly, despite general perceptions among both Native and non-Native respondents that news media is extremely biased, the particular biases of which respondents accused media outlets were not always indicated by a review of news and feature reporting. One frequently cited indicator of media bias was, for instance, the fact that most of the newspapers in northwestern Minnesota are owned by the Forum Media Corporation based in Fargo, ND, a corporation which is popularly known

to have strong conservative leanings. The perception exists that this suggests not only skewed reporting on political campaigns, but a general right-wing brand of selectivity when it comes to story coverage.

In interviews with officials at the Bemidji Pioneer, I was informed that the owning company has neither the authority nor the interest to influence what appears in the newspapers or how stories are written. The sole exception, according to the publisher, comes during major state and federal elections, when Forum determines which candidates the newspaper will endorse – local elections are left entirely alone, and in all other areas of business, the Forum has no voice. It is difficult to determine the extent to which this is factually true, but the publisher, Dennis Doeden, expressed his own sense of pride in the fact that the newspaper gets as many complaints from conservatives as they do from progressives. This explanation is also supported by the disparity I've observed between the complaints of underreporting or skewed reporting I have been privy to during interviews, and my own observations of readily available counter-examples in the news media.

This pattern was echoed to some degree in the accusations of racism that are made by the Anishinaabeg and strongly anti-racist non-Natives about the Bemidji area in general. During the course of the fieldwork for this dissertation, respondents repeatedly informed me that Bemidji is one of the most racist places in Minnesota. However, when pressed for details or examples, most of these respondents cited microaggressions involving being watched in supermarkets (with the expectation that a Native person presents a risk of theft), witnessing differences in tone between when Native and non-Native people are addressed in public, or experiencing a general sense of hostility, dislike, and ignorance among non-Native residents. Similar perceptions were evident among non-Native respondents as well, rooted in expectations of hostility that were rarely corroborated with personal experience or even direct second-hand evidence. For instance, despite the inauguration of a new annual powwow to be held in the Sanford Center in south Bemidji – an event which was lobbied for strongly by both Anishinaabe and non-Native officials and community members as a way of facilitating more cross-cultural contact and association – even advocates of the event who were non-Native told me that although they supported and were happy about the powwow and the opportunities it represented, they were not sure they would feel welcome and would most likely not attend for fear of feeling intrusive or out-of-place.

The empirical evidence seems to suggest that perceptions and expectations of bias are perpetuating a cycle of hostility and suspicion as strongly as, if not more than, the presence of overt and structural racial mistreatment. There is an extent to which, after a very long history of animosity

rooted in the structural oppressions of colonial conflict, Native and non-Native people in northern Minnesota largely see in one another and in all authoritative institutions what they expect to see; media bias, political corruption, propensity for crime, racial bigotry, and so on. In some cases, these are very much present and detrimental parts of the social and structural environment, but longstanding battles with these problems have produced a population haunted by history, creating broad stereotypes with which to paint the indigenous/colonial/conservative/liberal/wealthy/poor Other.

The different Bemidji institutional narrative sources may have differing audiences and modes of communication, but they are united by a common relationships to the Shaynowishkung narrative. All of the institutions included under the category of the “city of Bemidji” are embedded within – and structurally supportive of – the dominant settler society in northern Minnesota. They serve a somewhat homogeneous public, although the proportion of the population that identified in the 2010 Census as Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native is significantly higher than the national (0.9%) or statewide (1.1%) rates, with 11.34% of the Bemidji city population identified as American Indian / Native American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In spite of the high Native population, the audiences for which their Shaynowishkung narratives are primarily made are overwhelmingly part of the white settler population. Moreover, their institutional and political legitimacy is dependent on the legitimacy of the city itself, the county, and the state, which is in turn dependent on the hegemonic dominance of the colonial narrative, including, in the local context, the dominant account of Shaynowishkung’s biography.

In recent years, the Beltrami County History Center has made efforts not only to expand their Ojibwe history exhibit space and their rendition of the Shaynowishkung narrative, and they have intentionally consulted with an Anishinaabe historian to produce a narrative that did not whitewash over the darker details of Shaynowishkung’s story, including the legal and economic injustices he suffered toward the end of his life. There is a growing movement in various social and educational institutions in Bemidji advocating greater acknowledgment of colonial oppression, though the common perception among local (primarily white) residents remains that Shaynowishkung’s place in history is centrally if not solely represented by his warmth, generosity, and spirit of cooperation with the early settlers.

In news media, Shaynowishkung has for the most part been absent from the public eye throughout the settler history of the region. The moments when his name and image reappear are mainly associated with events surrounding the iconic statue in his likeness, as when it was renovated in 1927 and 1952, and again during the last six years as the Shaynowishkung Statue Project negotiated

with city officials on the placement of the new statue as well as the informational plaques (Dey June 8, 2015; Dec 12, 2014; Enger June 6, 2015; Hageman June 24, 2013; Meuers June 15, 2015; Wesley Sept 3, 2013). Many of the stories in local news sources emphasized in particular the controversy surrounding the language of these interpretive signs. Two of the four plaques focused attention on Shaynowishkung himself, and his actions and experiences during his lifetime; the other two (much more controversial) plaques engaged in broader discussion of the colonial history and political system that formed the context in which Shaynowishkung lived his life.

A particular source of public concern was the inclusion of a quote concerning the starvation of the Dakota and Ojibwe people during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century from a regional government trader by the name of Andrew Myrick,<sup>26</sup> which reads, “So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry, let them eat grass or their own dung.” Although reliable numbers on the proportions of the local population who supported the language as it was written are difficult to come by, the Bemidji Pioneer newspaper conducted an online poll, finding that 64% of 1,347 respondents were opposed to keeping what they perceived to be inflammatory language (Bemidji Pioneer 2015a). (34% from a sample of 304 also indicated an unfavorable opinion of the look of the new statue itself (Bemidji Pioneer 2015b).) There was some opposition from the city council as well during the discussion preceding the council vote to accept or reject the proposed language. Two of the five city council members expressed reservations about the writing and the inclusion of the Myrick quote, with the minutes from the city council discussion noting that councilman Helquist “recalled that the City put a substantial amount of money toward the project. He stated he did not look at this as a history lesson and did not believe this was the place for it” (Murphy Apr. 20, 2015).

## ii. *The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe*

Contrasted with the city of Bemidji as the other distinct political and geographic party invested in the Shaynowishkung biography is the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) – specifically the governing structure including the RBC and institutions of tribal history, culture, and education. By far the most detailed version of the Shaynowishkung narrative is to be found on the LLBO website, where a slideshow produced by local historian Patrice Jones in concert with Mike Jones and Elaine Fleming presents a thorough chronology of the events in and around Shaynowishkung’s life. This slideshow is not easily stumbled upon by accident, though if one searches for “Shaynowishkung” in a

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<sup>26</sup> Myrick himself was murdered in 1862 during the early part of the Dakota Wars by a group of Dakota men, his body left where it fell with a wad of grass stuffed in his mouth (Treuer 2011).

standard internet browser, the link to this version of the narrative is among the top results, making it simple to find for those who know what they're looking for.

The slideshow itself doesn't, for the most part, cover the first half of Shaynowishkung's life, focusing instead on the "Assimilation Era" from 1871-1934, the first half of which constituted the final three decades of his biography. Its narrative contains extensive information about late 19<sup>th</sup> century reservoir and dam systems, forest clearcutting, the attempted removal of the Ojibwe to the White Earth Reservation, and the consequences of these actions for the Anishinaabeg and for Shaynowishkung personally. These included the enormous loss of land to the Minnesota Ojibwe, focusing particularly on the Leech Lake band to which Shaynowishkung belonged: "Of the original 864,158 acres, 5% or approximately 43,000 acres remain in trust for the Leech Lake Band" (Jones & Jones 2013). The narrative continued through details of Shaynowishkung's later years (many included in the synopsis at the beginning of this chapter). Particularly striking is the comprehensive recognition in the slideshow of the agency exercised by the Ojibwe leaders, including Shaynowishkung – a factor too often overlooked in the more common historical narratives of either total eradication or total subordination (King 2012).

### iii. *The Shaynowishkung Statue Committee*

"I honestly think most people don't think about it very much. I think in some ways we're divorced our notion of Bemidji from Chief Bemidji, because Bemidji is just the town.' She guesses that most people almost never make the connection. She says she thinks they've 'managed' to separate the town from the history. (It's unclear how she feels about that.) She thinks that when people see the statue, it may make a difference to their understandings and perceptions (particularly because the statue is realistic and literally larger-than-life)" (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Bemidji city official, May 22, 2015).

The third invested group is the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, which from 2009 through 2015 worked toward the replacement of the outdated statue of "Chief Bemidji" in downtown Bemidji with the realistic bronze representation that stands in the park along the lakeshore today. The committee, initially formed by two non-Native women from Bemidji, and an Anishinaabe woman from Red Lake, and comprised of Native and non-Native residents of Bemidji, various towns on the Leech Lake reservation, the town of Red Lake, as well as multiple of Shaynowishkung's direct descendants living in the region (and eventually other relatives who traveled in from Texas), has met sporadically throughout the last few years to discuss the statue, the image of the Anishinaabeg in



northern Minnesota, the history of colonial-indigenous relations and conflict, and ways to approach the statue replacement and broader reconciliation efforts.

The committee began with a diverse membership, ranging from local history experts to community business and social leaders who knew little to nothing about Shaynowishkung or Anishinaabe history. As the members with whom I spoke described their experiences, the committee was to be very loosely structured, and while the organization had certain members who were active in managing the schedule and planning, there was no particular leadership or hierarchy. Meetings were informal, and at times seemed to meander far off the main topic of concern as people told stories, shared information about history, and discussed contemporary issues that the Anishinaabeg face in northern Minnesota. For some non-Native members of the committee, this was a jarring way of going about a project with so specific a goal. However, over time they came to appreciate this mode of communication and decision-making, which was far more familiar to the Anishinaabeg members present. This model of decision-making, which relied on prolonged dialogue and the development of consensus through sharing of perspectives, is an integral part of Anishinaabe political practice (Gross 2014; McNally 2009; Meyer 1999). The norms prioritizing this kind of decision-making remained, and continue to be reflected in the ways that many political and social meetings are held, including those of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee.

The Shaynowishkung Statue Committee straddles an interesting divide between the different and often competing interests of the settler and indigenous worlds in northern Minnesota, split between goals that are in some ways (as noted above) explicitly decolonial, and others which fit more precisely into what indigenous critics have referred to as the “colonial politics of recognition” (Coulthard 2014) – a construct which performs some of the functions of establishing indigenous presence in settler societies, but which simultaneously reifies the legitimacy of the settler state and rather easily absolves white settlers of their guilt over colonial violence that is assumed to be in the past. Overall, the politics of recognition are, thus, a much more settler-friendly construct, supporting a decidedly *postcolonial* societal imaginary.

It is important to note here that, in the sense I am employing the term, “postcolonial” politics should be understood as informed by but distinct from “postcolonial” scholarship. The latter concept, encompassing the work of such radical scholars as Frantz Fanon (2007), Edward Said (2014), and Gayatri Spivak (1999), posed a variety of direct challenges to the legitimacy of settler colonialism, including the inherent violence of its endemic racialization, sexual and gendered marginalization and oppression, and mutually constitutive relationship with exploitive capitalism. However, the field of

postcolonial theory has seen surprisingly little engagement with the ongoing conditions of life for colonized peoples in settler societies, not least of all in the United States. In *The Transit of Empire* (2011), Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd writes, “For those within American Indian and indigenous studies, postcolonial theory has been especially verboten precisely because the ‘post-,’ even though its contradictory temporal meanings are often debated, represents a condition of futurity that has not yet been achieved as the United States continues to colonize and occupy indigenous homelands” (xxxii). This twisting of postcolonialism has been perhaps even more egregious within settler state politics, where relegating colonial trauma to the permanent past has become a pervasive strategy not only for the settler state itself (Barker 2011; Byrd 2011; Povinelli 2011), but also in many cases for various indigenous governing bodies as well, as they face the unenviable choice of survival through at least partial acceptance of colonial rule and rules, or dwindling eradication through rejection of the “only game in town.” As the term is used throughout this dissertation, the implication of “postcolonialism” in Anishinaabe politics refers to a varied strategy of compromise between the ideals of indigenous self-government and rejection of colonial violence on the one hand, and the necessities of political and economic survival in the colonial capitalism superstructure on the other.

In many ways, both the structure and the conduct of the committee speak to a resurgence of Anishinaabe traditionalism and the employment of those traditions within social and political spaces that have, during colonial history, been dominated by Western colonial modes of thinking and acting. The version of the Shaynowishkung narrative that the committee eventually agreed upon intentionally avoided genial whitewashing, acknowledging the systems of domination and oppression under which Shaynowishkung lived. Moreover, in the process of compiling and collectively telling this narrative, both the knowledge and perceptions of many if not all the non-Native members of the group and other affiliates were significantly altered, with members of the committee emerging from the experience with a far greater awareness not only of past atrocities but the ongoing structures of control and deprivation – as well as the tools of indigenous resistance and survival – that characterize Anishinaabe lives today.

However, in both form and consequence, the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, and the statue itself, simultaneously informed a very different and more dominant political and historical narrative that supports postcoloniality and the legitimacy of the settler state. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Shaynowishkung has represented for Bemidji a symbol of friendship and cooperation between the settler and the Anishinaabeg, despite over a century of virtually uninterrupted and at times violent conflict and hostility between the two populations (Fleming 2015; Miller 1999), to say nothing

of the pervasive schisms that have existed between different segments of the Anishinaabe population as well (Kugel 2012; Meyer 1999; Treuer 2010; Treuer 2011).

But for the stereotypical imagery used to depict his likeness, Shaynowishkung's biography as told by the settlers could have been describing one of their own; even his name was Anglicized to "Chief Bemidji," and the original statue that was erected in the town to commemorate him was, notably, depicted as far fairer-skinned than Shaynowishkung himself had been, and but for the long, straight black hair, a casual observer would not have been able to tell for certain that the statue was not of one of the French *voyageurs* (see Fig. 3). Shaynowishkung, for most Bemidjians – particularly non-Natives – has fit in well with the common American archetype of the "Good Indian" (Büken 2002; Garcia 1978): something akin to the "Noble Savage" (Ellingson 2001), but welcoming of the advance of Western civilization; helping white settlers to acclimate to their new environment, alleviating uncomfortable feelings of white guilt associated with the continued occupation of indigenous lands, and facilitating the cultural imaginary of indigeneity which is willingly and happily shared with or even transferred to the new inhabitants of the land.

At the root of this postcolonial narrative is the narrative of Shaynowishkung as "bridge-builder" (a phrase I heard repeatedly by members of the Statue Committee and other local residents). Of all the experiences and actions of his long and considerably complicated lifetime, it is Shaynowishkung's welcome, assistance, insistence on peace, friendship, and his eventual kinship through marriage with the settlers that has dominated his biography, even for many of the members of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee. Indigenous scholars are producing more and more theoretical and empirical work on the pervasiveness of the multiculturalist and postracial vision of postcolonial relations, and in this setting we see a stark representation of the strength with which this ideology clings to the principles of non-confrontation and peaceful reconciliation as the most important and effective strategy for addressing social and historical conflict. Even in a circumstance of ongoing competing interests and hostility, the search for "bridge-building" remains at the heart of the organizational strategy. This may speak to one of the reasons why Shaynowishkung/"Chief Bemidji" has remained an integral (if vague) part of the identity of Bemidji. Seemingly paradoxically, while simultaneously practicing certain decolonial methods of knowledge and counter-narrative generation, the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee was also responsible for the revitalization of a narrative that has been used to reinterpret history in ways that legitimize the presence of the settler in northern Minnesota.

The purpose of the committee, and of the statue replacement, was to instill a sense of awareness of the actual history of Bemidji, the surrounding area, and the Anishinaabeg, among the non-Native residents of the region. It was also intended to provide the Anishinaabeg themselves, when they came through Bemidji, with a sense of belonging and welcome in this place. It would represent a symbolic change demonstrated by the removal of the old, cartoonish figure of “Chief Bemidji” and the honoring of Shaynowishkung with a piece of historic art (and an educational narrative) that would signify his own dignity. However, outside the immediate time-frame surrounding the statue replacement and the ensuing controversy over the narrative it represented to the public, local consumption of the Shaynowishkung biography will likely diminish in complexity and nuance until, once again, the only part of the narrative that remains is the name, the face, and the vague sense of settler entitlement that comes from having been welcomed by the previous occupant of the land. Tourists passing through, and occasional educational programs, may revisit the more complete narrative, but despite the energy and dedication of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, the story has been told and will likely fall into silence again.

Outside of the institutional parties invested in the Shaynowishkung biography, there are also Anishinaabe and non-Native individuals involved in the telling of the narrative and demonstrating remarkably strong influence on the ways in which the narrative plays out in the public sphere. Ultimately all narratives are created and recreated through the storytelling act, and for the creation of a particular tale, there is no storytelling voice so powerful as the individual expert. For present purposes, I’ve compared the work of Anishinaabeg historians Elaine Fleming and Patrice Jones with that of non-Native historians Cecelia McKeig and Bruce White.

#### iv. *Individual Anishinaabe historians*

The reason she shared the work for Beltrami and for the Chief Bemidji stuff is because she wants people to know that history. ‘If non-indigenous people know our history, they will better respect us and we can have better relationships.’ These histories are important for native pride, but also for breaking stereotypes (rich, drunks, welfare, violent). They should see how poverty affected Indians and how it affects their lives and their values, also that after what they’ve been through that they’ve survived. She doesn’t mind doing it – she doesn’t feel like she shared private stories and those things, but she believes in educating everyone. It’s about knowledge and healing, so that that leads to respect” (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Anishinaabe historian and elder, Elaine Fleming, Sept. 11, 2014).

Throughout recent years, Elaine Fleming has been perhaps the most influential single voice in the telling and retelling of Shaynowishkung's life story. Fleming, Chair of the Arts & Humanities Department at Leech Lake Tribal College and long-time instructor in Ojibwe language, culture, and history, was the principle author of the text on Shaynowishkung for both the new statue plaques in Bemidji and the Beltrami County History Museum, and has taught numerous classes covering the details of Shaynowishkung's life and the historical and political circumstances in which he lived. In addition to her writing and teaching, she has also done a multi-part radio series on the history of Leech Lake, and made multiple appearances on local television in her capacity as historian and storyteller.

In spite of the influence her work has had on the content of the narrative as communicated in the local region, Fleming has taken a decidedly hands-off approach to the actual applications of the narrative, generally preferring to tell no more and no less than her version of the narrative, after which point she distances herself from the process of editorializing and use of the narrative for its various purposes. During the production of the narrative, Fleming is uncompromising and single-mindedly determined to ensure that the full, detailed account is being told, complete with accurate recollection of the flaws in Shaynowishkung's own character, the dispossession that he and his family suffered following allotment of reservation lands, and the broader political and social environment of the time which was overwhelmingly hostile to Anishinaabe interests, and which produced myriad divisions between and among the Anishinaabeg and settlers.

In discussing Shaynowishkung's role in local history, Fleming takes a view that is both less rosy and far more complex than the dominant narrative presents. In narratives not only of Minnesota indigenous history but of the broader scope of indigenous responses to colonialism, the modes of coping with the structural and social difficulties of the situation have frequently been categorized dichotomously as an internal conflict between "traditional" and "assimilationist" Native people. The former (embodied in Minnesota history by the group that Melissa Meyer refers to as "full-bloods") group tended to employ strategies of survival that prioritized geographic and social isolation, preservation of precolonial customs, and refusal to participate in forms of colonial governance. The latter group (whom Meyer refers to as the "mixed-blood" faction) were more inclined to use colonial systems to their advantage, learning to speak English, adapting to colonial economic and political norms, and making use of alliances with settlers and colonial institutions for the purpose of improving their own situation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Meyer frames this assimilationist strategy as both an ideological and ethnic shift among the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota, pointing out that while there has been extensive animosity toward the mixed-blood faction from full-bloods

Shaynowishkung's cooperation and friendship with the first Bemidji settlers placed him decidedly in the latter category, and many Anishinaabeg today may have difficulty holding someone in high esteem who could also be considered complicit in the system of colonial domination. The version of the Shaynowishkung narrative that Fleming teaches, in the classroom, on the radio, and elsewhere, is predominately broadcast to Native audiences, or at least to audiences that hold a larger proportion of Native members (e.g., the listenership of the local radio station in Cass Lake which reaches across a large swath of the Leech Lake reservation, Bemidji, and nearby rural country where there is a moderately high Anishinaabe population). And despite the presence of a large non-Native population who have the opportunity to consume the narrative that Fleming produces, the evidence from interviews and observations throughout the region suggests that if someone is going to be exposed to (and affected by) her rendition of the Shaynowishkung biography, it is more likely than not that they will be Anishinaabeg. Non-Native residents remain, despite recent efforts to expand and complicate the colonial narrative, overwhelmingly unlikely to engage with the Shaynowishkung narrative in ways more complex than the face, the pseudonym, and the vague sense of inspiration and validation stemming from the feel-good story of the cross-cultural friendship and kinship that gave birth to the city of Bemidji.

v. *Individual non-Native historians*

Many people who live here now think their families were cheated out of their land, but there were also many families who had the education and the understanding to make the rational decision of whether to sell their property. I think we've heard so much about the cheating...that I think we don't know the positive.

For the Bemidji book, Arcadia requires you to compress what you know into a caption. It has to be straightforward and uncomplicated. She was kind of talked into that. She likes doing more detailed accounts (Fieldnote excerpt from interview with Bemidji historian, Cecelia McKeig, Oct. 21, 2014).

Non-Native historian Cecelia McKeig, who has done work with both the Beltrami County Historical Society in Bemidji and with the Cass County Historical Society based in Walker, has literally written the book(s) on Bemidji history, including one of the more thorough tellings of the Shaynowishkung biography (McKeig 2013). Her 2013 book, *Bemidji*, part of the *Images of America* series, tellingly begins with a description and photos of "Chief Bemidji," his family, and his home in

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and other traditionalists, it should be noted that under the norms of the Western capitalist culture into which they were born and educated, the focus on individual achievement and shrewd business skills among the mixed-bloods was not only normative but morally sanctioned (Meyer 1999).

Bemidji, but despite its prominent placement in the structure of the text, the narrative McKeig communicated is extremely selective, excluding all events that do not pertain directly to his close personal relationship with the settlers, and their supposed reverence for him evidenced by his massive funeral attendance and the statue erected in his honor. Interestingly, this book is far less rich in detail and acknowledgement of historical complexity and colonial misdeeds than her other works (McKeig 2008; McKeig, Fairbanks, & Fairbanks 2001), suggesting that the colonialist bent of the text has more to do with the publisher and the genre than the author's own perspective. However, in form and function, the "Chief Bemidji" chapter of McKeig's book is identical to the original statue itself: heavily white-washed, allowing the non-Native audience to avoid the discomfort of dwelling on the dark complexities of local history; portraying Bemidji as possessing a quaint, friendly, and simple character that the tourists would find pleasant and welcoming.

## **b. Geographic/Social Patterns of Distribution**

### ***i. Oral narratives***

"They are making this person real for us. That's a huge thing. There's been conversations, happenings around the statue, the truth and reconciliation group, Shared Vision, the signage. Even in small ways, it's that change that's making a difference.' She says she saw a story (she thinks on Lakeland public TV) about a gentleman who said he wasn't welcome in a store, and now he's welcomed in Ojibwe language on the door. 'Small things and big things,' and to her, the statue is a big thing. 'When people come to this community, they will see that real person. It speaks to their (Natives') humanity, and Shaynowishkung's humanity – he was an amazing person. And it gives them some perspective on the kind of thing that was happening at the time'" (Fieldnote excerpt from interview, May 21, 2015).

As with the Flood narrative, Shaynowishkung's biography is told both as oral and written narrative. Within the scope of its oral communication, there are four main means by which the narrative has been distributed in recent years: (1) public events, typified by the dedication of the new Shaynowishkung statue; (2) television and radio stories covering the statue dedication and the public discourse surrounding the statue and plaques as a narrative communicator; (3) other television and radio pieces pertaining to Shaynowishkung himself, communicating either his biography directly or another historical narrative in which Shaynowishkung appears as a character; and, finally, (4) classroom teaching, in which Shaynowishkung is used as part or all of a particular lesson for students. Each of these narrative venues interacts differently with the social, political, and geographic spaces of northern

Minnesota, crossing and creating boundaries in the course of communicating the Shaynowishkung biography.

The dedication of the new Shaynowishkung statue in Bemidji, held on a bright, windy day in June of 2015, was well-attended by Native and non-Native members of the local population, including various municipal and community leaders, many members of the Statue Committee, reporters, photographers, other members of the local media industry, descendants of Shaynowishkung, and other local residents ranging from Red Lake to towns on the Leech Lake Reservation as well as, of course, Bemidji itself. The statue received an Anishinaabe blessing ceremony with offerings of tobacco, and various people spoke to the crowd about their experience working toward the statue, about its significance as a symbol of both the city and of the Anishinaabeg who continue to reside in the area, and about Shaynowishkung's life. Among these speakers were members of the statue committee, as well as the historian responsible for the signage, Elaine Fleming, and the sculptor of the new statue, Garth Curtiss. Family members gave interviews to local and state radio stations, and Lakeland Public Television, describing their pleasure that the statue would be there to remind both Native and non-Native people of the importance of cooperation, friendship, and respect.

Addresses to the audience during the dedication represented a mixture of perspectives, and some took a more decidedly critical tone than one might expect to find at something so seemingly innocuous as a municipal statue dedication. Elaine Fleming, in particular, during her keynote speech to the audience, spoke directly and uncompromisingly about the historical circumstances of life for Native people in Minnesota during Shaynowishkung's lifetime. "There were atrocities," Fleming told the audience. "Many settlers do not know of or remember the Sandy Lake Tragedy. Native people had walked from all over northern Minnesota to get the goods they were promised. Then some 400 people died after annuities failed to be delivered for the winter. Treaties were dishonored" (Meuers June 15, 2015). A recurring theme among the Anishinaabeg proponents of the statue was the importance of the full truth of colonial history, particularly in environments like northern Minnesota where such knowledge is extremely scarce. For Fleming in particular, the narrative attached to the statue was less strictly about Shaynowishkung himself than about the complex relationships that existed between the Anishinaabeg, the federal and state governments, the local settlers, and the Dakota, and the roots of the ignorance and hostility that persist between Native and non-Native people today. Shaynowishkung is, for her, a representation of a particular orientation toward and relationship with the settler population, and while Fleming questions some of the motives and consequences of Shaynowishkung's complicity in the settler project, she employed the narrative during



the dedication (as she has on other occasions) to illustrate the unvarnished history of which so many in the region have been deprived.

Despite the serious tone of some of the storytelling instances involved in the pageantry of the statue dedication, the lasting impression (based on participant and news reports) seems to have been more characterized by feelings of accomplishment, relief, and even humor. Donnie Headbird, the great-great-grandson of Shaynowishkung and an active member of the Statue Committee, best exemplified the spirit of the occasion in his remarks to the Bemidji Pioneer: “It is my hope and dream it makes us all comes together. That’s what he was all about.” (Dey June 8, 2015). Donnie also derived a great deal of pride and humor from the observation that the new statue bore an uncannily similar appearance to Donnie’s older brother, Gabby. When I sat down with Donnie to discuss participation in the Statue Committee and experience as an Anishinaabe man and a descendent of Shaynowishkung, I found a man whose own personality and beliefs mirror those that most people in and around Bemidji attribute to his ancestor.

Despite noting the same general sense of racist hostility in the region that had been repeated time and time again by other participants, Donnie couldn’t recall specific instances when he felt unfairly targeted or mistreated. Commenting on the common reports by Native people of being racially profiled by the police, particularly for small infractions like traffic violations, Donnie recalled that he himself had been pulled over a number of times, but he never felt it was unjust – rather, he’d been speeding, or run a red light. In general, Donnie says, he gets along with everyone and doesn’t feel any particular sense of hostility either from or toward anyone. For the most part, Donnie is disinterested in divisive or contentious politics, up to and including those that directly affect the Leech Lake Reservation where Donnie resides. Inquiring about the controversy over the efforts to put tar sands oil pipelines through parts of northern and central Minnesota, and the substantial Anishinaabe-led campaign to prevent this from happening, Donnie took an easy-going (if somewhat fatalistic) stance, telling me that he wasn’t a big fan of the pipelines, but it was going to happen either way and he didn’t see much point in getting involved. In all ways, Donnie’s own attitude, advocating friendship, cooperation, and nonconfrontation between Anishinaabeg and the settler society and state, reflects the dominant portrayal of his ancestor.

The version of the Shaynowishkung narrative that Donnie both espouses and, to a great extent, embodies, remained the dominant version during the statue dedication event, despite efforts on the part of some of the attendees and speakers to draw attention to historical and ongoing injustices connected with the narrative and the broad recognition – even among those who advocated a

somewhat tamer and more settler-friendly rendition of the tale – that there continue to be significant and detrimental rifts between Native and non-Native residents of the region.

The strength of the dominant narrative continued to exert itself yet further in media accounts of the dedication, which tended to focus primarily on themes of camaraderie and bridge-building (Dey June 8, 2015; Meuers June 15, 2015; Sommer June 7, 2015). News outlets in Bemidji had periodically documented the ongoing process over the previous six years of putting together the Statue Committee. Local media had been particularly keen on the controversy that surrounded the content of the informational plaques. The presence of seemingly inflammatory language, heated debate in the city council over the appropriateness of the text, and debates among the public over the presence or absence of racist intentions in the opposition to including the original language, altogether made for some toothsome journalistic opportunities. This is not to say, of course, that this was not news worth reporting, but it was perhaps predictably the most noteworthy story (outside the dedication event itself) that was to be found on Shaynowishkung or the statue project throughout the years leading up to the conclusion.

Television segments following the statue dedication were generally quite brief, between 2-4 minutes in length, and featured a general description of the project, the purpose of the statue (which was invariably framed as a “healing” function), and soundbites from family and Statue Committee members present at the ceremony. These short excerpts from interviews with the attendees were trimmed for time, and reflected both a uniformly positive perspective on the statue itself and a broadly positive tone. Mentions were made of the controversy surrounding the plaque language, particularly among the city council members, but little note was made of the colonial systems or events that made the “healing” the statue meant to accomplish necessary.

Radio segments on the statue dedication, and on the project that preceded it, went into significantly greater depth, including more extended interviews, fuller discussion of the structural obstacles that the committee faced in putting together the project in the first place, and descriptions of the “turbulent times” in which Shaynowishkung lived. Northern Community Radio hosted interviews with Donnie Headbird, Jody Beaulieu, Carolyn Jacobs, and Melissa Townsend on the statue project, the Committee, the cultural and historical significance of the new statue and the narrative that the Committee aimed to present, and the city council hearings during which the plaque language was debated and ultimately approved. Jody Beaulieu’s interview in particular addressed the history of mistreatment and deception that the Anishinaabeg had experienced, and emphasized the importance of increasing awareness of that history, particularly for younger people and others who hadn’t attended

college, as she noted that for many Americans – both Native and non-Native – the first introduction to American Indian history doesn't come until higher education, if it comes at all. Although they did include substantially more information, these interviews did share in common with the television segments the general feeling of hope, optimism, and an inevitable and already growing cross-cultural friendship between Native and non-Native people in Minnesota, in spite of past and present tensions.

Since his death in 1904, stories having to do with Shaynowishkung have been few and far between, with biographical narratives that have not been attached to the statue(s) being virtually nonexistent. However, those addressing news surrounding the new statue or the preceding two often included some degree of biographical detail. These television and radio programs that dealt more broadly with news concerning the statues, but not directly addressing the new statue dedication or the histories provided by the committee, followed and facilitated even more the dominant narrative of friendship, cooperation, and peace. The lone exception to this trend is Elaine Fleming's rendition of the narrative, broadcast as part of the ongoing "History of Leech Lake" series on the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's official radio station, KOJB "The Eagle." Fleming's biography of Shaynowishkung is by far the most detailed oral narrative, and was produced after the statue dedication. In the fourth and final installment, Fleming noted that there are multiple ways to understand a person's life, and that while the primary means by which the public has come to know Shaynowishkung is through the newspaper narrative, it is critical that they come to understand Shaynowishkung through knowledge of the times in which he lived.

This oral narrative of Shaynowishkung's life diverged sharply from most others distributed through popular media. As Fleming noted, most of the exposure to the biography has come from newspaper accounts (or, as the case may be, news TV or radio), which have overwhelmingly been neither detailed nor particularly focused on themes of complex systems of colonial dispossession or internal divisions among either the Native or non-Native populations of centuries past. They have instead been primarily inoffensive, mild, and laudatory of Shaynowishkung's role as an ambassador, guide, and friend to the first white settlers, emblematic of the spirit of multiculturalism and cohabitation that one could perhaps believe that Bemidji embodies if one is both (a) white and (b) not looking too closely.

The final mode of distribution for the oral narrative of Shaynowishkung's biography takes place in the classroom. Students who learn about Shaynowishkung are extremely rare, though certainly present. In interviews with educators throughout the region, I found that, in spite of a surprising level of enthusiasm and a number of programmatic and staff improvements, virtually no one in the Bemidji

schools is talking about Shaynowishkung. Similarly, the story appears to be wholly absent from the White Earth schools, as well as non-Native schools outside Bemidji, though this we can most likely attribute to geographical distance from the source of this highly centralized narrative. Indeed, the only place where the narrative seems to experience some small degree of traction in education is in the tribal schools at Cass Lake, where teachers like Elaine Fleming, at the college level, and others in the high schools may discuss Shaynowishkung as a small but prominent figure in Ojibwe history during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

These narratives are, in certain cases, some of the most detailed, but the level of detail, the general impression of Shaynowishkung's role in history, and even the content of the narrative can vary a great degree from one teacher to the next. The common thread that seems to run through all public educational institutions is the impact of tightening education standards of curricular benchmarks to be met in the classroom. These measures have, for many teachers meant that local history has fallen too low on the list of priorities and been cut from lesson plans. Many teachers reported feeling shackled by the rigors of standardization, though at least one expressed some level of disdain for this perspective, telling me a dedicated teacher will find ways to adapt the standards to fit the needs of the local community and the particular students. The point is well taken, although there is no denying that the ability of educators to freely determine the content of their curriculum has been severely curtailed in recent years. The students, too, noted this pattern in their own education, commenting during interviews that they are virtually never exposed to local history, politics, or culture, instead learning much more about global conflicts and relations to which many students in the relatively rural and socially insular region of northern Minnesota have trouble relating.

From the patterns of distribution that we've seen so far based on the statue dedication, media accounts of both the statue project and the biography of Shaynowishkung itself, and the educational transmission of the Shaynowishkung narrative, we can infer certain characteristics that describe the ways that the oral narrative travels through and across various social, political, and geographic spaces.

First, I have established that the oral narrative is specific to Bemidji and Cass Lake. Although there are people outside of these two towns who are familiar with the biography, or at least with the name of Shaynowishkung or (more likely) "Chief Bemidji," and certain modes of communication such as television and radio stations have broadcast the narrative beyond these local boundaries, interviews have demonstrated a stark division between residents of these two towns (and to a lesser extent, nearby towns like Walker, which have a heavy overlapping population going between locations) and those

outside this immediate area. Having access to the narratives through media channels is not in and of itself sufficient to ensure that a given person will be familiar with or knowledgeable about it.

Insofar as it is attached to these particular towns, both of which have grown and evolved in ways and places that are heavily informed by colonial social and geographic endeavors, the Shaynowishkung biography follows and reaffirms certain colonial boundaries, including – most prominently – the city of Bemidji itself. Its patterns of transmission do cross the municipal boundaries of these towns, but the extent to which areas outside these boundaries are receptive to those transmissions is questionable, given the pervasive absence of awareness of the narrative among people in other towns, even those well within the reach of the television and radio broadcasts that might boost their knowledge of Shaynowishkung, or at least of the statue project and its associated debates and cross-cultural endeavors.

Second, the Shaynowishkung oral narrative is overwhelmingly institutionalized; that is to say, its modes of communication are almost always embedded in formal institutions rather than informal social relations or casual interactions. Individual residents almost never discuss Shaynowishkung unless prompted by an institutional version of the narrative – at least, this was certainly the case prior to the new statue dedication; it remains to be seen whether the new statue and its concomitant media attention generates a discourse with an energy and momentum of its own, though if history is any indication, this possibility is unlikely. Whether it be the Bemidji City Council, the Shaynowishkung Statue Project, the local media outlets, or the schools at Cass Lake, the Shaynowishkung biography is primarily communicated through the voices of organizations, and is likely to remain so.

Third, Shaynowishkung's biography is largely fragmented into two narratives, or perhaps more accurately, a narrative and a counter-narrative, and while these two narratives are distributed within overlapping social spaces, they are in direct conflict and in many ways are seeking to displace one another. The dominant and long-standing account of the friendly Indian man who welcomed and assisted the first white settlers and acted as a metaphorical and literal grandfather to the town of Bemidji circulates in and around Bemidji and the western portion of the Leech Lake Reservation, and elsewhere in a far less substantial form, and when people only know a small number of narrative fragments from Shaynowishkung's life, it is those emphasized in this narrative that they remember. The counter-narrative, distributed primarily by Anishinaabe historian Elaine Fleming but which is also gaining ground among a growing minority of Native and non-Native residents who are invested in learning more about the history, is distributed across much of the same space as the dominant narrative, though through the series of radio broadcasts on the Leech Lake Reservation, this account

covers a lesser portion of the predominately white towns to the West and a greater portion of the Leech Lake Reservation.

Fourth, when Anishinaabe storytellers are the ones producing, even in part, the narrative for distribution and consumption, the level of detail both about Shaynowishkung himself and about the historical period in which he lived rises dramatically. This is attributable in large part to the efforts of historian Elaine Fleming in contributing additional information to the narratives produced by local history museums, by the Statue Committee, and in her own classrooms, but her work does not stand alone. In instances in educational settings, in media segments, in organized discussion, and even in personal conversations I had with respondents, the accounts of the Shaynowishkung narrative which held the greatest level of detail were uniformly those told by Anishinaabeg. This includes accounts shared by both Native and non-Native people with differing levels of knowledge about his life, and different historical, cultural, and political perspectives; Native people with a moderate amount of knowledge of Shaynowishkung's life and the history surrounding the biography still shared more detailed and complex information about the man and the history even than non-Native people with a great deal of knowledge. The characteristics of the narrative as well differed between Native and non-Native storytellers, with Native people much readier to discuss the injustices and tragedies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that characterized Shaynowishkung's own life experiences, and highlighted the remarkable nature of his continuing dedication to peace and friendship given the events of his time.

*ii. Text narratives*

“When the Pioneer has done stories on the statue project, it does seem to get a lot of attention and comments. He seems to be very important to the identity of Bemidji. People are proud of Shaynowishkung's representation of this area and the community. I think Chief Bemidji is growing as a symbol – more and more people are trying to raise him up, tell about his history” (Participant/media professional, May 20, 2015).

As with the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, text renditions of the Shaynowishkung biography drastically increase the potential distribution range of the narrative, given their appearance in libraries in various locations around the United States and Canada.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the Flood narrative, however, the overall patterns of consumption of the Shaynowishkung narrative in its text forms much more closely resembles the patterns of consumption of the oral narrative versions. There are five

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<sup>28</sup> Libraries and bookstores outside the United States have not been inventoried for their possession of these text sources, though online book-sellers including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Book World have been inventoried.

primary text sources by which the Shaynowishkung narrative is communicated, the operations of which are explained below. These five sources are, in order, (1) the statue plaques and other interpretive signage; (2) the narrative presented in the Shaynowishkung biography exhibit at the Beltrami County History Museum; (3) a detailed interactive slideshow by Mike and Patrice Jones featured on the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe website; (4) books containing fragments, partial narratives, or whole narrative versions of the biography; (5) hard copy and online news stories covering information on the statue project; and, lastly, (6) various online text sources.

The information on interpretive signage in and around the Bemidji area concerning Shaynowishkung has been minimal up until the recent installment of the new plaques accompanying the bronze statue of Shaynowishkung in downtown Bemidji. In the course of traveling throughout the region over the period of nearly two years, I was able to identify three locations total, including the statue site, with some level of interpretive information on Shaynowishkung, and, strikingly, each narrative contained the same elements: (A) Shaynowishkung's proper name as well as his nickname, "Chief Bemidji"; (B) reference to his leadership of a small band of Ojibwe living in the area; (C) Shaynowishkung's general demeanor, which is described as soft-spoken, well-respected, kind, friendly, and honorable; (D) Shaynowishkung's friendship with the early settlers; and (E) his importance in the establishment of the town of Bemidji. The signs in all three locations are also united not only by what information they contain, but what information they lack; namely, all three locations entirely omit any mention of conflict between the settlers and the Anishinaabeg (or any other colonial tensions), or information about how Shaynowishkung himself responded to or experienced this conflict, despite his own personal experiences of colonial dispossession and his importance as a peace-broker between the local Anishinaabeg and the incoming settler population. The omission of this information is especially striking given the emphasis that the dominant narrative places on this very role of Shaynowishkung's as a peace-maker and bridge-builder. However, to stress the importance of his fulfillment of this role too much would invite further questions about why peace had to be made and bridges needed to be built in the first place.

This conflict-averse narrative style is common to public signage found in museums, parks, and other institutions of informal education, although much has been written on the importance of engaging with controversy and strategies for doing so (Cameron 2003; Rogers 2016; Rose 2013). Engagement with a public audience with a diversity of perspectives and opinions necessitates a measured approach to complex social issues, and many such institutions go to significant lengths to appear unbiased in order to avoid dissent from the audience and to conform to societal expectations

of objectivity in non-fiction storytelling. I will discuss the Shaynowishkung exhibit at the Beltrami County History Museum momentarily, for although it shares many characteristics with the interpretive signage found in other public locations, it also carries certain distinctive traits that set it apart.

The interpretive signage at these three public locations contain more than simple holes where additional information might be – they all demonstrate colonialist historical practices of whitewashing and using strategic language in order to tiptoe around the edges of colonial conflict. Romanticization of colonial expansion, omission of large portions of Shaynowishkung’s life, and exaggeration of Shaynowishkung’s continued association with Bemidji during and after the end of his life all characterize the language used in these texts. In a small sign printed on cheap white paper, crudely glued to a piece of poster-board and placed in an inconspicuous corner of the Bemidji Visitor Center, the brief biography of Shaynowishkung includes the following text: “On Nov 19, 1900 President William Howard Taft signed a deed for Zhenawishkung’s [Shaynowishkung’s] allotment of 80 acres in Ten Lake Township between Kitchi Lake and Big Rice Lake.” The syntax, as well as the placement within the larger paragraph on Shaynowishkung’s life, would – if the reader knew little of colonial history, which many if not most people living in the area do not – imply to the reader that the allotment was a gift from the President of the United States himself, presumably for Shaynowishkung’s role as a local peace-broker and steward of the land. The reality, of course, is that Shaynowishkung had no desire to leave Bemidji, and the allotment referred to in the text was one Shaynowishkung was forced to accept, having no other option after his lands in Bemidji itself were appropriated.

This kind of whitewashing is common in historical signage throughout the region. A particularly telling example outside of the Shaynowishkung narrative itself can be found at Diamond Point Park in Bemidji. The interpretive signage at this popular park is fairly extensive, and actually does recognize some degree of tension and conflict that occurred in the region, however, the tension that is acknowledged is the territorial wars between Native tribes,<sup>29</sup> particularly the Dakota and the Ojibwe. In the narrative presented at the state park, the representatives of the United States are positioned as peacemakers, when, as the sign says,

“In 1825, Major Lawrence Taliaferro, the agent for Indian Affairs at Fort Snelling, convened 325 representatives of the Dakota and Ojibwe nations, along with leaders

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<sup>29</sup> The term “wars” here can be interpreted as well as part of the strategic colonial narrative that exaggerates Native aggression in order to highlight settler civility, considering that Anishinaabe scholar Anton Treuer has pointed out that large-scale conflicts of the kind that we would normally think of as part of “war” were virtually nonexistent between the Ojibwe and the Dakota (Treuer 2011). Despite the very real existence of tension over control and use of the central Minnesota resources, violent conflict was generally isolated to individual families or communities. Hence, Treuer says, “war” is a wholly inappropriate term for use in describing the Ojibwe-Dakota conflict.



of the Menominee, Winnebago, and Sac and Fox. The representatives agreed to a treaty brokering peace between the warring Indian nations, principally the Ojibwe and the Dakota, who had been fighting over the bountiful land of central Minnesota, the tension zone where the prairie met the deciduous forest.”

The myriad ways the United States government was culpable for the conflict are carefully omitted in favor of a narrative that delegitimizes indigenous claims to the land and positions the white settler as the rightful steward of the land in his capacity as the most civilized of the invested parties.

For the most part, the kind of information one can find on the Shaynowishkung biography on public signage is similar to narratives about other parts of local history found in museums, visitor centers, and other non-fiction storytelling institutions throughout this region of northern Minnesota (although, as noted above and discussed below, the Beltrami County History Museum in particular demonstrates some different narrative strategies than other similar institutions). In interviews with staff at the Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, and Itasca County Historical Societies, each of which manages its own local history museum, I inquired about the processes by which the organizations determine what material to include in the exhibit spaces, particularly where contentious narratives with multiple conflicting perspectives are concerned. In all cases, the mechanisms that determined exhibit content involved a combination of (1) those data which were empirically supportable, (2) which were relevant to the local population, (3) which would presumably be of interest to the public (including local populations as well as the seasonally-migratory tourists), and, lastly (4) those for which necessary funding and materials are available to put together a compelling and effective display.

Staff members at the various institutions had varying responses concerning the relative importance of these different factors, and to some extent the balance shifts from one exhibit to the next – for instance, if a local community member is willing to donate a collection of sports memorabilia and funding on the condition that the resources be put toward an exhibit on local sports history, the fourth factor is going to play a more significant role. If, on the other hand, there is no particular donor, but rather the museum is simply attempting to put together a permanent exhibit that communicates some of the important events of local history, the first three criteria are going to carry substantially more weight.

The exhibit space in the Beltrami County History Museum represents something of a special case among other museums and institutions of informal education, in much the same way that the signage accompanying the new statue of Shaynowishkung represents a special case among other public

interpretive signage that can be found in the area. Conspicuously, Elaine Fleming had a leading hand in producing the text of both the museum exhibit and the statue plaques. However, these two instances of a more detailed and anti-colonial telling of the Shaynowishkung narrative should be considered to be distinct from one another, given that the institutions of *distribution* – namely, the city of Bemidji (vis-à-vis the city council) and the Beltrami Historical Society are distinct from one another and do not necessarily represent the same structural or social interests.

The narrative presented on the new plaques tells of both Shaynowishkung's own life and character as well as the history of colonial domination and conflict that shaped that life. In particular, the four plaques outline, respectively, (1) Shaynowishkung's biography, (2) the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of treaty-making and treaty-breaking between the Ojibwe and the United States, (3) the Sandy Lake Tragedy, the Dakota Wars, and the Battle of Sugar Point, and (4) the importance of Shaynowishkung's role as a peacemaker, and of the recognition of historical injustices as a means to healing. The content of the narrative in the Beltrami County History Museum follows a similar arc, though it is presented specifically as a detailed chronology of indigenous-settler relations throughout Shaynowishkung's lifetime, prefaced by a detailed introduction outlining Shaynowishkung's own life experiences and providing a general overview of the 19<sup>th</sup> century history prior to the more in-depth exposition. The narrative styles of these two renditions differs somewhat, with the plaques at the statue site relying heavily on quotes from various historical figures in order to express a sense of the different perspectives present throughout the eras of Shaynowishkung's life, while the museum text relies to a much greater degree on the description of specific events that occurred across the timeline of the biography, along with photos of Shaynowishkung, his family, the landscape, news clippings, editorial cartoons, and maps.

The older, whitewashed and less detailed versions of the Shaynowishkung narrative largely share audiences with the newer, anti-colonial renditions. The history museums, park interpretive signage, and visitor centers tend to be predominately visited by tourists rather than locals, although there is some variation to this trend; the history museums in particular also report regular, if infrequent, visits from (usually elderly and non-Native) locals interested in the history of the area, and parks are of course frequented by a wide variety of people including locals. Visitor centers, on the other hand, by their nature are most often attended by visitors to the area, and while the Shaynowishkung statue itself is a prominent feature in the day-to-day lives of people living and working in Bemidji, interview data – as well as observations of people's interactions (or lack thereof) with the statue site – suggest that spending much time at the statue or reading the signage is rare, and in the event that people are

interacting with the signage they don't seem to retain the information beyond the extremely basic details noted earlier in this chapter.

The version of the Shaynowishkung biography used in the exhibit space of the Beltrami County History Museum stems from the same academic history project under Elaine Fleming's direction that produced the interactive slideshow written by Patrice Jones, and designed by Mike Jones. Patrice, a student of Elaine's, conducted detailed research on Shaynowishkung's biography, local and state history, and federal colonial history, and used this information to produce an extraordinarily extensive and comprehensive narrative, surpassed in its level of detail only by the radio series Fleming distributed on Shaynowishkung's biography. In some respects, in fact, the slideshow presentation contains the greater degree of detail, at least in terms of the "Assimilation Era" which is the focus of both the slideshow and the exhibit at the history museum. The radio program contains a lesser (although still extensive) volume of content on this period in particular, but it is farther-reaching in its engagement with the whole of Shaynowishkung's life rather than exclusively the final 30 years or so. Structurally, the slideshow is quite similar to the chronology in the history museum, although this work goes into a greater degree of detail and makes far more extensive use of photographs from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, sources from local historical archives, as well as quotes from a variety of Native and non-Native figures who played central roles in shaping the social and political processes of the time.

Like the history museum narrative and the one found on the plaques accompanying the new Shaynowishkung statue, the greater contrast between the museum narrative and the slideshow on the Leech Lake website is not so much in the content as in the identity of the narrative distributor; unlike the museum and the statue plaques, however, there is a further difference between these and the slideshow narrative: namely, these narratives are primarily received by entirely different audiences. Unlike both of the other Shaynowishkung counter-narratives, which are distributed by settler institutions (the city of Bemidji and the Beltrami County Historical Society), the slideshow on Shaynowishkung's life is distributed by the Reservation Business Committee of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO), and consumed primarily by visitors to the LLBO website. Only speculation is possible concerning the demographic makeup of the visitors to this site, but given that the content of the site is primarily information about the reservation administrative services, access to the LLBO newspaper (*Debahjimon*), news posts about current events on the reservation, particularly those having to do with the LLBO itself, and directory information for all of the various offices and services offered on the reservation, it is logical to assume that the primary visitorship is comprised of LLBO members,

their families, and other people living, working, or otherwise invested in the goings-on of the Leech Lake Reservation. In short, the slideshow on the LLBO site is, as far as I am able to discern, the only textual account of the narrative which is produced, distributed, and (likely) consumed primarily by Anishinaabeg.

The most pervasive and diffuse of the modes of communication of the Shaynowishkung narrative – with the exception of various online sources, which have a theoretically global reach, but which have a dubious level of real impact – comes from local newspaper sources, which in the past six years have seen a significant uptick in the number of reports published on Shaynowishkung as a direct result of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee’s efforts, the local controversy over the language of the interpretive signage, the extensive and unavoidable construction in downtown Bemidji, and the well-attended statue dedication ceremony. Newspapers throughout northern Minnesota, and even statewide sources such as Minnesota Public Radio’s online text reporting centers, have carried stories on the subject, although for many of the newspapers in the northern and northwestern part of the state, common ownership under the Forum Media Corporation facilitates sharing of syndicated stories across 28 publications, vastly boosting the circulation of Shaynowishkung narratives which otherwise would likely stay fairly localized, owing to the apparently significant disparity in the level of interest between people living in the Bemidji and Cass Lake area, and those living outside this local region.

Although the statue dedication event itself, and the oral narrative that it facilitated, reached an audience of its own – an audience which was, admittedly, geographically and socially diverse – the news reporting surrounding the event boosted the scope of the Shaynowishkung narrative over a much broader area. News outlets throughout the region between Red Lake and Leech Lake covered the dedication event, and the statue project overall had been picked up from time to time by larger news agencies throughout Minnesota. Most of these news stories became available online, though despite the potentially unlimited geographic and social range thus afforded to the Shaynowishkung biography, there is little to suggest that people outside the immediate area of concern would have paid much attention. This being said, some of the local newspapers enjoy small readerships far outside the local vicinity, owing primarily to the nostalgic desire of people who have moved away from the region, or who may have family still living there, to keep up with current events.

In interviews with reporters, editors, and other media officials, most respondents admitted that they had relatively little way of knowing the demographics or even the locations of their readers. It is possible to track where sales of newspapers are highest and lowest, and television and radio

stations receive ratings indicating an approximate overall population of the audience, but none of the media outlets in the region have performed the kind of audience research that would be required to determine, for example, what proportion of their audiences are Anishinaabeg, or what particular news reports and features are receiving the most attention in a given issue or edition. The research informing this dissertation being qualitative and small-sampled in nature, it is impossible to extrapolate with certainty from the experiences of participants, however, a fairly clear pattern did become evident during interviews. Namely, people (both Anishinaabeg and non-Native) living in rural areas, particularly on the reservations, were almost universally less likely than those living in Bemidji itself, or even in the smaller towns of Cass Lake, Park Rapids, and Grand Rapids, to frequently read the newspaper, look at news online, or watch news programs on television. Occasionally these participants would catch local interest stories on radio programs, but their knowledge of current events, whether local or otherwise, came overwhelmingly from word-of-mouth.

In addition to the history provided on the LLBO website and a variety of news stories over the course of recent years, there are a small number of other websites that also provide text information about the Shaynowishkung biography, though none with anything like the level of detail provided by the Jones & Jones slideshow, or the exhibit text in the Beltrami History Museum. Additionally, each of these narratives is specifically attached to a particular visual representation of Shaynowishkung himself that is (or was previously) presented to the public in Bemidji – mostly the older and new statues, or photographs and paintings displayed in prominent locations. Without exception, these other online text narratives follow the dominant iteration of the Shaynowishkung story: his name, his nickname, sometimes an account of the source of the nickname but invariably in tones that suggest it was complimentary, his relocation to Bemidji, his friendship with the early settlers, his death, and his memorialization.

Through searching for the terms “Shaynowishkung,” “Shay-now-ish-kung,” “Chief Bemidji,” and “Zhenaawishkang,” in various book-related search engines, including Amazon.com, Google Books, Barnes & Noble, various Minnesota academic, state, and municipal libraries, and the I-Share system used by colleges and universities throughout Illinois, I managed to identify what I believe to be a nearly complete listing of the books containing reference to Shaynowishkung.<sup>30</sup> In total, there

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<sup>30</sup> Given the popularity of self-published local histories by resident authors throughout northern Minnesota – a popularity which became quite apparent in visiting bookstores and libraries throughout the region – it is likely that there are additional books that mention Shaynowishkung, but unlikely that they are in substantial enough circulation to have a significant impact on the spread of the narrative, as they would very likely have shown up in one of the local library catalog search engines were this the case.

appear to be 23 books that contain some level of information about Shaynowishkung: 16 that contain narrative fragments (usually a brief mention of the man or, in the case of some travel guides, the statue), 5 that contain partial or brief accounts of the biography, and only two books that contain a relatively full account of Shaynowishkung's life – although these two both pale in comparison to the level of detail contained in any of the counter-narrative renditions, and are even surpassed by some of the sources of the dominant narrative that are distributed locally (such as certain news articles).

One of the two books containing a fairly full telling of the biography is *We Are At Home: Pictures of the Ojibwe People* (2007), by Bruce White – a non-Native historian who has done extensive work on and with various Ojibwe tribal entities (McClurken et al. 2000; White 1998-99; 2005). White's account follows fairly closely the dominant narrative details as outlined earlier in this chapter, though the tone of his writing suggests both a better understanding than most non-Native writers exhibit of the complexity of the time, as well as the extent to which “Chief Bemidji” has been claimed by the settler city of Bemidji itself. White notes briefly, “He [Shaynowishkung] came to be seen as a kind of founding Ojibwe father for the new town of Bemidji, a revered symbol of the place's past, a white people's ogimaa [Anishinaabe chief/leader]” (2008: 158). The other book, *Bemidji* (2013), by Cecelia Wattles McKeig, contains a much greater degree of detail, but, as discussed in the previous subsection of this chapter, also provides a perfect representation of the dominant narrative: happy, conflict-free, quaint, and indicative of a past, present, and future in which the Anishinaabeg and settlers hold hands and assist one another in the spirit of multicultural cooperation and understanding.

Unsurprisingly, of these two books, the one pertaining solely to the town of Bemidji (McKeig 2013) and largely sold in visitor centers and other places tourists to the area frequent has a much more limited range, appearing in very few library collections, exclusively in northern Minnesota. The book is available for purchase from all three of the biggest online book-sellers servicing the region (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Book World), but is absent from all of the regular (non-tourist-centric) local bookstores, including those in Bemidji itself.

White's (2007) book on interpretations of photographs of Ojibwe people throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century is actually quite widely distributed, being found in library systems and bookstores throughout Minnesota, and as far away as Toronto (within the scope of the library searches for this study, which covered North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Ontario, and select library systems near the Potawatomi communities in Kansas and Oklahoma, as well as the Prospector system in the Denver region and systems in Washington and British Columbia) (see Figures 5 and 6). In fact, this book is one of the most popular of those containing any information

about Shaynowishkung, second only to one of the travel guides (*Midwest Marvels* (Dregni 2006), which appears in 53 of the searched locations; *We Are at Home* appears in 42).

The distribution of the Shaynowishkung narratives in books varies between different texts, with some existing solely in extremely localized circulation and others appearing in library collections throughout the search area (see Figs. 5 & 6). The highest concentration of narrative information on the Shaynowishkung biography is to be found in the Duluth public library system, which houses both the books with full renditions of the narrative, three partial narratives, and nine additional texts with fragments/mentions. By comparison with the distribution of books containing renditions of the Flood narrative, however, the Shaynowishkung biography appears to have a significantly more centralized range, relegated primarily to the state of Minnesota. Interestingly, the Shaynowishkung narrative in books is virtually nonexistent in the Ontario Library Consortium, and in the Winnipeg Library System, each of which housed numerous iterations of the Flood narrative in various books. The absence of the Shaynowishkung narrative is most likely due to a combination of factors, including the importance of particular Native biographies as a tool for building the legitimacy of American colonial history (consider the centrality of figures such as Crazy Horse, Geronimo, and Ishi in creating the settler colonial narrative of the United States), and the prevalence of this particular biography in travel and novelty books that are distributed mainly to tourists traveling within the United States (Dregni 2001; 2006; Dregni, Moran, & Scurman 2006; Hoverson 2007; Pohlen 2003; Hintz 2003).

Notably, only one of the 23 books identified to have some information on the Shaynowishkung narrative was written by Anishinaabe authors (or indigenous authors at all, for that matter), this one being *The Four Hills of Life* (2011), a book on Anishinaabe spiritual traditions by Peacock & Wisuri, and this book contains only a picture of Shaynowishkung (referred to in the book as “Chief Bemidji”), with a caption that reads “The Ojibwe people had many leaders, like Chief Bemidji” (74). This finding further supports the assertion that, as has previously been evidenced by the patterns of institutional engagement with the narrative, the Shaynowishkung narrative holds greater significance in and of itself for white settlers than for the Anishinaabeg. This is not to say that the narrative does not become useful for the Anishinaabeg under particular circumstances, as demonstrated by the success of the counter-narrative in reshaping settler perceptions of colonial history and ongoing structures of control and oppression, but clearly various settler institutions have found something valuable in the life, actions, and image of Shaynowishkung.

Books covering the Shaynowishkung biography are for the most part either travel or novelty books, in which case the references to Shaynowishkung are invariably concerned with the statue as a

roadside attraction in Bemidji, or Minnesota history books and reference texts, in which the narratives are occasionally more detailed but are just as frequently limited to a brief fragment and/or photograph. There is one book of American history on the list (Chiefetz 2001), another book of local history (McKeig 2013), a book of poetry (Glancy 2007), and a book on Anishinaabe spirituality (Peacock & Wisuri 2011). Despite these other occasional references to Shaynowishkung, his biography is, by all evidence, overwhelmingly a source of historical curiosity produced, distributed, and consumed primarily by white settlers.

Overall, the patterns of distribution and consumption of the text narratives around Shaynowishkung's life share some similarities with the oral narrative renditions, overlapping to some degree in terms of the methods of their transmission, the particular individuals and organizations involved in their distribution, and the audiences they reach. We should take a moment here to summarize the particular patterns of narrative distribution for the text biographies, and examine how their interactions with social and political spaces compare and contrast with those of the oral narrative counterparts.

First, very much like the oral accounts, the text versions of the Shaynowishkung biography are highly institutionalized. The plaques accompanying the new (and old) statue, the stories in local and state newspapers, the exhibit text in the Beltrami History Museum, and even the various accounts that have been posted in different places online were almost without exception attached to particular organized institutions that use the narrative intentionally for a particular purpose (or perhaps more than one). In some cases, the narratives at the time of their production were not intended to be used by the institutions for which they are currently serving their various purposes. For instance, the text currently in use on the statue plaques in downtown Bemidji, in the Beltrami County History Museum, and on the LLBO website all stemmed from an academic project under Elaine Fleming's direction at the Leech Lake Tribal College, and hence have similar content and communicate similar messages concerning Anishinaabe cultural and historical identity. In spite of the somewhat organic way in which the text narratives have moved between locations and organizations, these transitions rarely seem to leave the institutional realm, as the narrative itself is rarely discussed (and even more rarely written about) outside the bounds of institutional contexts.

Second, the text narratives are, like the oral narratives, fragmented into dominant and counter-narrative forms, with some level of variation in each. The dominant narrative, which has appeared in books, travel guides, and newspapers sporadically throughout the past century, and continues to appear in these sources as well as interpretive signage around Bemidji and in various locations online,



contains much the same information – if somewhat more detail – as the dominant oral narrative: that is, some brief chronological-biographical information concerning Shaynowishkung’s birth, his marriage, his relocation, and the mutual camaraderie and assistance that he shared with Bemidji’s early settlers. The counter-narrative here is also quite similar to its oral counterpart, consisting largely of the same biographical information about Shaynowishkung and his character, but supplemented with descriptions of the political, economic, ecological, and cultural climate of the time during, before, and immediately after Shaynowishkung’s life, and the injustices that he suffered at the hands of the federal government, the railroad companies, the town of Bemidji where he tried and failed to live out his final years. Both the dominant and counter-narrative appear in Native and non-Native social spaces, though the dominant narrative is attached more closely to settler institutions, and the counter-narrative more to Anishinaabe institutions.

Third, as with the oral narratives, the distinguishing characteristics dividing narrative from counter-narrative depend almost entirely on whether Anishinaabeg storytellers have been included in the process of producing a given account. The written narratives produced by Anishinaabe authors are richer in detail, and generally less concerned with the biography of Shaynowishkung himself as with the full and unflinching inclusion of details about the historical context, and how it may be used to better understand the significance of Shaynowishkung’s choices. In interviews with non-Native narrative facilitators, the participants expressed a desire to hear more from the indigenous community, in part for their own personal education and interest, but also in larger part for the purpose of giving voice to people whose history and culture has been systematically suppressed and warped for too long. Setting aside momentarily the paternalistic issues inherent in the idea of the white settler “giving voice” to indigenous people (though I will be coming back to this issue in the coming subsection), these sentiments represent a growing commitment among the settler population of the Bemidji area to engage in decolonial modes of history – even though they may not always be entirely certain what that commitment requires or those modes entail.

Up to this point, the oral and text narrative renditions of the Shaynowishkung biography have shared fairly similar qualities in terms of their patterns of distribution, and the relations between their authors, distributors, and audiences. It is at this point, however, that the two communicative styles diverge.

The fourth trend in the distribution of the text sources represents a significant departure from the oral narratives; namely, where the oral accounts of the biography don’t necessarily follow a strict adherence to areas with particular population density, owing in large part to the prevalence of radio

as a means of mass communication throughout rural areas in northern Minnesota, the text narratives tend to follow a fairly well-defined divide between urban and rural spaces. In particular, the *consumption* of text narratives on Shaynowishkung (at least to the extent that the information is retained by the audience) seems to take place almost exclusively in urban areas.

During interviews with participants throughout rural areas, Native and non-Native people told me almost without exception that they rarely read the newspaper, and weren't particularly frequent consumers of books, either. As far as media went, occasionally listening to the radio or watching television was reasonably normal throughout these spaces, but most people were emphatic that the news-media, particularly the newspapers, were not to be trusted to provide reliable or valuable information. As for books, while there was generally no explicit aversion to the concept of gleaning knowledge this way, it is broadly not a part of the culture of rural living in the region, and some Anishinaabeg – particularly more traditional elders – expressed a general but clear sense of disdain for learning Anishinaabe culture and history in particular from books, rather than by the customary means established in the oral tradition. In some cases, elders seemed more inclined to read archival documents than books and newspapers – an affinity for original source material I experienced acutely when, in a large, informal interview with a group of Anishinaabeg consisting of people of varying ages and backgrounds at the White Earth Reservation, a local elder and independent historian arrived with a neatly organized and plastic-wrapped stack of documents, inches thick, for me to read, refer back to, and make copies.<sup>31</sup>

The fifth and final characteristic of the distribution patterns for the text versions of the Shaynowishkung biography also indicates a fairly stark divide between the text and oral accounts. The oral accounts, as outlined above, are fairly fluid in terms of their production, distribution, and consumption across the lines between settler and indigenous social spaces. In some instances, the narratives may be produced and distributed by non-Native sources and consumed by Anishinaabeg audiences (as with the dominant narratives that are broadcast through television and radio stations from settler institutions, or white educators producing meagerly-detailed versions that are taught to Native students), and they may also be produced and distributed by Native sources and consumed by non-Native audiences (as in the case of the Shaynowishkung Statue dedication speeches, or the talks

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<sup>31</sup> This devotion to original documentation, particularly to legal documents pertaining to treaties and other agreements from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and often to the exclusion of other forms of evidence, has been described by Deloria & Lytle (2013) as characteristic of many traditional-minded elders from various tribes, who in Minnesota have used this in-depth knowledge of tribal legal history to play significant (and often contentious) roles in the world of tribal politics (Meyer 1999; Nesper 2012; Suzack 2008; Youngbear-Tibbetts 1991).

given by Elaine Fleming at local libraries and other public institutions in predominately settler spaces). The text narratives, on the other hand, despite their distribution across settler and indigenous spaces through newspapers and books, are consumed by a predominately white settler audience, controlled predominately by settler institutions, and circulate predominately in politically (if not demographically) settler spaces.

The patterns outlined above, for both the oral and text-based narratives covering the Shaynowishkung biography, can be synthesized in order to assert some of the broader trends in the narrative's overall interaction with political, social, and cultural boundaries, and in doing so we can compare the distributive patterns with those of the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood (see page 29), and more clearly articulate how these narratives operate to interrupt and redefine the borders of particular communities in northern Minnesota. Because some of these patterns have been outlined in greater detail in the course of addressing the particular trends of the oral and text narratives respectively, in order to avoid redundancy some of what follows will only briefly reiterate the central finding, and refer back to the broader description above.

A. First, it becomes immediately apparent if one spends any effort looking into the ways that the Shaynowishkung biography is and has been communicated that there is a very current and active conflict occurring between a dominant narrative and counter-narrative. The characteristics of these differing and contradictory accounts have been described in detail above, but what is of particular interest from a sociological perspective is the emergent power of the counter-narrative to overtake spaces which had previously been held by the dominant narrative, and to change perspectives particularly of settler residents of the area who had previously been ignorant of an alternative to the dominant account and generally uninvested in changing the status quo. I submit that this change is largely due to a series of actions and efforts by particular local actors in positions of structural and cultural authority, which have precipitated a shift in the normative environment of the city of Bemidji, and in particular for many white settler residents of the city and the surrounding region.

I discuss further in the fourth finding (see page 117) the power of the individual to shape the narrative in the local environment, but for the moment I will simply note that the energetic emergence of the counter-narrative has not – or at least not entirely – been due to a generational shift in racial or decolonial perspective as one might expect, but rather to the momentum built by a small number of particular community members who have acted as cultural brokers between the settler and Anishinaabeg populations. These include, but are not limited to, the core members of the Shared

Vision Initiative, the leaders of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, and historians from the Leech Lake area (including Anton Treuer, Elaine Fleming, and Larry Aitkin). Some of these cultural brokers have been engaging in cross-cultural communication and advocacy since long before the recent development of the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, and as discussed above (see page 59), they have been able to achieve a greater degree of traction in challenging the dominant narrative in recent years through a confluence of political and cultural changes in the Bemidji community, and the capacity of these brokers to enact significant change is quite high within the bounds of the relatively small social environment.

B. The counter-narrative, telling the story of colonial dispossession throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> by way of the Shaynowishkung biography, has involved a wide variety of storytellers and distributors from various backgrounds and geographic regions throughout northern Minnesota. Indeed, the artist who produced the new bronze statue, which itself is certain part of the counter-narrative insofar as it communicates a more humanizing representation of this local symbol of Anishinaabe indigeneity and municipal identity in Bemidji, was brought in from Olympia, Washington, and Shaynowishkung family members from Texas were also involved in the process. However, despite the presence of Native and non-Native members of the Statue Committee, staff and affiliates of the Beltrami Historical Society, even staff working for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the production of the counter-narrative has thus far necessarily been rooted in indigenous voices. It is theoretically possible for a non-Native storyteller or distributor to independently produce a version of the counter-narrative which is rich in historical detail, unflinching when addressing the injustices, dispossessions, and violence that the Anishinaabe experienced during Shaynowishkung's life and the oppressive environments in which many still live today, and free of the kind of whitewashing that has defined the Shaynowishkung biography up until fairly recently. However, this has not taken place so far.<sup>32</sup>

I would further submit that, although a narrative may be decolonial in content, mirroring the language of the slideshow presentation on the LLBO website (Jones & Jones 2013), the plaques accompanying the new statue, or the text of the Shaynowishkung exhibit in the Beltrami History Museum, for the account to be a true indigenous counter-narrative, it must make central the voices of indigenous historians themselves. As demonstrated by some members of the non-Native population

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<sup>32</sup> Even this study, which itself represents something of a counter-narrative, is rooted in knowledge-production and information supplied by Anishinaabeg historians, scholars, and other participants who have shared with me their accounts of Shaynowishkung's and the Anishinaabeg's history in extensive and honest detail.

in Bemidji, it is possible for non-Native people to be knowledgeable about colonial history with the same grasp of detail, complexity, and injustice as the Native people with whom they are producing these narratives; however, to produce a Shaynowishkung counter-narrative biography without centering the Anishinaabe voices at the heart of the production process merely serves to further legitimize existing structures of colonial knowledge production and the positions of power into which non-Native people are born relative to indigenous histories in the colonial state.

C. In terms of geographic distribution, the Shaynowishkung biography differs from the traditional Flood narrative so sharply as to approach patterns that are the polar opposite of the latter case. Where the Flood narrative primarily follows the spread of the Anishinaabe population – particularly the Ojibwe population distributed throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, and parts of southern Ontario – the Shaynowishkung narrative, although about an Anishinaabe leader and influential in shaping perceptions of Anishinaabe history on the local level, has no particular spatial link to the Anishinaabeg per se. Secondly, where the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood circulates in both Native and non-Native spaces as well as urban and rural spaces, the areas in which the narrative appears to exercise the greatest importance and influence are generally the rural and predominately Anishinaabe spaces. The Shaynowishkung biography distribution flips this relationship, being similarly distributed through a variety of media across Native and non-Native as well as urban and rural spaces, but finding the greatest relevance and significance to people living in the urban spaces of Bemidji and Cass Lake, and its primary influence taking place in Bemidji – a predominately white, settler community.

Even in instances where the Shaynowishkung narrative travels outside the local region, the narrative primarily does so in the capacity of a local curiosity. By far the most common text sources appearing outside the local region are the travel guides for tourists presumably coming to the Bemidji area, and in instances when Shaynowishkung appears in other types of books, he is invariably positioned as a figure of local importance. In short, his story holds no particular meaningful influence or significance for people outside the limited environment of the Bemidji area, in spite of broad applicability of the themes in the dominant and counter-narrative accounts – friendship, cooperation, and multicultural understanding in the former, and recognition of historical injustice, decolonial responsibility, and psychological, cultural, and political healing in the latter.

D. This leads to the next significant trend in the production and communication of the Shaynowishkung narrative: namely, the individual storyteller has immense power to shape the version(s) of the narrative that will become normative in the local environment. This is not necessarily

the case with narratives that have a broader scope, as the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood does throughout Anishinaabe (and particularly Ojibwe) cultural space. The version created by, for instance, Eddie Benton-Banai in *The Mishomis Book* (2010) is distributed widely not only throughout northern Minnesota and Wisconsin where Benton resides, but across much of the *Anishinaabe Akiing* (Anishinaabe Country), and is widely read by Anishinaabeg and non-Natives alike, but this can also be said of various other renditions of the narrative found in text (Coatsworth 1979; Lund 1997; Kohl 1860; Tanner 1992, to name a few), and there are also myriad local variations on the story when it is told in the oral tradition – even in the ceremonial context, although there is said to be a “right” way to tell the story, and certain details and turns of phrase must be employed in order to honor the true spirit of the narrative, different storytellers will vary in style and delivery.

The array of iterations and the broad range across which the narrative is told creates narrative norms for the Flood tale that are formed through the cumulative creation production of a large community of storytellers. In the case of the Shaynowishkung narrative, on the other hand, there are very few variations on the story, and the local distribution and relevance of the narrative significantly empowers individuals invested in the narrative to make decisive actions that shape what the normative version or couple of versions will be.

This is seen most prominently in the work of the individuals who established the first descriptions of Shaynowishkung and his effect on the community, who would set the stage for the specific list of facts and characterizations that would be included in the dominant narrative for the subsequent century, and in the subsequent work of the very small number of individuals who have shaped the content of the counter-narrative more recently. Individual newspaper columnists, the sculptor of the original “Chief Bemidji” statue, and the authors of the public interpretive signage held a veritable monopoly on the biography, and the narrative changed extremely little during that period. In recent years, Elaine Fleming’s work in particular, as an educator, an oral storyteller, a public figure, and the producer (if not the distributor) of the biographical and historical text for the Beltrami History Museum and the Shaynowishkung statue plaques installed in 2015, has quickly and wholly defined the normative version of the counter-narrative. When the plaques for the statue were developed, it was the verbatim language of Fleming’s suggested narrative that would be submitted for approval, and neither the Statue Committee nor the Bemidji City Council changed the language in any meaningful way save for some shortening of the overall length in order to better suit the visitors’ attention spans, though members of the city council did certainly lobby for significant changes to be made.

E. Lastly, the oral and text narratives share a common quality that, similar to their relationship to the urban-rural divide, separates them almost entirely from the distribution and operations of the Flood narrative. This difference is found in the identity of the primary audience of impact, what might be termed the “reference point” for each narrative: specifically, while the Flood narrative’s primary audience is the Anishinaabeg, the primary audience of the Shaynowishkung narrative – whether orally or textually communicated, whether narrative or counter-narrative in content – is the white settler population.

The tailoring of the dominant narrative to mainly appeal to a settler audience is intuitively logical, given that the dominant narrative follows in a long-standing colonial tradition of harnessing indigenous biographies and histories, emptying them of extraneous complexity and conflict, sometimes augmenting or exaggerating the remaining details, and keeping the parts that are useful in the pursuit of making settler audiences feel a sense of belonging and kinship with the land they’ve appropriated from indigenous peoples (Berkhofer 2011; Deloria 1998; Garcia 1978; Huhndorf 2001; Sturm 2011). In the case of the dominant narrative of the Shaynowishkung biography, the story seems innocuous and even casually constructed at first glance, but the details have been (knowingly or otherwise) selected from among the potentially infinite number of alternatives specifically for their qualities that will appeal to the audience – an audience which has for the most part been tacitly assumed to be non-Native. For the most part, the early years of Shaynowishkung’s life are left out of the narrative, with most accounts skipping to the death of his wife in 1882, after which he moved with his family to the south shore of Lake Bemidji and became a more or less permanent fixture there. Also omitted is (usually) the Battle of Sugar Point, which, although Shaynowishkung did not participate or condone it, would remind the audience of the turbulence of the period, as well as the conflict between the railroads and local Anishinaabe camps, the fearmongering of the newspapers of the time, and Shaynowishkung’s own personal experiences of dispossession. The included details of his friendship and help are clearly designed to appeal to a white settler audience who desires to feel both welcome and responsibility-free where the Anishinaabeg are concerned.

The counter-narrative that has been gaining ground against the hegemony of the dominant narrative is less intuitively linked to a white settler audience, considering that its intended aim is to combat historical erasures endemic to the colonial project and to demand recognition of the trauma of indigenous experience during what has, through the dominant narrative, been mistakenly portrayed as a relatively simple and quaint, if challenging, period in local history. Admittedly, the producers and distributors of the counter-narrative are a mixed group of Native and non-Native individuals and

organizations, and to be sure, one of the stated goals of the communication of the counter narrative is to encourage Anishinaabeg inside and outside of Bemidji to recognize that it is their city and their history as well, and to help educate the many Anishinaabeg who are themselves unaware of the details of the local history (as it is rarely taught in detail, even in reservation schools).

However, the persisting presence of the Shaynowishkung statue prominently displayed in downtown Bemidji (and the absence of similar representations elsewhere, even in Cass Lake where Shaynowishkung lived for decades, or Inger, where he was born and raised) speaks to the extent to which his image and biography continue to be claimed primarily by the settler community. More importantly, the stated purpose of the more detailed and uncensored version of the biography by most of the Native and non-Native people involved in the production and distribution of the counter-narrative has been framed as a symbol of the importance of acknowledging the truth of the historical relationship between settlers and the Anishinaabeg, and the real consequences with which the Anishinaabeg continue to struggle today – a goal which puts the burden of change and growth primarily on the broadly ignorant not infrequently hostile non-Native population of present-day northern Minnesota. In short, where the dominant narrative involved primarily settlers talking to settlers about “Chief Bemidji,” the counter-narrative involves primarily Anishinaabeg talking to settlers (and, secondarily, to Anishinaabeg) about the context of Shaynowishkung’s life.

Not only are the settlers the primary target for the counter-narrative, but they are also the audience who appear to be most profoundly affected by it. Certainly members of Shaynowishkung’s family line have been deeply affected by the creation of the new statue, the dedication ceremony, and the healing that it represents, and Elaine Fleming has used the biography as a means to introduce local history to numerous students, and has herself been affected by the process of producing and distributing the decolonial counter-narratives. However, for most of the Anishinaabeg with whom I’ve spoken, their engagements with the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative has not so much changed their own perspectives on colonial history, or Shaynowishkung’s role as a historical figure or a leader, as it has augmented those perspectives with additional information and a sense of renewed vigor stemming from the excitement of having those perspectives validated. For non-Native participants, on the other hand, the change in some cases has been profound. White members of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee reported entering the process with little to know knowledge of Shaynowishkung himself, the history of Minnesota or the local region, or the past and present experiences of the Anishinaabeg. For some, social and professional interactions with the Anishinaabeg had, prior to participation in the committee, been rare, and the contexts of the



interactions (e.g., checking out at the grocery store, passing on the street) were fleeting and non-conducive to any kind of real informational or cultural exchange.<sup>33</sup>

In an interview with one of the founding members of the Statue Committee, the respondent discussed at some length the process of learning about the history, discussing its consequences in the present time, and hearing ideas for other means outside the statue itself that some of these problems could be addressed and the rift between Native and non-Native people be closed. She specifically noted that her involvement with the statue project taught her to have a level of patience that she hadn't held previously; a patience that came from years of observing the Anishinaabeg members of the committee operating at what seemed at first to be a dragging pace, seeming to go off on frequent tangents, and realizing over the course of years that this method of decision-making was critical for the project to exercise its full potential as a decolonial endeavor. Discussions continued constantly, the content of meetings was determined by what the members (particularly the family members) felt needed to be addressed at the particular given moment, and by the time the final decisions had been made concerning the logistics of the statue, a tremendous volume of new information had been absorbed, especially by the non-Native members of the committee, and sufficient time had been taken for the members to reflect on what they'd learned, to build relationships with fellow committee members, and to understand the full scope of the project they were undertaking.

Committee members as well as other non-Native local residents have experienced increased interest and investment in understanding the truth of local history, frustration that these subjects are not taught more frequently (and even mandatorily) in the schools, and excitement at the prospect of continuing to work toward racial and decolonial justice in Bemidji and the surrounding region. In addition their statements to this effect, in interviews as well as observations at meetings and social settings, the sense of satisfaction coupled with a sense of responsibility experienced by many of the participants in the statue project was readily apparent. In fact, quite to the contrary of the stated concerns of many of the people opposed to the negative tone of the language on the plaques accompanying the new statue, that no good could come from dwelling on past conflicts and that doing so would only stir up further resentment, the participants and community members invested in the projects making this direct engagement with past conflicts uniformly demonstrated positive feelings about having done so and were eager to continue in this pursuit. To some extent, the prediction of

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<sup>33</sup> It is worth noting that these types of interactions are often those described by the Anishinaabeg during interviews when asked to recall instances of discrimination. In these moments of fleeting, public, generally anonymous contact, many Anishinaabeg respondents indicated feeling as if their interactions with non-Native people are frequently cold, hostile, condescending, suspicious, or some combination of the above.

the opponents of the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative was indeed proven correct, insofar as feelings of conflict and tension were admittedly brought to the surface (as noted by local media, among others (Enger June 6, 2015; Sorenson May 11, 2015)), but there is no evidence to suggest that these tensions were manufactured or exacerbated by the emergence of the counter-narrative; they were rather merely uncovered as the proponents of the dominant narrative reciprocally responded to the counter-narrative by voicing their own feelings on the matter.

Examining the patterns of distribution for the Shaynowishkung narrative, including how the narrative is produced, distributed, and consumed, the places the text and oral narratives appear and have influence, and the political, social, and cultural boundaries that are (and are not) crossed in the process, we can infer five particular mechanisms by which these patterns of distribution are determined. In approximate order of influence, these mechanisms are as follows: (1) proximity to the city of Bemidji and, to a lesser extent, the town of Cass Lake; (2) contact with institutions or individuals directly invested in the production or distribution of the narrative, including but not limited to Bemidji municipal government, the Beltrami County Historical Society, the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, Elaine Fleming, Cecelia McKeig, and Donnie Headbird; (3) whether a given account is an instance the dominant or counter-narrative – instances of the dominant narrative tend to have a much wider distribution due to both their longer history of distribution and to the types of texts in which they are commonly found (i.e., travel guides and novelty books); (4) whether a given individual, family, or community resides in a primarily urban or primarily rural area (within the general vicinity of the Bemidji-Cass Lake area, which contains variously higher and lower population densities) – both dominant and counter-narrative accounts have a much higher degree of consumption and influence among urban populations; (5) the U.S.-Canadian border, across which the Shaynowishkung biography appears rarely to travel, owing most likely to the distribution of local travel guides in which references to the statue and occasional biographical information appear, and the attachment of the narrative to the city of Bemidji and, to a far lesser extent, the state of Minnesota.

### **c. Influencing Perceptions of the Anishinaabeg**

“The worst thing you can do to a people is to rob them of the memory of themselves”  
(Excerpt from a letter to the Bemidji city council from the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee).

“[Regarding the exhibit space in the Beltrami County History Museum:] [The director] borrowed a big wigwam, and put it in the middle of the exhibit. [Participant] and other Ojibwe said ‘Take it down! Let us put history up there, stop seeing us in terms of

culture stuff, and actually learn about the society.’ The wigwam was later moved to the side, and the larger exhibit with the timeline and historical information was put in” (Fieldnote excerpt from interview, Sept. 11, 2014).

The differences between the effects of the dominant narrative and the counter-narrative of Shaynowishkung’s life are vast in terms of their influence on how Native and – especially – non-Native people seem to understand Ojibwe history, and the implications of that history for understanding the character and identity of the Ojibwe people alive today. With the emergence and growing popularity of the counter-narrative, it seems that overall perceptions are changing somewhat though the presence of the counter-narrative in settler spaces, particularly where featured prominently, is so new that it is impossible to say for certain at this point what the outcome of the narrative conflict will be, or exactly how perceptions and relations between the settlers and the Anishinaabeg will change over time.

*i. Dominant narrative effects*

The dominant narrative of the Shaynowishkung biography, and indeed the dominant narrative of local colonial history of which the biography is a highlighted but small piece, has been shaping perceptions of the Anishinaabeg since even before Shaynowishkung’s death in 1904 (Fleming 2015; McKeig 2013; Meuers June 15, 2015), and has grown in hegemonic dominance while simultaneously shrinking in detail ever since that time. This version of the biography leans heavily on simplistic representations of Shaynowishkung – standing in for the original indigenous inhabitants of the region – as welcoming, accommodating, generous, and utterly unperturbed by the influx of white settlers to the area. In fact, in the dominant narrative, Shaynowishkung is portrayed in such a way as to seem substantially more upset by the prospect of losing the bond with the settlers than with the violence, starvation, and dispossession experienced by the Anishinaabeg; indeed, the latter issues are rarely mentioned at all.

The impression one gets from this narrative was perhaps represented best by a young white woman originally from a rural town in North Dakota, who expressed that she wished that the Indian people could go back to the way they used to be; that there was a time – her implication being that this was prior to corruption by Europeans – when Native people had proper, healthy ways of living, and that today, most Native people seemed to have lost their spirituality, gotten addicted to alcohol or recreational drugs, gotten involved in violence and crime, and so on. While certainly making some note of the disastrous effects that colonial history has had on indigenous people, the tone and

emphasis in the young woman's voice indicated a belief, all too common among settlers ignorant of colonial history, in a romanticized, idyllic purity that indigenous people once possessed, and that that transcendent quality of indigenous identity and culture was now lost forever, along with the people who would, but for the ravages of European corruption, still be practitioners of this utopian lifestyle. The sentiment is typically accompanied, as it was in this instance, with a sense of disdain for what the speaker believes Native people have become.

The dominant Shaynowishkung narrative is, for the many non-Natives whose perception mirrors that of this young woman's own, a kind of supporting and reifying source of data to prop up the broader "noble savage" narrative of a paradise lost. In the dominant narrative, Shaynowishkung represents the best of the idyllic cultural norms existing prior to colonization, and after helping to establish the first white settlement on the banks of the lake where he'd made his home, he passed away (to be replaced by a statue, like a character in Greek myth), symbolically passing the torch to the new inhabitants of the land. Shaynowishkung himself is then, in the narrative, the last of a dying breed, to be succeeded by generations of Native people whose position of spiritual innocence has been tragically but irrevocably lost.

Many of the negative stereotypes that are held about Native people in northern Minnesota today are historically constructed by perceptions of what they have lost: where once the Ojibwe had hospitality for white settlers, today they are culturally and geographically isolationist; where they used to be supportive of settler endeavors to colonize the region, today they stir up trouble over their own land rights, prevent infrastructural developments, and attempt to claim more for themselves; where they once wanted only to be treated as social and legal equals to the settlers, they are now constantly trying to claim special rights through agreements made long ago that are no longer applicable in the present day. To the extent that the dominant Shaynowishkung narrative does acknowledge the wrongs of the past, they are treated as precisely that: past. According to these (relatively rare) accounts, Shaynowishkung (and the Native people in general) are characterized by a history of victimization of the weak by the strong; a version which may breed pity, but does little to further humanize the Anishinaabeg, contextualize their victimization, acknowledge their agency, or release them from the historical constraints of the "permanent past tense" (Povinelli 2011).

## *ii. Counter-narrative effects*

The counter-narrative informs a very different and in many ways contradictory conception of Anishinaabe identity than the dominant narrative, although there are overlaps in the messages of the

two, which counteract or redirect the otherwise patently decolonial function that it might serve, as I discuss further in the next section on theoretical implications of the Shaynowishkung narrative. With the shift in focus from the man to the politics of the time, the understanding of Anishinaabe identity becomes rooted fundamentally in systems of dominance, rather than multicultural exchanges on the American frontier. For those involved in the production and distribution of the counter-narrative, in some cases there was a change in their understanding of Anishinaabe identity, and for others an enrichment and intensification of perceptions already held. The Anishinaabeg involved in the process, and seemingly most Anishinaabeg living in northern Minnesota, are aware and often emotionally invested in the truth of colonial history, even if they are not aware of the particular dates, names, events, laws, treaties, and so on, as many are not. In spite of possible vagueness concerning the details of the history that they might hold, it was apparent that the Anishinaabeg engaging with the counter-narrative already held, to a great degree, the general perception of Anishinaabe identity toward which the non-Native members who were similar ignorant of historical fact would turn through the course of their own engagement.

The image of Anishinaabe identity supported by the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative represents a people who began the colonial period with an ethic of peace and cooperation in the name of mutual advancement. As emblematic of the Anishinaabe experience in Minnesota, Shaynowishkung is portrayed as deeply committed to peace and friendship with all people regardless of race or nativity, but naïve in his belief that the settler state and colonial economic forces would abide by the same principles. Contrary to the dominant narrative of Native and non-Native walking together – perhaps not hand-in-hand but parallel to one another – into the future, the counter-narrative biography of Shaynowishkung is primarily a tale of kindness being repaid with callousness, peace with violence, and cooperation with dispossession.

In this, the counter-narrative is as much about the historical and cultural identity of the settlers as about those of the Anishinaabeg, and it is in this portrayal of the Anishinaabeg as victims (but with historical legal and institutional context which temporizes them beyond Shaynowishkung's death and into the present day), and the settlers as transgressors and (in some cases) oppressors, that the function of the narrative is produced: if effective, the audience will understand (A) that the conditions of many Anishinaabeg communities today, including elevated rates of poverty, substance abuse, family dysfunction, and suicide, are not part of the innate character of the Anishinaabeg themselves but rather the legacy of colonial violence; (B) that when the Anishinaabeg vigorously demand their usufructuary rights based on treaties, it is because peacefully and politely requesting such things has been met with

contempt and failure in the past; (C) that the town of Bemidji was created through acts of friendship and multicultural cooperation, true, but that it was also made possible through land and resources dispossession and forced relocation programs. Anishinaabe identity, for receptive audiences to the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, is about perseverance, peaceful determination, and survival through generations of victimization and trauma.

### **3.5 Discussion of Theoretical Implications**

As with the Flood narrative, the analysis of the Shaynowishkung biography – in both its dominant and counter-narrative forms – leads to certain theoretical conclusions concerning the ways in which the results of the analysis outlined above respond to the original discussion questions driving this study. The modes of communication, patterns of distribution, and content of the various accounts broadly categorized into the dialogic relationship of dominant/counter-narrative provides some illuminating information on the kinds of political and cultural projects that the Shaynowishkung biography helps to shape, and how those projects differ from the ones informed by the Flood narrative and other traditional narratives that remain fundamentally decolonial in their form and function.

#### **a. Historically-rooted political, cultural, and racial boundaries: denial, recognition, and transmigration**

“When [the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee] first came up with the idea, they wanted to do just a statue, and now it’s turned into a political history lesson. That’s not what [the city council] wanted – they weren’t looking to create either discussion or vitriol, and theirs is a fair concern, though I’m not as worried about it. The concern is that these plaques are not there for truth and reconciliation, but rather they’re there to say ‘see, you guys are jerks.’ And there’s some truth to that. I hope that’s not what everyone takes away from it; I hope that through this, people will be able to come together. But I will say too that there’s a lot of tension between the tribes and the non-Native people. They’re fiercely independent, and sometimes, they can come across as jerks. That maybe sounds a little harsh, but that’s the experience” (Participant, May 20, 2015).

The counter-narrative operates largely as a direct response to the dominant narrative – specifically, to its many significant omissions and the distortions that have arisen in public knowledge and perceptions as a result of the dominant narrative’s extraordinarily selective portrayal of history. Chronologically speaking, these narrative versions operate in what is likely to become a dialectic relationship, influencing each other for years to come, though this dialectic is now in its infancy, and

consequently the process has thus far involved only thesis and antithesis, and the synthesis remains to be seen.

The dominant narrative of the Shaynowishkung biography constructs a historical and sociological perspective in which the cultural and racial boundaries that might have existed between settlers and the Anishinaabeg were cast aside from the beginning, as Shaynowishkung welcomed and befriended the settlers, they reciprocated, and the two communities lived together happily on the shores of the lake and spread throughout the northern woods. The concept of political boundaries rarely comes into play in the dominant narrative at all; indeed, it seems intentionally designed to be as apolitical as possible. The inclusion only of interesting historical and cultural tidbits to amuse divert (in every sense of the word) the casual audience of locals and tourists was calculated in order to create a narrative which was pleasantly free from the burdens of complexity, conflict, or guilt. This is a particularly appealing notion for many people in this area of Minnesota, which has been characterized throughout its history of contact between settler and indigenous peoples by these exact kind of political, cultural, and racial boundaries that have produced in the minds of the settlers those exact qualities: complexity, conflict, and guilt. To encounter a Native narrative in which the white settlers are not the “bad guy” is, perhaps understandably, an attractive experience for the non-Native population. The dominant narrative communicates to the audience that the boundaries between Native and non-Native people are artificial, and the proper state of the relationship between the two is one of friendship and mutual cooperation (although the burden of cooperation in the narrative as well as the kinds of colonial political projects it informs is placed predominately on the Native people, whose hostility is seen in many cases as being the primary obstacle on the path to peace).

The distribution of the dominant narrative informs a community which is geographically inclusive of Native and non-Native spaces, but the content precludes the Anishinaabeg from full participation or membership in any narrative community that is created by the sharing of this tale. The dominant Shaynowishkung biography is, as noted above, a story told by white people to other white people about Native people, creating a body of shared information which is relevant and even positively inclined toward the subjects of the narrative, but simultaneously exclusive of those subjects by way of their dehumanization and depoliticization. It has triple-function in that it first includes the Anishinaabeg as a part of the community through the historical precedent of Shaynowishkung’s own affinity with the settlers; second, it renders that invitation to present-day inclusion an unattractive and demeaning process through the dehumanization of Shaynowishkung and erasure of indigenous history

and experience; and lastly, it places the burden of exclusion on the Anishinaabeg for not living up to the assimilative inclinations of their 19<sup>th</sup> century representative.

The counter-narrative facilitates a very different kind of community by first making visible the boundaries that have existed in the past and continue to exist between the white settlers and the Anishinaabeg as well as the structures, processes, and decisions that created and shaped those boundaries, and then using the Shaynowishkung narrative as means of allowing travel across the boundaries by both Native and non-Native people invested in a new cooperative, postcolonial project. The counter-narrative is not less constitutive of distinctions between communities, but is rather intent on creating distinctions that do not preclude the possibility of alliance, exchange, and mutual respect. The assimilationist message of the original, dominant narrative is challenged and complicated by the counter-narratives' emphasis on Shaynowishkung's own experience of dispossession even after his own desperate and last-ditch efforts to further assimilate into the settler society by renouncing his tribal membership, and the importance of distinctive Anishinaabe identity is critical for healing the damage that has been done. Similarly, the counter-narrative is explicit about identifying a white settler community who are the benefitters of the same colonial legacy that continues to hold indigenous people back. These identities and their historical roles and present and future responsibilities are crucial to the narrative – hence, despite the distribution of the counter-narrative across Native and non-Native spaces, it's purpose is not to create a single narrative community but rather to recognize the reality of the divide between the communities and to begin a process of reflective, reconciliatory dialog between them.

This concept reveals a complication in the theory with which this study is engaged: namely, that a community can, in some cases, be better defined in terms of its membership and borders by examining the overlapping bodies of shared narratives that different communities hold in common. In the case of the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, the various modes of communication and distribution extend the narrative over a large geographic area, and the population of people involved in the narrative, either in their capacities as producers, distributors, consumers, or some combination of these roles, include Native and non-Native people, and a wide variety of other diverse background characteristics. Under the original conception of the theory, these people would thus, relative to the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, be considered to be a single narrative community (albeit with differing levels and qualities of investment in the community and the maintenance or extension of its boundaries). However, the counter-narrative operates in such a way as to intentionally divide this narrative community in two, uniting them in relation to the narrative but also creating internal



divisions within the total population of people engaged with the narrative. The implication of this observed trend seems to suggest that in order to determine the boundaries of narrative communities, we must look beyond the patterns of distribution of these narratives across geographic, social, and political spaces, to the *content* of the narratives and the sociological consequences of its communication.

## **b. Colonial and postcolonial nationhood**

“I would say that Shaynowishkung is thought of as a Leech Laker, but I’m not sure why I get that impression, and it’s important to remember that when Shaynowishkung was alive, there wasn’t a Leech Lake reservation or anything. I think all of the Ojibwe people in the area should have a claim on his biography, since they all have ancestral connections to these same groups from the same areas, but they don’t necessarily make that claim” (Bemidji city official, May 20, 2015).

“It’s like talking about a foreign government; it’s like trying to describe the government of Belgium to people, and so people just don’t know. But it would be helpful for people to understand that – that they’re governed differently. The indigenous nation is an *idea*, it’s not quite a *thing* yet. Nation-building is all about reducing that reliance on the federal government, being entrepreneurial and self-reliant, figuring out how they’re going to create jobs for their people and all the things that come along with a successful community.

And there’s a lot of discussion in Native communities about the colonial system they’re stuck in, and they just can’t seem to figure out how to get off that merry-go-round, and they’re very frustrated by that” (Bemidji city official, May 22, 2015).

In the first case study, I examined the version of Ojibwe/Anishinaabe nationhood that is informed by the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood. Specifically, that narrative I refer to as “decolonial,” informing a vision of Anishinaabe political identity that is against and above colonial definition, defying the artificial divisions of colonial and racial logic, exercising cultural survivance (Vizenor 1994; 2008), and making some headway toward the cause of turning settlers who engage with the narrative against the settler state. The Shaynowishkung narrative also informs the parameters of Anishinaabe national and extra-national political projects, but its influence is altogether different – and, perhaps, more complicated for the presence of the internal division and conflict between dominant narrative and counter-narrative.

Prior to the existence of the counter-narrative, the Shaynowishkung biography did not serve the construction of an indigenous polity of any kind. Quite to the contrary, its explicitly assimilationist narrative served only to bolster the legitimacy of the city of Bemidji directly, and indirectly, the larger settler state. In this, it is neither “decolonial” nor “postcolonial,” but simply a “colonial” narrative,

-serving the intellectual hegemony of the settler historical narrative. The Anishinaabeg as a distinct and meaningful political entity were supposed to have been lost to the past in a history that, while at times unpleasant, was inevitable with the westward march of colonial progress. The distribution of the narrative exclusively in settler spaces, including the city of Bemidji, local newspapers, and books produced by non-Native authors primarily for non-Native audiences who cared about the story only insofar as it represented an interesting factoid lending an air of quaint wildness to the locale from which it came, lent nothing to a project of contemporary Anishinaabe tribal identity, sovereignty, or other distinction from the dominant settler society. The occasional mention of the towns of Inger and Cass Lake, and of their location on the Leech Lake Reservation, in various renditions of the dominant narrative may have lent some semblance of legitimacy to the reservation by creating a shared history between Leech Lake and Bemidji, but this reference would only have extended as far as the acknowledgement of the Leech Lake Reservation's existence – hardly a sturdy support for any particular conception of Anishinaabe or Ojibwe polity.

The counter-narrative, on the other hand, heavily informs Anishinaabe political projects in northern Minnesota. The political functions of the counter-narrative are similar to those of the Flood narrative, in that its modes of communication and distribution challenge the legitimacy of the settler state, and of the dominant bodies of knowledge with which both Native and non-Native people continue to be educated. However, despite the similarities the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative bears to the Flood narrative, I am hesitant to call it a “decolonial narrative,” or to apply the “decolonial” label to describe the kinds of political projects which this counter-narrative informs. Considering the specificity of its application to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and, more importantly, its emphasis on reconciliation and healing through settler recognition of the history of indigenous dispossession, I would contend that the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative is actually much more representative of what indigenous critical theory might critique as a “postcolonial” narrative (Byrd 2011), not in the sense that it draws on the critiques of colonial systems addressed by postcolonial theory, but rather that it suggests that we have arrived at a moment in history when colonialism exists in the past and we should prioritize cooperation and mutual benefit between settlers and indigenous peoples.

Specifically, I understand the postcolonial narrative as one that stems from and supports the postcolonial project of putting past differences and antagonisms aside in the name of finding commonalities, strategies of cooperation, and expressions of kinship and friendship (see pages 89-90). As various scholars have pointed out, this attitude and political ideology too often serves little practical

purpose other than to distract from ongoing structures of colonial oppression and control (Barker 2011; Byrd 2011; Coulthard 2014).

For over a century, Shaynowishkung's narrative remained almost fully appropriated by the town of Bemidji. The Ojibwe communities in the area, including Cass Lake and Inger (the earlier areas of Shaynowishkung's residence) exercised little ownership over the narrative, nor was there much of an attempt to contest the dominant version of his biography held by the settler population. In recent years, the Ojibwe community has taken staked a claim on the biography through the production of the counter-narrative, the most visible example of which being the new statue. The counter-narrative reshapes not only the content of the narrative itself, but also the parameters of political and cultural ownership at work in creating and recreating the narrative. Interestingly, the symbols and themes Shaynowishkung represents in the counter-narrative remain largely unchanged, despite years of contentious debate over the circumstances of his life and the ways in which his narrative should be told. In spite of the apparent victory for the indigenous people interested in historical and political recognition achieved through the undiminished information about the atrocities committed by the state and private enterprise during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the brand new statue, Shaynowishkung still stands in the middle of the settler town of Bemidji, holding a peace-pipe.

Through his connection with locations now within the Leech Lake Reservation, the participation of Leech Lake Nation citizens in the reappropriation of the narrative, and the inclusion of the counter-narrative slideshow on the Leech Lake website, Shaynowishkung has in recent years begun to inform not only the settler-state nationhood, but Leech Lake Nationhood as well. In the introduction to their collection of essays, *The Creolization of Theory* (2011), editors Francoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih discuss a version of postcolonial cultural and intellectual mixing referred to as *Creolization*. This term succinctly alludes to the ways in which colonizer and colonized influence one another's cultural and political narratives, and an optimistic prognosis for the state of theorizing in which the continued relationality and exchange involved will go on sustaining theory's life force. This is a rosy prospect indeed, particular for those of us invested in the health of theoretical discourse, and the concept of Creolization is in some ways an attractive way of understanding the mixture of Ojibwe historical narrative and settler modes of storytelling and historical presentation. The reality in the local context does, to some extent, support this kind of interpretation – the history and multicultural vision of the settler town of Bemidji is bolstered, and the participation of Ojibwe people (mainly from Leech Lake) in the retelling of the narrative strengthens certain forms of Ojibwe intellectual sovereignty and

social and political structure. The question becomes, however, whether these forms are ones worth maintaining.

Anishinaabeg from outside Leech Lake were involved in the Shaynowishkung Statue Project, but it has been primarily Leech Lake storytellers who have taken an interest in telling their own version of Shaynowishkung's life, and the patterns of narrative distribution extend more in the direction of Leech Lake than either of the other nearby Ojibwe polities. There are two main implications for Ojibwe nationhood represented here. First, the attachment of Shaynowishkung's counter-narrative biography to Leech Lake nationhood, contrasted with the sparse distribution or influence of his narrative at Red Lake or White Earth, reinforces a narrative distinction between these communities. The Leech Lake national narrative is growing distinct from those of White Earth and Red Lake, shoring up the postcolonial nationhood defined by attachment to reservation spaces and Band-based population distinctions. Second, the continuity of Shaynowishkung's representational symbols – peace, cooperation, friendship, coexistence – even after interventions from Ojibwe community members suggests a postcolonial concept of Ojibwe nationhood built on settler politics of recognition (Coulthard 2014).

To summarize, Shaynowishkung's biography, at least in the more recent and growing counter-narrative, supports a version of Ojibwe nationhood that exists on the other side of complicated colonial history, in a new era of multicultural cooperation, reconciliation, and healing, albeit an era that requires admitting and confronting the unpleasant tensions below the surface of day-to-day life in northern Minnesota. It is unsurprisingly appealing to the non-Native population of Bemidji and the wider region, considering that it places the guilt of culpability firmly in the past, though asserts responsibility on the people living in the present. The possibility of being able to move on; that there is a fast-approaching light at the end of the tunnel of hostility and complexity – this a vision which has value for the ignorant racist and the well-meaning multiculturalist alike. By sharp contrast, the modes of distribution of the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood do not create spaces for reconciliation at all, save for the settler audience coming to the process of reconciliation on indigenous terms; outside of this path, the Flood narrative does not seek healing through reconciliation or recognition, but instead through investment in promoting cultural literacy within the Anishinaabe community concerning spiritual history, core values, and traditional/proper ways of living (*mino-bimaadiziwin*).

In their 1984 analysis of American Indian political history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Deloria & Lytle lay out a more explicitly political distinction between the kinds of projects that I have thus far been

referring to as “post-colonial” and “decolonial” – terms which I have drawn more from the literature in Latino critiques of post-colonial theory (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2011; Pérez 1999); indigenous critical theory (Barker 2011; Corntassel 2012; Coulthard 2014; Martineau & Ritskes 2014; Simpson 2014; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012) than the more classic American Indian History perspectives. Deloria and Lytle draw a line between two particular political goals that have driven often highly divided American Indian communities:

“When we distinguish between nationhood and self-government, we speak of two entirely different positions in the world. *Nationhood* implies a process of decision making that is free and uninhibited within the community, a community in fact that is almost completely insulated from external factors as it considers its possible options. *Self-government*, on the other hand, implies a recognition by the superior political power that some measure of local decision making is necessary but that this process must be monitored very carefully so that its products are compatible with the goals and policies of the larger political power. *Self-government* implies that the people were previously incapable of making any decisions for themselves and are now ready to assume some, but not all, of the responsibilities of a municipality” (2013 [1984]: 20).

The category here called “Nationhood” is elsewhere in the book referred to as “self-determination,” and could also be equated with the term “sovereignty” – indeed, with the popularity of the latter term in contemporary indigenous political parlance, I imagine that were Deloria & Lytle writing today, this term would have seen a more liberal use throughout this text. Nationhood, as these authors understand the concept, is what I refer to in this dissertation as a “decolonial” project: one which has as its goal the assertion of complete political and social sovereignty (which does not necessarily equate to independence or isolation), the revitalization and free practice of indigenous cultural traditions as well as the freedom to reshape and innovate within indigenous cultures, and autonomy from the power of colonial governance to determine the parameters of indigenous nationhood. Self-government, on the other hand, follows what I refer to here as a “post-colonial” project, that is, one for which the primary focus is to move beyond the conflicts and struggles of the past (and to relegate present conflicts and struggles to that same past) in order for indigenous and settler people, communities, and polities to become progressively more functional, healthy, and prosperous through pragmatic means. The post-colonial project, which in the local environment is informed wholeheartedly by the dominant

Shaynowishkung narrative and somewhat ambiguously by the counter-narrative, is a friendlier notion and greatly appealing to many Native and non-Native people, but necessarily requires a great deal of acceptance of colonial cultural and political structures.

In comparing the relative political influence and operations of the first two narrative cases, it is important to note that while these contrasting narrative nationhoods are in many ways contradictory to one another, this is not to say that one is effective and the other is not. It is true that the distribution and influence of the Flood narrative is wider and deeper than that of the Shaynowishkung biography, but the two narratives are not comparable when it comes to these traits – one tells the story of a local historical figure who, while interesting and important in his own right, was not influential outside the local sphere; the other is a story told by numerous peoples throughout a vast geographic region for centuries, describing a fundamental ontological event. It is enough to say that both narratives are effective and influential to the extent that they are able to be within their respective realms of circulation. In short, it is not my intention to suggest that decolonial narratives are more powerful than postcolonial ones (or vice versa), although for the political purposes of strengthening indigenous resistance to colonial structures of power, the former certainly seems to take a more direct approach, even demonstrating success in convincing non-Native individuals of the value of indigenous systems of ethics and ways of knowing. More to the point, I intend to suggest that the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood, and its implications for understanding Ojibwe nationhood, stands to provide us with meaningful insights into alternative (decolonial) modes of understanding the national unit.

While the Shaynowishkung biography provides means for Ojibwe people to gain involvement in and recognition for shaping their own nationhood, it does so in ways that are legible to the settler-state and therefore not as directly decolonial. That being said, it has been impressed upon me by the elders with whom I have consulted for this project that the telling of these historical narratives is every bit as crucial for the restoration and defense of indigenous sovereignty as the telling of traditional tales. Narratives like the biography of Shaynowishkung concretize the Ojibwe role in Minnesota history, introducing the concept of Ojibwe political, social, and economic agency, and removing them from the realm of dances, legends, and wild rice-gathering to which they have been so often relegated in the popular imagination. As one advisor and participant has told me frequently, “we are more than just our culture.”

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The Shaynowishkung narrative operate within a much more local and centralized range than the Flood narrative, and where the latter has deep spiritual and ontological importance to many Anishinaabeg throughout a vast swatch of North America surrounding the Great Lakes, the former is taken by many if not most to be little more than a local curiosity; a piece of vaguely interesting local history that augments the character of the city of Bemidji. The counter-narrative has, in a short time, radically altered the way some people in the local environment think about that character and history, but the narrative remains miniscule in the scope of its effects relative to the earlier case study. Despite the chasm between the form, function, and distribution of these narratives, they both hold valuable information that we are able to use in order to better understand the relationship that Native and non-Native people have to their varied communities, their identities, their history, their physical and cultural spaces, and to each other.

In the next chapter, I will discuss a very different kind of narrative, which in some ways speaks to the same issues as the Flood and Shaynowishkung narratives and can therefore be compared and contrasted with them, and in other ways is so distinct that it must be analyzed as a stand-alone case.

### 3.7 Figures

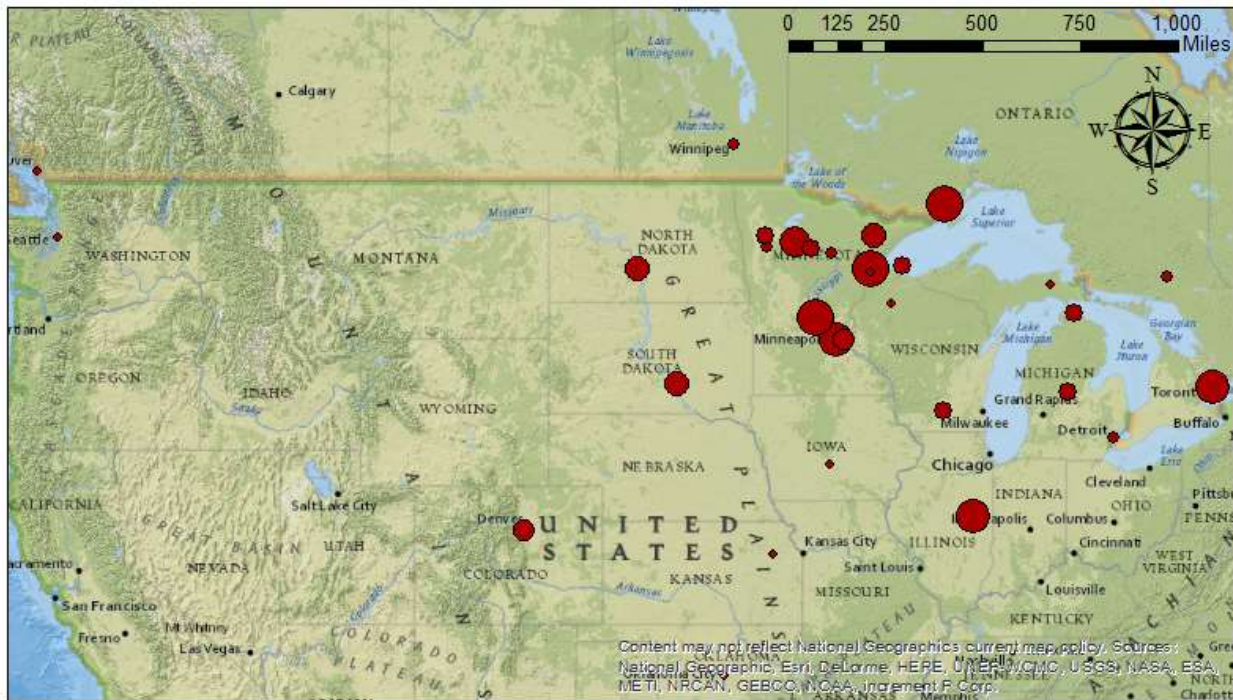
Fig. 3. Old and New Statues of Shaynowishkung







Fig. 5. Density of Shaynowishkung narratives in books – regional, college/university, and major urban libraries



Score calculated according to number of individual titles containing the Shaynowishkung narrative at each location, depending on the level of detail per title; full account of the narrative = 1, partial account = 0.5, brief mention = 0.1.

### Legend

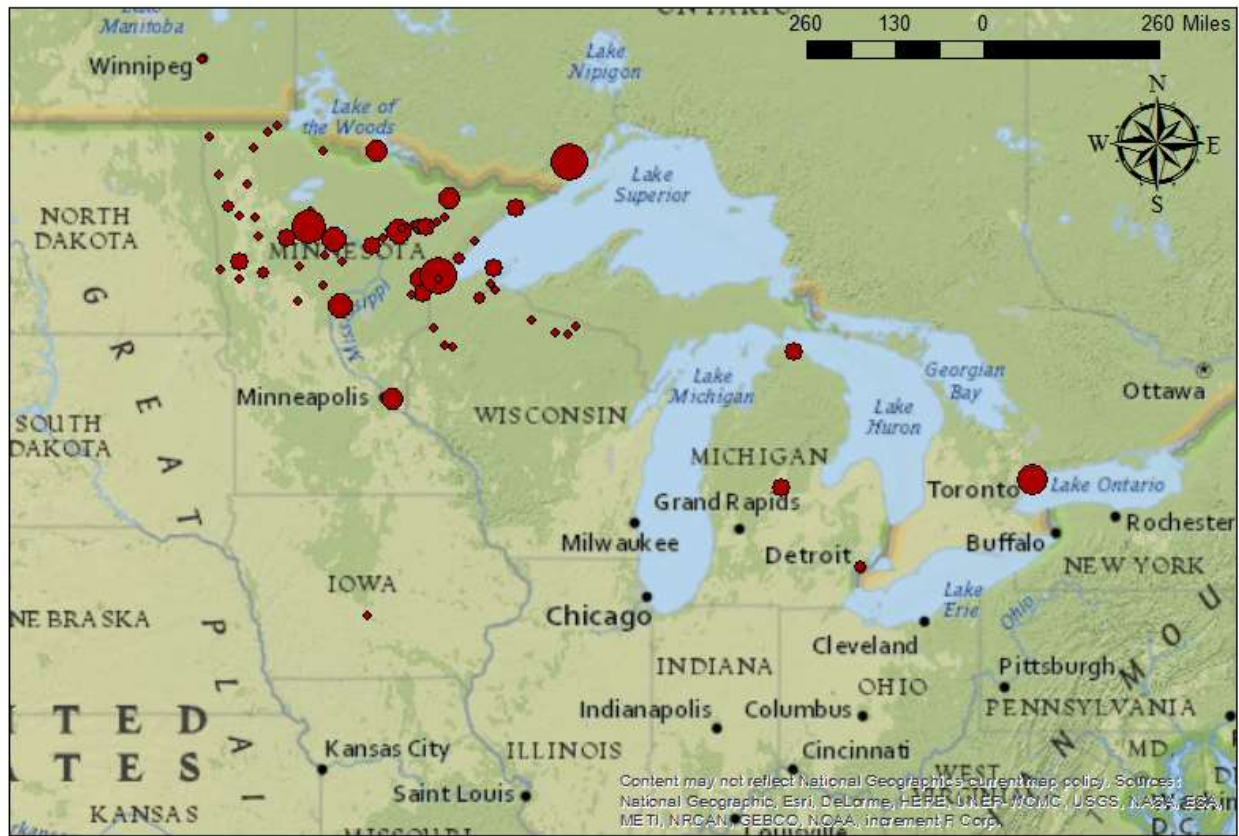
#### Shaynowishkung Narratives

##### Score

- ◆ 0.000000 - 0.525000
- ◆ 0.525001 - 1.050000
- 1.050001 - 1.575000
- 1.575001 - 2.100000
- 2.100001 - 2.625000
- 2.625001 - 3.150000
- 3.150001 - 3.675000
- 3.675001 - 4.200000



Fig. 6. Density of Shaynowishkung narratives in books – local branch libraries



Score calculated according to number of individual titles containing the Shaynowishkung narrative at each location, depending on the level of detail per title; full account of the narrative = 1, partial account = 0.5, brief mention = 0.1.

**Legend**

**Shaynowishkung Narrative**

**Score**

- ◆ 0.200000 - 0.237500
- ◆ 0.237501 - 0.275000
- 0.275001 - 0.312500
- 0.312501 - 0.350000
- 0.350001 - 0.387500
- 0.387501 - 0.425000
- 0.425001 - 0.462500
- 0.462501 - 0.500000

## Chapter 4: The Ongoing Saga of the *Honor the Earth* Campaign

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be examining a narrative that is, in some ways, farther-reaching than either the Shaynowishkung biography or the traditional Flood narrative, although it too is grounded in the local environment and in the lifeways of the Minnesota Anishinaabeg. The “Honor the Earth” organization, directed by White Earth Ojibwe political writer, economist, and activist Winona LaDuke, has been fighting for environmental protections in northern Minnesota for over two decades, although much of the attention and support the organization has received has come in recent years, primarily as a result of their very public and controversial battle (along with various other organizations) against the Enbridge Energy corporation over a series of oil pipeline expansion proposals, the most well-known of which is the “Sandpiper” line that has been slated to cut through ecologically, economically, and culturally significant areas to the Anishinaabeg in order to connect with existing pipelines in Duluth, MN. The narrative I investigate in the following chapter is the ongoing story chronicling the battle between Honor the Earth and Enbridge, being told in news media, in Honor the Earth’s own organizational media, in local and state courtrooms, and in various events ranging from organizational fundraisers to meetings of the Public Utilities Commission along the route of the proposed pipeline.

This narrative represents a type which we may refer to as a “current events narrative,” insofar as it not only describes a series of events that have occurred recently, but is also in continuous evolution as the story at the heart of the narrative<sup>34</sup> grows over time and incorporates new events and interpretations. The relevance of current events narratives is self-evident, and the importance of the narrative of Honor the Earth and the Enbridge pipelines is not only significant but, indeed, pressing in the lives of many people in northern and central Minnesota. The investments of people in different regions and different social spaces differ greatly, but by far the greatest reason for the significance of this narrative in people’s lives is the imminence of the pipeline itself, and the effects it is expected to have on the lives and livelihoods of people along its proposed route and beyond. Considering the extent to which people in the rural parts of northern Minnesota appear to distrust and avoid mainstream news media wherever possible, we might imagine that current events narratives surrounding ongoing stories might hold less significance for residents of these regions, but the truth is quite the opposite. Based on interviews with residents throughout the rural areas of northern and

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<sup>34</sup> Remember that, from the field of narrative sociology, I am taking “narrative” to mean, in short, a story or set of stories the structure, chronology, and content of which have been imbued with particular sociological meaning.

northwestern Minnesota, it was made clear that these people have to rely quite heavily on a steady stream of information concerning the goings-on in the local environment as, for many of them, their ability to manage their lives is dependent on being consistently aware of policies and actions of local and state governments, corporations, and community organizations that may affect the social, economic, or ecological landscape.

Sociologically speaking, the significance of current events narratives in general may seem patently obvious, given that the story components that inform the overall narrative heavily inform what the audience knows about the world, and how the audience interprets and applies this knowledge. There is greater complexity to this process than is readily apparent, however. In the case of the Honor the Earth narrative, it is my contention that the stories that form the narrative are not only informing the general public about the events and decisions that are taking place, but also (and more importantly for our present purposes) the meaning and significance of Indian Treaties, the place of indigenous political action within the wider scope of state and national (and international) politics, the definition of Ojibwe, Anishinaabe, American Indian, and indigenous identities as they relate to natural environments as well as to capitalist enterprise, and the nature of the colonial conflict.

The choice of the Honor the Earth narrative case was based on a number of salient factors. First, the narrative was evolving rapidly during the data collection period from the fall of 2014 through to the spring of 2016; Honor the Earth has been in more or less continuous conflict with Enbridge, both in the courts and in the media. The narrative also held strong importance for both Native and non-Native people throughout the region, and was receiving a great deal of media attention, providing a deep wellspring of data for analysis. Despite the relevance of the narrative across populations and communities, however, Honor the Earth and its campaigns were deeply rooted in the environmental politics of the White Earth reservation, and principals of responsibility to the land that derived directly from Anishinaabe traditions. Lastly, this narrative presented particular interest to the questions of indigenous nationalism and transnationalism, as the Honor the Earth organization – which is itself a conglomeration of members from different tribal and geographic communities – is engaged in sometimes friendly and sometimes contentious relationships with political and economic entities based in Ontario, Manitoba, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Washington DC, the White Earth, Leech Lake, Fond du Lac, and Mille Lacs Reservations, and myriad cities and towns along the route of the pipeline. The network of the organization both affirms and interrupts the legitimacy and boundedness of these distinct but often overlapping social and political spaces.

As with the first two case studies, this chapter will include an overview of the narrative itself, followed by an outline of the methods used to gather and analyze data, the findings based on my research, and a broader discussion of how these findings respond to the questions at the heart of the study and supplement existing literature. The Honor the Earth narrative is divided in the findings into a cultural narrative and procedural narrative, as different communicative instances use different framing devices for presenting select pieces and parts of the larger narrative, both intentionally and unintentionally, to accomplish a variety of distinct outcomes. I will also discuss the combination of the cultural and procedural narratives into a single whole by Honor the Earth itself, as this holistic mode of self-narration holds certain significant ties to the cultural and political roots of the organization. In the sections on the narrative's influence on perceptions of Anishinaabe indigenous identity, and the broader theoretical implications of the findings as they pertain to the foundational research questions underlying the study, I will discuss the variously decolonial and postcolonial tendencies of the Honor the Earth narrative, internal contradictions within the narrative itself, and the ways that the narrative interacts with the diverse social and political borders across which it must travel in the course of communication.

## 4.2 Story synopsis

“In our Anishinaabe prophecies this is called the time of the Seventh Fire. This is a time when our people will have two roads ahead of us - one *miikina*, or path, which is well-worn - but scorched - and another path which is green. It will be our choice upon which path to embark. That is where we are. We have seen the rise of a highly inefficient American industrial society on our lands. The largest mining companies in the world began in the heart of Anishinaabe territory- the Keewenaw Bay and the Mesabe Iron range, and then traveled the world. The society which has been created is highly extractive and highly inefficient, where today material resources and water become wasted and toxic, and we waste 60% or more of the energy between point of origin and point of consumption. This highly destructive economy has reached material limits, and is now resorting to extreme extraction. Whether the removal of 500 mountain tops in Appalachia (largely for foreign coal contracts), extreme mining proposals in the Great Lakes region, to Fracking and tar sands extraction, we are clearly on a scorched path” (Excerpt from the “About Us” page of the Honor the Earth website).

“Our manoomin came in, grew tall, and ripened throughout the season just as it has for ten thousand years...this yearly harvest is the nourishment of our people – physically and spiritually. We sang for our rice, prayed for our rice, and took to our horses for a 200-mile ride to protect our rice” (Excerpt from Honor the Earth mass e-mail, Oct. 24, 2014).

Honor the Earth was established in 1993 by a small group of friends invested in strengthening American indigenous environmental campaigns through networking and fundraising. According to the organization's own telling of its history, the founding was accomplished by Anishinaabe activist, lawyer, and political leader Winona LaDuke, as well as Amy Ray and Emily Saliers of the band "Indigo Girls." Although the organization, its goals, and its network have grown extensively, in interviews with LaDuke and others involved in Honor the Earth's conception, its beginnings were humble – focused on local environmental protection concerns in the area in and around the White Earth reservation. At the time of Honor the Earth's creation, LaDuke was already the founder and executive director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP) – an ongoing effort to reclaim and preserve Anishinaabe control over the lands and waters of the White Earth reservation. The WELRP continues to do its work, though LaDuke has shifted her focus to influencing environmental policy and practice on a broader scale through her directorship of Honor the Earth.

In the past two decades, Honor the Earth has acted as a central node creating a network of specifically indigenous as well as non-indigenous environmental organizations and campaigns, providing connections and resources, and carrying out its own particular environmental campaign efforts. Although the bulk of Honor the Earth's organizational connections are rooted in the upper-Midwest of the US, their campaigns have ranged widely, both intra- and internationally.

Honor the Earth's most recent and active campaign, appearing frequently in news media throughout Minnesota, North Dakota, and in the nearby states, is the conflict with the Enbridge Energy corporation – an infrastructural development giant specializing in the construction of oil pipelines. Since March of 2013, Enbridge has been in the process of planning and attempting to install a new pipeline, nicknamed the "Sandpiper," which would run tar-sands oil fracked from the Bakken oilfield in North Dakota through northern Minnesota, connecting with the existing Enbridge lines in the northeastern part of the state.<sup>35</sup> Among other ecologically and culturally important areas that would be crossed by the pipeline, the current plan runs the construction through a lake in the northwestern corner of the White Earth reservation which, during the late summer and early fall, is an important supplier of *manoomin* (wild rice), a staple of the local diet, a major source of local revenue, and a historically and spiritually vital element of Anishinaabe culture. In addition to the wild rice

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<sup>35</sup> The information pertaining to the Sandpiper project in this dissertation is accurate up to the Summer of 2016, though there have been further developments in the saga of Honor the Earth versus the Enbridge pipelines, including the cancelation of the Sandpiper project and the intended coupling instead of the Bakken-based line with the Dakota Access pipeline, which is being protested by Lakota groups with the additional support of Honor the Earth (Littleredfeather Kalmandson August 30, 2016; Maxwell August 24, 2016; Medina & Rafolz-Nunez September 9, 2016; Democracy Now! July 9, 2016).

harvest, this area of Minnesota is renowned for its fishing, game hunting, and seasonal tourism which brings in a large proportion of the annual revenue throughout the region (Explore Minnesota 2016). Despite Enbridge's statements to the contrary (Enbridge 2016), Honor the Earth officials have claimed that the likelihood of a spill with the type of pipeline that has been proposed is very high, and the effects of any substantial oil spill on the local ecology would be potentially disastrous (Kraker June 1 2015).

The arguments made by Enbridge representatives have included assurances that the pipelines will be as safe as they could possibly be, that these pipelines bring jobs to the local economy, and that – oil being essential to the maintenance of contemporary life – small risks and big infrastructural achievements are unavoidable and well worth it in the name of progress. This latter argument echoes sentiments that were heard and seen throughout northern Minnesota in the course of my research, mainly from local white residents who don't understand or don't support the attempt groups like Honor the Earth are making to slow progress on the Sandpiper. It also echoes a larger pattern of environmental sacrifice in which certain pieces of land or water ("national sacrifice areas" (Hooks & Smith 2004; Kuletz 1998)) are deemed dispensable in the name of necessary industrial progress. If the concept of "sacrificing" environmental health for resource capitalization is not worrisome enough, it should also be noted that too often these lands are associated with indigenous communities, treaty lands, and problems in indigenous health (Hooks & Smith 2004).

Honor the Earth's most direct method of action against the proposed pipeline is through legal intervention, although the broader work of the network is devoted to raising awareness through protest events, and stalling the progress of pipeline planning and development by setting up procedural roadblocks wherever possible. These roadblocks serve multiple purposes, including raising awareness through media coverage and preventing pipeline construction at least in the short term, but their primary function is to make the implementation of the planned pipeline route so costly, time-consuming, and logistically cumbersome that it becomes unviable. By mobilizing popular opposition to the pipelines, Honor the Earth endeavors to make it more difficult for Enbridge to get the necessary permissions from private landowners to put the pipeline through private property. By contesting Enbridge's legal motions and filings with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), they are able to drastically slow down the process of governmental approval. The organization also files motions of its own to extend or suspend deadlines, for consideration of alternative routes, and challenging the legality of Enbridge's use of land in which the Chippewa retain usufructuary rights. They are also able to use up time during PUC meetings by asking questions of the PUC and of the officials from



Enbridge, further drawing out the pipeline approval process and costing Enbridge significant amounts of time, labor-power, and capital.<sup>36</sup>

Honor the Earth stages demonstrations, speaking events, and concerts sporadically throughout the year. By far the biggest event – really a series of events, but united under a single banner – is the annual “Love Water Not Oil” tour, which has been undertaken each year since 2013. This tour, led by Winona LaDuke and involving between 30 and 50 members of the organization, travels westward along the route of the proposed Sandpiper line, beginning with a canoe voyage from Madeline Island on Lake Superior to Duluth, from which point the tour members continue west on horseback through McGregor, Aitken, Brainerd, Pine River, Hackensack, Walker, Park Rapids, the Mississippi Headwaters, Rice Lake, and finally ending the tour in Bemidji (see Fig. 7). The tour allows the organizational leaders to speak directly with communities that will be most significantly affected by the pipeline. By speaking with homeowners along the Sandpiper route and convincing them of the risks involved in the implementation of the pipeline, Honor the Earth makes the project significantly more expensive and difficult for their opponent.

The Love Water Not Oil tour also garners significant media attention – a Native former vice-presidential candidate riding a horse through towns in northern Minnesota as an act of political protest tends to be big news in the smaller communities scattered throughout the region. At each stop in the tour, LaDuke usually gives a few short interviews, there may be a speech, and in most of the main locations along the route there is some form of social event; music concerts are the most common, as each year there have been a handful of local and visiting musicians traveling with the tour. The timing of the tour, generally held in the late summer, is strategic as well, and tied to the Anishinaabe seasonal round, as it is during this time of year that the Anishinaabeg are already out gathering wild rice on the lakes throughout the north woods and both the environmental traditions and the people themselves are much more actively visible than they might otherwise be throughout the rest of the year. This visibility facilitates the connection with the continuation of environmentally sustainable Anishinaabe lifeways that Honor the Earth trades on in the course of their advocacy and protest, and, ideally, helps to cement the concept of the relationship between people and clean water in the minds of regional residents.

The concept for the tour came to LaDuke in a dream – one of two central narratives that she communicates regularly through organizational media, speeches, and interviews with news-media.

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<sup>36</sup> Information on all of these efforts is laid out in detail on the Honor the Earth website at [http://www.honorearth.org/sandpiper\\_line\\_3\\_corridor](http://www.honorearth.org/sandpiper_line_3_corridor).

Some years ago, LaDuke tells audiences, she had a dream in which she was riding her horse against the current of a river of oil. She'd ridden horses for years with Lakota friends in South Dakota, and after telling them about the dream, they helped her to interpret the dream and to determine what she should do. This kind of dream interpretation and application as a practical mode of identifying and addressing issues is an integral part of both Anishinaabe and Lakota traditions (Brown & Brightman 1998; Irwin 1996; Pomedli 2014), speaking further to the indigenous bedrock of Honor the Earth's actions and narrative, despite a growing support-base which is largely (if not mostly) non-Native. LaDuke determined that she should follow exactly as her dream directed her, by riding her horse against the current of the proposed pipeline as a means of protecting the water and land that have sustained the Anishinaabeg and without which they would not be able to carry on their indigenous lifeways. In this, her project was to be an explicitly decolonial one.

The second of the two common stories that LaDuke connects with Honor the Earth's work is, if anything, an even more explicit tie to Anishinaabe tradition. Throughout the organizational literature, interviews, speeches, and other public events, the "Seven Fires Prophecy" (see also the footnote on page 16) appears with great frequency, used as a means of explaining the paths that lie in front of humanity at this moment which LaDuke takes to be a point of no return in our exploitation of natural resources. LaDuke believes the human race to be in a time referred to in Anishinaabe tradition as the "Seventh Fire," when (according to prophecy) the "Light-Skinned Race" (Benton-Banai 2010:90) will have brought tremendous destruction to the Earth, but a new race/generation of people will be born who will have an ultimate choice to make. "This is a time when our people will have two roads ahead of us - one *miikina*, or path, which is well-worn - but scorched - and another path which is green. It will be our choice upon which path to embark" (Honor the Earth n.d.).

### **4.3 Methods**

The investigation of the Honor the Earth organization, and its narrative playing out through the popular media as well as organizational output, took a significantly different methodological approach than either of the previous two narrative cases. Although all three cases relied strongly on qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation, the primary source of data on the Honor the Earth narrative was text and video media distributed through e-mail, social media, and news media. More than any other mode of communication, these represent the means by which the overwhelming majority of Honor the Earth's constituents, detractors, and other members of the general public receive information about the organization and its protest and legal actions.

Honor the Earth keeps in consistent contact with its supporters through a thin but steady stream of e-mails and social media posts concerning upcoming events, updates on court battles, movements by the Enbridge corporation in their pursuit of putting additional pipelines through northern Minnesota, and fundraising calls (usually coinciding either with organizational events or significant days on the Anishinaabe calendar). On social media, posts include these subjects, as well as references to indigenous environmental issues happening nationally and internationally, and links to Youtube videos and other multimedia from indigenous organizations. Since October of 2014, I have been collecting and taking notes on these messages to the organizational base.

A wide variety of news media outlets report with varying degrees of regularity on Honor the Earth, noting in particular their lawsuits against the Enbridge, the “Love Water Not Oil” tours the organization took annually to reinvigorate their base and promote their fight against the encroachment of the pipelines, and the practically minute-by-minute accounts of Winona LaDuke’s movements and statements. Samples of these media stories were collected by searching archives of media outlets throughout northern Minnesota (as well as the Twin Cities, where Honor the Earth occasionally appeared for protest actions), focusing on the terms “Honor the Earth,” “Enbridge,” “Sandpiper Pipeline,” “Winona LaDuke,” and “Frank Bibeau.”<sup>37</sup> Articles, television news segments, and featured stories from print, television, and online media were collected from the beginning of the organization in 1993 to the present.

Besides the data from media sources, interviews were also conducted with organizational leadership, including Winona LaDuke, Frank Bibeau, and Michael Dahl, as well as a number of participants at Honor the Earth events, contributors to the organization’s campaigns, members of the public throughout the region of research. In many cases, during interviews with participants on either of the two other narrative cases, the participants were also asked about their knowledge of Honor the Earth and their campaign against the Sandpiper Pipeline. Opportunities for interviews with people outside the organizational leadership were taken on a mostly *ad hoc* basis, although certain members of the community were contacted specifically for their knowledge of and participation in local environmental politics.

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<sup>37</sup> Frank Bibeau has been the primary attorney for Honor the Earth since the organization’s beginnings, and second to Winona LaDuke, represents the public face of the organization in the pipeline fight, often appearing in interviews and other media stories about the organization. He is also the founder and director of the 1855 Treaty Authority, an Anishinaabe activist organization from central Minnesota fighting for the treaty rights negotiated between the US federal government and the Pillager and Lake Winnibigoshish bands of Minnesota Chippewa, it is also affiliated with, but distinct from, Honor the Earth itself.

I also participated in two organizational events, conducting participant observation and discussing with other participants their experiences with Honor the Earth, the means by which they heard about the event and those by which they'd received information about the organization and its goals, and their impressions of Honor the Earth's indigenous roots and their cross-cultural outreach. The first event was a fundraising dinner and auction held at the First Unitarian Church in Minneapolis, and the second was the Duluth leg of the 2015 annual "Love Water Not Oil" tour, during which members of the organization stopped at a local art gallery owned by supporters, and later in the evening at a downtown bar where musicians and poets affiliated with the organization performed for a crowd of tour-participants and other local supporters.

#### **4.4 Findings**

##### **a. Modes of Communication**

There are five main ways that Honor the Earth engages with the public, each of which involves variations in audience and rhetoric, although the core message remains the same: the pipelines projects proposed by Enbridge Energy have a high probability of catastrophic failure, the waterways of northern Minnesota will be irrevocably damaged, and the very survival of the Anishinaabeg depends on preventing this kind of catastrophe. The five means of contact that I'll be addressing in this section are public demonstrations, fundraising events, public town-hall meetings, organizational media, and news media. The Honor the Earth narrative is also shared occasionally in casual conversation, but the analysis of the narrative in this study focuses specifically on its institutionalized distribution.

##### ***i. Public demonstrations***

"We're here because we've been playing by the rules in this pipeline process for three years and it's not working," said Honor the Earth organizer Thane Maxwell. "The regulatory process of the state is profoundly dysfunctional. Enbridge's own process is disrespectful and aggressive, dishonest and in violation of their own policy on consultation and relationships with native people."

"So this action was our way of going to their space, to their office and saying what you're doing is not OK," Maxwell told the media before he and three others were arraigned on trespassing charges at the St. Louis County Courthouse.

"They do not want to have a conversation. They do not want to engage with us. They want to make a profit," said one of the demonstrators who had visited Enbridge" (Excerpt from article by Michael McIntee for *The Uptake*, Dec. 12, 2015)

Honor the Earth's public demonstrations and awareness-events are diverse, ranging from political protests complete with chants and placards, to performance events featuring musicians and

poets that are allies of the organization, to the annual horseback and canoe protest event, the Love Water Not Oil tour. These events are generally organized by core group members and attended by local supporters. Based on observations, videos, and photographs of these events it appears that a high proportion of the attendees tend to be Native, although there are non-Native supporters who show up frequently as well, including two or three non-Native members of Honor the Earth's organizational core.

The purpose of these events depends somewhat on the location and structure of the gathering, but they serve primarily to raise public awareness of the proposed pipeline projects and to instill in the public a sense of the risk involved in what Enbridge is endeavoring to accomplish. The act of public protest is designed to attract attention and to demonstrate that the public is facing a problem that is outside the norm by engaging in public behaviors which are themselves outside the norm. If the battles over the pipelines, land devastation, and resource exploitation took place exclusively in the relatively hidden environment of the courtroom, Enbridge would have a considerable advantage. Their level of financial means and professional and political support is far beyond what Honor the Earth and its allies would be able to meaningfully contest, despite the aggressive style of Honor the Earth's lead attorney, Frank Bibeau, who has been described to me by others as both "brilliant" and "bombastic" – a description borne out by my own interactions with Bibeau. The public demonstrations provide Honor the Earth with considerable leverage by exposing the details of the pipeline projects, and their likely consequences, by means to which Enbridge is structurally unsuited to respond: the grassroots organization can speak informally, directly, and even disruptively to the public; Enbridge, by and large, cannot.

The specific modes of communication employed at public demonstrations tend to involve some combination of short speeches by attendees and others by the Honor the Earth core group, call-and-response chanting, sign-waving, and direct conversations with people passing by as well as with the media. Throughout these demonstrations, the dysfunctional and unfair nature of the state regulatory process is impressed on the audience, with Honor the Earth members recounting their years of attempting to keep the pipelines at bay through lawsuits, proposed legislation, and direct mediation with Enbridge, and the extent of failure that these processes have shown, using this as the rationale for their more protest-oriented methodology of confrontation.

Despite the arguments against the ineffective regulatory process, the rhetoric at the public protests is largely procedural. The legal violations of the Enbridge projects as well as the legal rights of the Anishinaabeg and other landowners throughout northern Minnesota are featured heavily in the

speeches made at demonstrations and rallies, although the content of the speech varies widely depending on the identity of the speaker. For instance, Michael Dahl, a founding member and long-time spiritual leader of Honor the Earth, often traveled with the organization on tours and to public demonstrations, where he spoke principally on the responsibility of the Anishinaabeg to act as protectors of the land, the water, and the *manoomin* upon which they have depended for centuries. “If the rice dies, we will die,” Dahl says during a speech at a meeting with Enbridge officials at the Fond du Lac reservation in the summer of 2015. In contrast to the cultural and spiritual components of the broader Honor the Earth narrative espoused by many of the Anishinaabe speakers, the non-Native speakers at these events are often more focused on the issues of property rights for landowners, or on a kind of “one people” humanistic environmentalism which says that protection of the land and water is the responsibility of all people. Occasionally, a kind of “nativist” rhetoric slips into these addresses by non-Native people, in which the generations of their own ancestors who have lived on settled lands are invoked as a means to justify this kind of postcolonial settler-and-indigenous co-responsibility, which, although contrary to the decolonial sentiments of some among the organizational core, is complementary enough with the specific pragmatic goals of Honor the Earth that it meshes effectively with the rest of the anti-pipeline messages.

The public demonstrations, for the most part, do not employ a coherent single story with a concrete beginning, middle, and end, but rather use a variety of experiences and opinions, and the passion of attendees to build and maintain the energy that is necessary for these events to be successful. The most fragmented communicative instances are those at public rally events, and are necessarily shaped by the particular attendees. They are also, therefore, dependent heavily on the location in which a given rally takes place; for instance, protests at rural sites along the route of the proposed Sandpiper line tend to incline a good deal more emphasis on Anishinaabe cultural, historical, and political issues, given that a greater proportion of the attendees are Anishinaabeg practicing at least partially traditional lifeways; by contrast, rallies in urban centers, including those taking place at the state capitol building or Enbridge offices, generally involve a greater emphasis on the legal and procedural issues that are more broadly applicable to both Native and non-Native attendees (although the Anishinaabe roots of the organization and its particular struggles continue to hold a defining and central position in these rallies as well). The sharing of individual stories and voices also has a populist appeal, framing the struggle in terms of “regular people” fighting against the oppressive power of Big Oil, rather than a battle between two discrete organizational bodies (Honor the Earth and Enbridge).

This framing is further supported by the signage included in such events, which highlights the legal and environmental issues at hand rather than promoting the Honor the Earth organization itself.

To a great extent, the annual Love Water Not Oil tour is a very different event (or series of events) from the rest of the public demonstrations organized by Honor the Earth. The tour, which generally takes approximately two weeks, includes a variety of rallies, media events, celebrations, and performances. The purpose of the tour is very much in line with the other kinds of public demonstrations, namely, to raise awareness of the dangers of the pipeline projects, to garner support and funds along the route of the proposed pipeline corridor, and to enact a highly visible promotion of Honor the Earth itself, including the Anishinaabe cultural foundation upon which the organization is based. Unlike many of the other public demonstrations, this tour often relies on longer speeches from organizational leaders, including Winona LaDuke, allowing for a more complex and nuanced account of Honor the Earth's self-presentation and a more coherent narrative of the battle they are waging for the health and soul of *Anishinaabe Akiing*. The audiences at the various stops along the way vary according to the local population, but according to both LaDuke and Bibeau, the message the organization puts out stays fairly consistent regardless of audience. That said, there do appear to be some variations in the extent to which Anishinaabe cultural and spiritual identity in particular are employed – a subject of significant relevance to the current study, as these presentations are, in large part, the components of the Honor the Earth narrative that hold the greatest influence in shaping public perceptions of Anishinaabe cultural and political identity.

The tour is replete with symbols, practices, and performances of Anishinaabe identity, including but not limited to collecting and parching *manoomin*, greetings and prayers in Anishinaabemowin at speaking events, traditional drum and song performances by Anishinaabe musicians, the use of horses and canoes for transportation along the route of the pipeline, and speeches that directly address issues of invasion, colonization, settlement, land dispossession, treaty rights, and threats to indigenous lifeways. As the cultural and spiritual icon of the organization, LaDuke's presence in particular ensures that the body of narratives surrounding the tour remains focused primarily on the Anishinaabe roots of Honor the Earth, although this is not to say that the procedural and political aspects of the organization's endeavors are lost – rather, they are framed primarily as culturally and spiritually-inspired actions.

In her engagements with the public, LaDuke artfully and, to all appearances, effortlessly walks a delicate line between representing Honor the Earth as a specifically Anishinaabe organization on the one hand, and (as much of the organizational literature says) an “indigenous-led” organization

addressing a fundamentally *human* social problem. During protest events that take place along the Love Water Not Oil tour, LaDuke shares her dream of riding her horse against the current of the oil frequently as a way of explaining, in brief, the rationale for the protest in terms of both its method and its purpose. The second of the two central narratives defining the basis for Honor the Earth's actions along the tour, the Seventh Fire Prophecy, is more unusual on the tour, and is primarily employed at large-scale events when LaDuke is speaking to a broader audience, usually comprised at least in part of non-Native audience members who are less familiar with the Anishinaabe spiritual history. LaDuke employs the dream-interpretation methodology that is firmly grounded in Anishinaabe traditions in order to explain the particular protest method used during the tour, and in certain venues, draws on the Anishinaabe prophetic tradition, but her storytelling implies to the audience that the narratives are shared as a means of communicating LaDuke's own personal connection to the challenges at hand, rather than an attempt to subvert alternative spiritual or cultural traditions. She also frequently preempts accusations of Honor the Earth being a luddite organization by telling audiences that she drives a car, uses electricity, and enjoys the modern creature-comforts just the same as anyone else, but that she believes that humanity has reached a point at which we must begin seriously pursuing sustainable lifestyles, and interacting in respectful ways with the rest of the natural environment upon which we depend.

*ii. Public town-hall meetings*

“Enbridge representative: We're very willing and happy to answer those questions, specific questions you have about process, about deactivation, about all of that, but we're [indistinct] looking at nine, twelve months right now through through this process, we'd be happy to continue a discussion as we go along.

Winona LaDuke: Would you answer those questions on camera, in an interview we can share with our community?

ER: How about we answer that at the evidentiary hearing, where they're being transcribed, and can be available to the public, as well as the public meetings that we'll have out here, and those will also be transcribed.

WL: Okay, I'll [indistinct] that the hearing needs to go on, because there are people here who need to testify, but in the evidentiary hearing, we were not allowed to call witnesses or re-call witnesses. Each of you testified and then someone else answered their questions, you compartmentalized your answers so that we could not get the answers. That does not work! We actually want the full answers so we can disclose them to our communities!”

(Excerpt of dialog at Public Utilities Commission meeting, Aug. 18, 2015)



Town-hall meetings are an oft-frequented type of event for Honor the Earth, although they rarely arrange these meetings themselves. Over the course of the most recent couple of years, the most common meetings of this type have been those organized by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the state office handling regulation of the pipeline planning and implementation process and one of the primary arbiters in the dispute between Enbridge and Honor the Earth (as well as other tribal and municipal organizations opposed to the pipeline projects). These meetings are frequently attended by both Winona LaDuke and Frank Bibeau, as well as other members of the Honor the Earth organizational core, members of the community, and representatives from Enbridge. During these hearings, interested parties are invited to make statements before the PUC and the attendees concerning their position on the procedural issue at hand. Honor the Earth tends to stand out in these contexts, as they are the party least likely to follow the strict parameters of what a given meeting is designed to accomplish, instead using each meeting as a platform from which to address the public and demand answers of the Enbridge officials on questions of environmental, economic, and social risk. In order to implement a new pipeline corridor across northern Minnesota, Enbridge would need to obtain permission and cooperation from landowners along the entire route. Many of these landowners have attended the public hearings on the matter in an effort to find out the details of the project, and by appealing directly to these people (in this setting as well as through the Love Water Not Oil tour), Honor the Earth is able to create significant logistical problems for the energy company.

The formal nature of the public hearings, based in the logic and practices of state bureaucracy, would make for a particularly striking setting in which to assert indigenous cultural and spiritual identity, but for the most part, Honor the Earth's involvement in these meetings conforms to more common bureaucratic methods of participation and critique. There is an extent to which this kind of bureaucratic conformity enables a greater accomplishment of the organization's pragmatic goals; by using communicative styles that are legible to the state and corporate representatives as well as non-Native audience members, Winona LaDuke and other Honor the Earth speakers ensure that their opposition to the Enbridge pipeline plans are clear, specific, and understood by everyone in the room, which would not necessarily be the case were they to employ, for instance, prayers in Anishinaabemowin, discussion of dreams and spiritual history, blessings with sage or tobacco, and so on. This kind of pragmatic adaptation to colonial bureaucratic systems echoes the same practices of self-governance practiced by Reservation Business Committees and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe

Council, and comes with the same slew of practical benefits at the cost of sacrificing the more explicitly decolonial language of indigenous traditions (see page 244).

When Anishinaabe culture in particular does factor into the discussions in these contexts, it is invariably about the practical dependence that the Anishinaabeg have on the water and plant life of the region, and how those means of survival could be lost in the event of a large-scale oil spill. For the Anishinaabeg, subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering are inextricably tied to cultural traditions, familial relationships, and the historical politics of land cession under 19<sup>th</sup> century treaties, but this component of the debate over the proposed pipelines is better suited to the discourse in PUC and other town-hall meetings, where clear arguments can be lobbied about the present-day necessity of wild rice and fishing for the economy in the north woods, about issues of poverty throughout the region, and about the dispossession faced by Native and non-Native populations alike in order for the pipeline corridor to be installed. In short, keeping the discussion grounded in the legal, economic, and environmental troubles of the present further facilitates the translatability of Anishinaabe concerns into northern Minnesota concerns, avoiding the potential for alienation of the non-Native constituency and the de-legitimization by state and corporate officials that could come with a more aggressively decolonial indigenous mode of engagement.

For the most part, Honor the Earth's environmentalist message has been distinctly separate from the world of tribal, national, or state politics except insofar as these polities determine the regulatory process and structures by which Honor the Earth is able to make its legal and political challenge to Enbridge on the pipeline projects. At times, the organization has worked with tribal bodies, including the White Earth and Mille Lacs bands, both of whom have independently and collectively with Honor the Earth spoken out against the Sandpiper line and derided Enbridge as well as the state and federal government for their insufficient efforts to consult directly with tribal bodies. Notably, however, Honor the Earth has also found itself in conflict with these same tribal polities as well, of course, as various municipalities, the state of Minnesota and the federal government. Although they interact regularly with political bodies, Honor the Earth has remained a fairly explicitly apolitical organization, at least as far as its own self-presentation to the public has been concerned. However, it is in the town-hall meetings that the language of nationhood and Ojibwe political identity is most explicitly employed.

### *iii. Fundraising events*

“Dinner of the Maple Sugar Moon:

## Two Indigenous Feasts Celebrating the Maple Season of Native MN

On March 8 in Fargo, ND, and again on March 20 in Minneapolis, Honor the Earth teamed up with Sean Sherman of The Sioux Chef to host fundraising dinners in celebration of the arrival of Native Minnesota's maple sugar season. Sean is a food revolutionary – he works only with foods indigenous to the region and prepares them in pre-colonial recipes using traditional techniques. He is bringing back the old ways. Both dinners were beautiful evenings of art, music, amazing food, and solidarity in our work to protect Mother Earth and our indigenous ways of living” (Excerpt from Honor the Earth mass e-mail, April 3, 2015).

The fundraisers that Honor the Earth holds include silent auctions featuring food and crafts provided by supporters of the organization, concerts by various Native and non-Native musical groups including traditional Anishinaabe drum-groups from Minnesota and Wisconsin, and cost-per-plate dinners, most of which are catered the by Sean Sherman, also known as the “Sioux Chef,” a Minneapolis-based specialist in pre-colonial indigenous cuisine from the area of the upper plains and forest which today encompasses the Dakotas and Minnesota. Generally speaking, these events tend to take place in urban locales, most commonly the Twin Cities or Duluth, and are often conducted in tandem with other allied organizations including Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, and Friends of the Mississippi Headwaters. These organizational ties are often crucial for providing not only a more substantial attendance at the fundraisers, but also the physical space in which to hold the events, and other logistical resources that an organization like Honor the Earth, which is both relatively small in terms of staff and internal resources and headquartered out of a fairly remote town on the southwest corner of the White Earth Reservation, may lack.

During these events, there are often poets, musicians, or other performers, but the featured speaker is almost invariably Winona LaDuke herself. I was in attendance at one such fundraiser – a \$60-per-plate dinner and auction co-hosted by Honor the Earth and Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light at the First Unitarian Church in Minneapolis in the summer of 2015. The event began with an extended lecture from LaDuke and others on the details of the pipeline projects, focused particularly on the Sandpiper line, after which the dinner and auction began. Shortly after the appetizer, a mashed whitefish cake with an amaranth cracker, had been served, LaDuke took the stage. She introduced herself and delivered a blessing over the food in Anishinaabemowin, and spoke briefly about Honor the Earth's mission and why it was so important for everyone to work together in the struggle against the destruction of the environment. As she often does at these kinds of events, LaDuke delivered the shortened, sound-byte version of the Seventh Fire Prophecy, impressing upon the crowd the urgency of the situation in which we found ourselves, and providing encouragement through the reiteration of

our capacity to do something about it – to make the right choice by pursuing the green path rather than the blackened and scorched one leading to irrevocable destruction. There were very few explicit mentions of the monetary support for which the event had been organized, but the implication was relatively clear that supporting Honor the Earth's efforts, either financially or by other means, would constitute an appropriate step toward the Green Path. Given that the 2015 Love Water Not Oil tour had just been completed, LaDuke also spoke briefly about her dream of riding horses against the current of the oil.

Fundraising events often overlap with public demonstrations, but have a generally different audience and rhetorical style, including, as with the dinner event described above, a stronger emphasis on the dream and prophecy narratives, and other performative aspects of Anishinaabe cultural tradition. There is also a significant amount of legal, ecological, and economic information provided at some of these events (also as demonstrated above), but by comparison to both the town-hall meetings and the various public demonstrations (not including the annual tour), the fundraising events employ much more explicitly the Anishinaabe cultural identity at the heart of Honor the Earth. The demographic makeup of the audience differs between locations, but it is often predominately comprised of non-Native Honor the Earth supporters or members of affiliated organizations. Conducted in front of an Anishinaabe audience, the prayers, songs, and traditionally-derived narrative content would have a much different effect given the familiarity that many Anishinaabeg have with these aspects of the culture, so we must consider what the intent and effect are of these cultural displays are when conducted before a predominately non-Native (usually white) audience.

At organizational fundraisers, few if any of the attendees need to be convinced of the legitimacy of Honor the Earth's campaign against the Enbridge corporation. LaDuke and the other speakers are, in a sense, preaching to the choir – a particularly apt metaphor during events taking place in churches where speeches are often made from the dais at the head of the chapel. Thus, there is no need for aggressive placards, call-and-response chanting, or the kind of polemic justifications that appear at PUC hearings or public demonstrations. That being said, the function of the fundraiser does necessitate persuasive communication, as the organization is attempting to garner more active support from a group of people who, while supportive in principle, are not necessarily contributing materially to Honor the Earth's goals. In order to accomplish this galvanizing effort, Honor the Earth places Anishinaabe traditions in a central position, providing extensive rhetorical *logos* in the form of detailed information about the pipelines and their potential consequences, but framing the entire event in terms of an indigenous *ethos*. This framing accomplishes a number of specific aims that help to

further the broader goal of bolstering Honor the Earth's campaigns through enhanced social and financial support.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the use of intensive cultural performance provides Honor the Earth with a strong and distinct organizational identity. This identity is one which is culturally indigenous, environmentally focused, apolitical, and economically decolonial (though not necessarily politically so – a point I will revisit below). The establishment of a relatively simple, coherent, and inclusive identity makes the organization recognizable across different geographic and social spaces; it facilitates a sense of community and belonging for members; in its self-presentations and appearances in the media, a pervasive and succinct identity allows the name of the organization, its leaders, and its frequently used slogans to function as narrative fragments, mnemonic devices that refer the audience back to the core identity of the organization and the various social, cultural, and political meanings attached to that identity. Lastly, it provides a constant touchstone for members which is always present and able to remind them of (a) the main goals of the organization, (b) the purpose for their struggles, (c) the consequences of failure, and (d) the benefits of success.

Feminist postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak is often credited with coining the phrase “strategic essentialism” (Lee 2011), referring to the practice of reducing an identity or a position to a relatively simple set of characteristics in order to better accomplish a particular political, social, or cultural purpose. The term has been used more frequently in reference to feminist essentialism (Fuss 2013; Phillips 2010) or feminist political issues more broadly (Battersby 2016; Sturgeon 2016), but it is also clearly applicable in other settings, including indigenous political movements like Honor the Earth, which employs a kind of performance of indigeneity and ethnicity in order to maintain relationships within the Anishinaabe community as well as appealing to non-Native constituents who are allies in the fight for environmental protection. A study conducted in Norway with ethnic minority men and women found that these individuals often employed “strategic essentialism” as a means of garnering greater media attention and recognition for their political and social movements (Eide 2010). Informants would, when encountering discrimination based on their ethnic identity, identify themselves outwardly as members of a subset within the ethnicity that contradicts the prejudice with which they were faced, and in this way would use essentialism to fight essentialism. Honor the Earth is not fighting essentialism per se (although the kinds of capitalist dispossession practiced by energy corporations throughout the world depends largely on the relegation of all indigenous people to one large and generally ignorable category), but they are employing strategic essentialism as a means of garnering greater attention and support within the social systems of the dominant (settler) society.

In front of a predominately non-Native audience, it is critical for Honor the Earth to represent the organizational identity in a way that allows for non-Native inclusion, a task plagued by cognitive dissonance when the identity itself is explicitly Anishinaabe. Despite the seeming contradiction of telling a particular audience that an organization with an apparently antithetical identity to their own individual identities represents their interests, ironically, a colonial state is perhaps the most effective location for making this kind of argument. Fascination with indigenous identity, particularly symbols of culture and spirituality, have characterized American colonial culture for as long as there has been contact between settlers and indigenous people in North America (Deloria 1998; Huhndorf 2001; King 2012). Appropriation of indigenous identities has been rampant and ongoing, though in recent years, indigenous critiques of cultural appropriation have been gaining some traction through alliance with anti-appropriation struggles of other minority communities (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill 2013; Atshan & Moore 2014; Sandhu 2016), large-scale mobilization of indigenous rights actions (Churchill 2002; Cornthassel 2012; Coulthard 2014), and increasing recognition from settler states of indigenous identities as well as the atrocities committed in the pursuit of colonial expansion (Barker 2011; Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2011). Much of this resurgence of anti-colonial movement (at least in the United States) stemmed from the “Red Power” movement of the 1960s and 70s, though the concurrent hippie and new age movements saw simultaneously appropriations of indigenous spirituality by the white political left (Goldberg 2013; Smith 2012).

Although cultural appropriation itself is highly problematic and can be damaging to indigenous communities (Coombe 1993; George 2010; Moore 2003; Ziff & Rao 1997), Honor the Earth as an indigenous organization is able to exploit to some degree the continued settler fixation with Native culture and spirituality, allowing non-Native supporters to feel as if they are part of a multicultural indigenous community, while avoiding the feeling that they are appropriating Anishinaabe culture or trespassing in social and cultural spaces where they don't belong. By using indigenous leadership to discuss the heritage of the organization and its relationship to Anishinaabe concerns, the structure of the relationship between the organization and non-Native supporters is one of open invitation and humanistic coexistence. This also may provide an avenue for white supporters to absolve themselves of any “settler guilt” that they might feel by virtue of their colonial and racial association with large-scale exploitive institutions like Enbridge Energy. The presentation of Anishinaabe indigenous identity, and of this identity as the ethical and methodological foundation of the Honor the Earth organization, skirts broad indictments of colonialism in general in favor of focusing on environmental, anti-capitalist rhetoric that won't alienate non-Native allies.

The two central narratives of the Seventh Fire Prophecy and Winona LaDuke's dream-inspiration for the horseback protests are emblematic of this approach. Although the prophecy comes from Anishinaabe spiritual tradition, its orientation toward the future (rather than descriptions or interpretations of the past) enable it to function as an effective metaphor for the environmental tipping-point already entrenched in the consciousness of non-Native audience members, offering a compelling and simplified narrative that communicates the urgency of the situation without contradicting the complexities of environmental science or the Christian faith of many of these supporters. Likewise, the dream that LaDuke describes throughout various media and events surrounding the Love Water Not Oil tour draws on traditional Anishinaabe dream-interpretation as an essential epistemological practice, but one which in no way conflicts with Christian or secular belief systems. In short, LaDuke presents neither herself nor the organization as an evangelist or culturally and religiously critical agent, but rather as environmental agents viewing the contemporary circumstances through a particular cultural lens, and inviting non-Native allies and members to take a look for themselves.

*iv. Organizational media*

“Enbridge wants to build a new pipeline corridor through the heart of Minnesota's lake country and some of the largest wild rice beds in the world. The proposed Sandpiper pipeline would carry fracked oil from the Bakken formation of North Dakota, across the White Earth reservation and the headwaters of the Mississippi River, and through the 1855 Treaty Area, to their terminal in Superior, WI. This highly volatile substance has “incinerated” a town in Canada, and its extraction in ND threatens the lifeways and wellbeing of our relatives of the Three Affiliated Tribes. The proposed Line 3 Replacement pipeline would carry tar sands, the dirtiest fuel on the planet, from the Athabasca River Basin in Alberta. Enbridge wants to simply abandon its existing Line 3 pipeline and walk away from it, because it has over 900 “structural anomalies”, and build a brand new line in this new corridor. If this new corridor is established, we expect Enbridge to propose building even more pipelines in it. We cannot allow that” (Excerpt from the “Pipelines” page of the Honor the Earth website).

Honor the Earth distributes frequent, though sporadic, organizational media through a variety of outlets; this mode of communication is the most regular and most widely distributed means by which the organization stays in contact with supporters. The specific content of this organizational media is diverse, including social media posts about upcoming events, e-mail announcements concerning relevant news on the progress of Honor the Earth's various campaigns, videos from protest events held by allied organizations, links to articles directly or indirectly related to the Enbridge pipeline projects, and other sundry information about Honor the Earth and its allies' movements.

There is also a great deal of “static media,” so called not because it does not change over time but rather because it is not actively distributed by the organization and instead has to be sought out. These media include the Honor the Earth website and their Facebook page, each of which contains general information about the history of the organization, their campaigns, and their activist network, as well as means for the public to get in touch with organizational staff. The distributed media includes e-mails to a large listserv of supporters, videos posted to the organization’s Youtube channel, and regular social media posts through Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter. As far as I am aware, Honor the Earth does not distribute paper mail or other physical media, with the exception of fliers, leaflets, and information sheets that are handed out or posted at particular events (i.e., fundraisers, public meetings).

The function of the organizational media is somewhat different from the various forms of in-person engagement with the public that Honor the Earth organizes, including their public demonstrations, meetings, and fundraising events. The organizational media is, by and large, poorly suited to the tasks of either directly confronting their opponents in the Enbridge corporation or the state, and is also an inefficient venue for galvanizing action from the more active supporters (although social media does often provide a venue for requesting immediate donations at moments when they are most needed). Above all else, the organizational media serves to maintain a consistent presence in the public eye, and to keep supporters apprised with up-to-date news on Honor the Earth’s efforts. For an organization of this type to maintain momentum, they must ensure that the support they receive (both active and passive) is sustained rather than momentary; that, to the extent possible, supporters continue to remember and engage with Honor the Earth, and do not see their own support (or the struggles that the organization is facing) as a one-time event, but rather as an ongoing commitment to a long-term battle against a pervasive and persistent foe: capitalist environmental exploitation and degradation. This is principally accomplished through (a) the regularity and variety of media distribution, and (b) the simplification of each individual message.

The specific content of the organizational media ranges in terms of its level of narrative flow, from the relatively disjointed social media posts to the narrative prose of the specific sections of the Honor the Earth website. The length and type of content tends to vary by the particular means of distribution. The static media contains the bulk of the longer narratives, while the distributed media tend to contain shorter messages or links to news media or other sites where additional information can be found. Twitter serves primarily as a means for posting links to related articles and information about Honor the Earth or allied campaigns. Facebook functions similarly, receiving a large proportion



of Honor the Earth's online audience, while also providing a gallery in which to post photos from organizational events. The Tumblr page, the newest of Honor the Earth's social media outlets, was created specifically in preparation for the fourth annual Love Water Not Oil tour in the summer of 2016, and has operated as a distributor primarily for uploading photos, video clips, and status updates as the 38 riders participating in the tour made their way west across northern Minnesota. The Youtube channel offers, as one might expect, videos from various Honor the Earth events including speaking engagements, public town-hall meetings, protests and rallies, fundraisers, and celebrations, as well as edited promotional and informational videos invariably including voice-over oratory from Winona LaDuke, and usually addressing the basic facts of the campaigns against the pipelines and emphasizing the danger that oil spills would pose to the northern Minnesota ecology, particularly the Anishinaabe *manoomin* beds.

Particularly in the distributed media, Honor the Earth also takes the opportunity to demonstrate the human face of the organization that is so distinct from the seemingly cold, capitalistic inhumanity of the Enbridge corporation by making frequent use of dry, tongue-in-cheek humor. The use of humor as a tool of anti-colonial resistance and assertion of cultural survivance has been an active part of Anishinaabe discourse, appearing in places like Anishinaabe writer Jim Northrup's works (1995; 1997; 2011; 2012; 2013), and has not gone unnoticed by scholars working with Anishinaabe communities (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark; Gross 2007; 2009; Spielmann 1998; Treuer 2008). Often, this humor involves poking fun at Enbridge for their bungling efforts to ingratiate themselves to the Minnesota Native communities, as demonstrated in the following excerpt from an Honor the Earth mass e-mailing:

The North Country can be cold and a little lonely during the winter. As the Indigenous people of this region we have special knowledge of this, and have usually prepared for the weather by snagging a partner to keep the other side of the bed warm. Well, it turns out that for all their money and status The Enbridge Oil Company's [personal ad](#) for its own Indian Whisperer isn't getting many responses – and they're looking at a loooong winter ahead. Now, we know they weren't so popular after proposing to put the Sandpiper Pipeline through the best wild rice lakes in Ojibwe territory...and that whole bringing a million barrels of oil per day through our reservations on Line 9 "Switcheroo" without consulting with tribal governments wasn't such a sweet move, but, ya know, you gotta feel a little bad for them.

They're getting desperate to find that special Indian to whisper sweet nothings to our community about the benefits of oil, and have extended their job application deadline (twice now). So, because we are welcoming people, we decided to help them out by prospecting for them.

You can view the video [HERE](#). Happy Thanksgiving :-)

(Winona LaDuke November 25, 2014)

All of these media outlets are also used to promote allied protest efforts – for instance, during late July and August of 2016, Honor the Earth distributive media was devoted almost entirely to regular status updates, photos, videos, and links pertaining to the Standing Rock Sioux’s “Sacred Stone Camp” protest of the Dakota Access line (e.g., Littleredfeather Kalmandson August 30, 2016; Maxwell August 24 2016). Of the various means of interacting with the public through organizational media, the e-mails and static media are those that contain the greatest level of focus specifically on Honor the Earth itself, though even in these media there are frequent mentions of allied projects. E-mails from Honor the Earth are less frequent than other distributive media, tending to appear with periodic updates, invitations to particular events (generally in the Twin Cities and Duluth), or coinciding with important dates in the Anishinaabe seasonal round.

Mentions of the dream and prophecy narratives are scattered throughout these missives, though they are not always marked as such. For instance, the phrase “riding against the current of the oil” is ubiquitous throughout mentions of the horseback protests. The audiences being reached here are mainly people who are already supporters of the organization, though unlike the audiences at the fundraising events, their level of engagement is on average relatively low – for many people, direct support of Honor the Earth may be limited to “likes” in response to Facebook posts, or simply following the posts in the first place. The audience is a mixture of Native and non-Native people, many of whom will already be familiar with the recurring narratives underlying Honor the Earth’s self-presentation. Hence, the continued mention of the dream and prophecy narratives throughout the organizational media suggests that these narratives are designed not only to provide a particular set of informational data to the audience, but to create a sustained narrative identity for the organization that can be reinvoked again and again as needed.

**v. *News media***

“[Frank] Bibeau: Prove to me you need the pipeline first, and then we can talk about the route.’ Images of lakes, water running over rocks, administrative buildings in the background of text overlays, a van with ‘Support our 1855 treaty rights’ written in the dust on the back windows, protests, traditional drumming and singing by people in traditional regalia and modern clothes, map of the wild rice lakes, people getting ready to rice (including packing and blessing the canoes); Behind the Enbridge guy talking are images of white people in hard hats and safety vests, standing near construction sites, building the pipelines, and a sign with their ‘commitment to safety,’ maps of the proposed routes.

Curwin [Enbridge representative] says that the wild rice is, for Enbridge, the same as any other environmental resource, and they are ‘just as concerned as anybody else about minimizing environmental impact’” (Fieldnote excerpt pertaining to Lakeland Public Access Television report)

The last of the five modes of public engagement that Honor the Earth uses is the news media, giving frequent interviews to newspapers and TV and radio programs, with Honor the Earth protests appearing frequently in smaller media outlets and occasionally in larger regional or statewide outlets. The media accounts generally appear in response to public demonstrations or town-hall meetings, which, as noted above, is one of the main reasons for organizing such events. The publicity that Honor the Earth receives through the news media lends the organization a measure of mainstream credibility that indigenous rights movements like this one might otherwise lack due to their small staff, the rural location of the organizational headquarters, and the extent to which indigenous politics has been systematically delegitimized in the colonial imagination (Alfred 1995; Borrows 2002; Lyons 2010; Postero 2005; Simpson 2014). Throughout the local media outlets in northern Minnesota, when there is a story about the Enbridge pipelines, it is frequently accompanied by discussion of Honor the Earth and/or other grassroots and tribal organizations that opposed the projects, placing these organizations rhetorically on the same level with the much more financially (and perhaps politically) powerful Enbridge corporation. In the broad media narrative telling the story of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge, the environmentalists are positioned as plausible (if small and scrappy) opponents against the power of Big Oil – a depiction which trades in some significant and useful ways in the American passion for “underdog” victories (Trautman 2010).

Of the various means of engaging with the public, the news media is the most reductive. The specific content of the Honor the Earth stories in the news media is remarkably simplified given the technical, legal, political, cultural, and ecological complexities of the issues at hand. The length of the stories varies depending on the size of the news outlet and the subject or specific event to which a given story is responding, but the topics broadly fall into two main categories: legal/procedural stories, and event coverage. The former category primarily consist of stories written in response to judicial or regulatory decisions concerning the pipeline projects, legal actions taken by Honor the Earth and allied organizations, and notifications of upcoming public meetings or opportunities for the public to take action or learn more about the pipeline projects. The latter, which are somewhat more common, have to do mainly with coverage of Honor the Earth protests (especially horseback and canoe protests during the Love Water Not Oil tour) and town-hall meetings (especially PUC meetings) where Honor

the Earth and/or Enbridge were present. The relatively limited range of topics can be explained in part by the story format that the news media outlets employ in reporting on the organization. Based on interviews with reporters, editors, publishers, and other news staff, news stories in all mediums are divided fairly neatly into “straight news,” “opinions,” and “features,” and from a comprehensive survey of the news coverage of Honor the Earth, I am able to say with some certainty that not a single “feature” story has been produced on the organization’s fight against the pipelines.

“Opinion” pieces are easy to distinguish by the perhaps self-explanatory lack of attempted objectivity. These stories are generally marked as “opinion” pieces, thereby communicating to the reading or viewing audience that the contents represent only one perspective and are not necessarily generalizable to either the news outlet or the general public. Many news workers had considerably more difficulty defining the line between “straight news” and “features,” but certain characteristics make these types of stories relatively easy to distinguish from one another. First and foremost, “straight news” aims primarily at reporting events in a way that could be described as straightforward and as little descriptive or editorial information as possible. These stories may contain quotes or viewpoints, but they are invariably greatly simplified and attributed to particular parties. In general, “straight news” is brief and to-the-point, relaying just enough information to get a general sense of the basic facts of a particular event. Lastly, “straight news” tends to be inherently responsive – that is, reporters generally don’t have to seek out these stories, but rather produce the reports as the stories crop up. “Features,” by contrast, are typically longer, more descriptive in style and comprehensive in content, and involve a more proactive and investigative technique as they usually cover subject matter beyond the idiographic, including social programs, ongoing or regular events, human interest stories, and so on. Although both “features” and “straight news” are ideally meant to have editorial objectivity, there is considerable reason to believe that neither mode of media storytelling is without bias, if for no other reason than that a given media outlet has finite time and resources to devote to covering the news, and must be selective regarding what stories are worthy of attention. Features, by and large, are considered to be less objective as they contain a greater degree of descriptive content, though I also found in reviewing various media outlets throughout the region of research that, to a significant degree, the goal of objectivity in any form of news storytelling becomes progressively less important as the size of the media outlet shrinks – for instance, in many smaller outlets, the stories on Honor the Earth (included among the “straight news”) were contributed by Winona LaDuke herself.

One of the most striking features of all news stories (of any variety, from any outlet) is the extent of the focus on Honor the Earth’s organizational leadership. There are three leaders in

particular who are featured heavily in news stories about the organization, those being the founder and director, Winona LaDuke, the organization's lead attorney Frank Bibeau, and the National Campaigns Director, Tara Houska. Bibeau tends to appear most often in local and state news stories particularly pertaining to the legal and procedural events taking place in northern Minnesota, as his role within the organization is focused primarily on the battle against Enbridge (rather than other external campaigns). As the director of the allied organization, the 1855 Treaty Authority (which Bibeau described half in jest as the "single-finger banner of sovereignty" (personal communication May 23, 2015)) Bibeau's affiliation with Honor the Earth also tends to come up in stories covering the Treaty Authority's movements as well. Houska, by contrast, comes up occasionally in stories covering the fight against pipeline projects in northern Minnesota, but is much more often found in stories covering Honor the Earth's other campaigns and allied movements around the country. As discussed further below, her association with the national campaigns means that Houska is often more closely attached to the procedural narrative than the cultural narrative, as the former has a much more diffuse range of distribution.

For the most part, media stories tend to be the most reductive of the modes of communication by which the Honor the Earth narrative is distributed. Both procedural and cultural information about the battle over the pipeline projects tends to be simplified for the sake of concision, involving the selection of certain particular details deemed the most noteworthy and the filtering of everything else deemed (apparently) peripheral to the point, or at least peripheral enough to warrant omission. Interestingly, the dream and prophecy narratives only appear in the news stories about or containing quotes by LaDuke in particular. LaDuke's role as the representative face of the organization and its cultural roots is never clearer than in these media stories. In the news media, there is often relatively little space to represent the essential details of a particular report, which ends up meaning that the entire organizational message of Honor the Earth is often boiled down to brief recounting of the dream and/or prophecy narratives. This pattern is particularly strong in the news media covering the events surrounding the annual Love Water Not Oil tour.

#### **b. Geographic/Social Patterns of Distribution**

Whereas the Flood narrative and Shaynowishkung biography are each made up of a single story, or at least varied renditions of the same core narrative, the saga of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge Energy is comprised of a large and constantly growing number of smaller stories forming the evolving history of the organization and its campaign. In the previous case studies, the section on

the geographic and social patterns of distribution have been primarily organized according to whether a given rendition is spoken or written (or, in some cases, communicated visually), but this mode of organization does not support the Honor the Earth narrative as well as the previous cases. As far as the Honor the Earth narrative and its constituent stories are concerned, the salient geographic and social divide has less to do with the method of communication than the specific content of a given block of narrative information. Specifically, the most significant difference in determining the patterns of distribution comes from whether a given story concerns the Anishinaabe cultural and spiritual roots of the organization and its efforts, or the legal, economic, and procedural nature of their fight against the Enbridge pipelines. It is this difference that forms the organizing principle of the following section.

In *Activists Beyond Borders* (2014), Keck & Sikkink discuss (among other things) the use of framing devices in environmental advocacy networks, pointing out that such networks often lack the kind of ideological, ethical, or political homogeneity of other kinds of advocacy networks (i.e., human rights networks), and thus tend to operate more as a frame through which other diverse ideological, ethical, and political concerns can be focused. In addition to “environmentalism” itself acting as a frame, these networks and movements also employ a variety of internal framing mechanisms. Of particular note is the use of “human face” (121) frames for mobilizing support for environmental concerns with which audiences may have a difficult time connecting. In the case of the presentation of the battle between Honor the Earth and Enbridge over the use of land and waterways in northern Minnesota, the cultural and procedural narratives represent particular frames for communicating the situation, the former leveraged powerfully by Honor the Earth itself in the pursuit of humanizing the problems elaborated by the latter.

I will discuss the individual patterns of distribution for the cultural and procedural narratives, respectively, in greater detail below, but there are two particular patterns of note which I would like to address briefly first. In the course of their production and distribution through the various forms of engagement between Honor the Earth and the public, the cultural and procedural narratives defining Honor the Earth’s organizational identity and the frame through which their goals are presented to diverse audiences are tied to restrictions of distribution and means of presentation that serve to differentiate their respective relationships to the organization itself and to the external outlets chronicling their narrative.

First, it is only in Honor the Earth organizational media and (to a lesser extent) events that the cultural and procedural narratives are mixed together or interwoven to form a single coherent narrative

and organizational identity – in all other cases, the two defining narratives of Honor the Earth tend to be distributed separately, or at least separated within individual communicative instances (e.g., a news article separating procedural and cultural information into different paragraphs or sections). This may suggest that Honor the Earth is engaged in the process of framing its own narrative as one that is not both (or alternately) procedural and cultural, but rather as one of a different kind of organization than what settler society tends to expect or produce: one in which the cultural, spiritual, political, legal, and logistic are wedded into a single organizational identity and orientation, rather than operating with a structural division of labor that parts these elements out and employs them pragmatically as needed. This kind of holistic approach to the Honor the Earth narrative would be very much in accordance with how many Anishinaabeg describe traditional lifeways, in that spiritual and normative beliefs are inextricably tied into the quotidian processes, activities, and structures of daily living, and these aspects of living in the traditional way are constantly in dialog with one another (Child 2014; Copway 1851; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Gross 2014; Landes 1937). This tends to be quite different from both the normative lifeways of American settler society, which tends to operate on a complex segregation of different aspects of the lived experience into separate social and temporal spaces (Clark 2000; Mintz 1989; Nippert-Eng 2008; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014), but the stories informing the Honor the Earth narrative produced by non-Native sources, in which the procedural and cultural aspects of the organization are generally shown to inform each other, but which are distinct parts of the organizational whole.

This difference in how the cultural and procedural narratives are presented – either as a single holistic representation of the organization and its objectives or as separate tools in the Honor the Earth toolkit – are significant in large part because of the very different social and political spaces that they encounter in the course of production and distribution. In many of the communicative instances of contact between Honor the Earth and the public, there is a specific emphasis on either the cultural narrative (e.g., Honor the Earth February 21, 2016) or the procedural narrative (e.g., Maxwell February 4, 2016), but in the instances of Honor the Earth’s dissemination of a joint cultural and procedural narrative, this self-presentation is reaching primarily into the spaces in which the organization itself operates most directly. That is to say, spatially, the joint procedural-cultural narrative reaches most thoroughly into the towns (particularly small towns and particular neighborhoods in larger urban areas) along the route of the proposed pipeline corridor through northern Minnesota. It tends to follow, in particular, Winona LaDuke’s movements within this space. Socially speaking, the joint narrative is distributed primarily to the Honor the Earth support base, through social media, e-mail,

and certain organizational events, especially those surrounding the annual Love Water Not Oil tour. This way of framing Honor the Earth's organizational identity, as informed by a more holistic understanding of the relationship between culture and political movement, is primarily circulating among those already in support of the organization. The presentation of the procedural and cultural narratives as structurally distinct, on the other hand, tends to take place through the modes of communication that are reaching a more spatially diffuse and socially and politically diverse audience, including those recipients who may know relatively little about Honor the Earth, may have yet to form a solid understanding of the organizational identity, goals, or ways of conducting its affairs, as well as those who oppose Honor the Earth's politics (either directly, through opposition of Honor the Earth in particular, or indirectly through opposition to indigenous and/or environmentalist political movements).

Second, in terms of the spatial distribution of each of the two versions of the Honor the Earth narrative, the cultural narrative seems tied to the structural magnitude and region of influence of Honor the Earth itself, whereas the distribution of the procedural narrative seems tied to the structural magnitude and region of influence of the Enbridge corporation. As discussed below, the cultural narrative stays, for the most part, within the state of Minnesota, and specifically throughout the area of northern Minnesota that has been identified as the chosen route for the Sandpiper/Line 3 pipeline corridor, along which Honor the Earth holds its annual Love Water Not Oil canoe and horseback riding tour and conducts most of its other business of engaging with the public and staging public demonstrations (apart from those events and demonstrations that take place in the Twin Cities). The cultural narrative is propagated by the Honor the Earth organization itself, and its area of distribution is therefore primarily attached to the intentional acts of narrative production and distribution of the organization, but even in the cases where the narrative is carried further by external actors, such as the news media or allied organizations, it tends not to travel far. We might attribute this to a cultural narrative staying within the region within which the culture itself is found, but for two contravening factors: (1) the Anishinaabe culture is not isolated to the same region as the cultural narrative of the Honor the Earth organization, and (2) cultural narratives do not always remain relegated to the specific spaces inhabited by the culture-group; for instance, a similar kind of cultural narrative following the ongoing protests at Cannonball, North Dakota, against the "Dakota Access" pipeline by the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies has extended far beyond the land of the Standing Rock Lakota people.

The much broader distribution of the Honor the Earth procedural narrative is yet more puzzling, given that it is also tied to the organization's actions and concerns the population of the



same region of Minnesota in which the pipeline corridor would be implemented – in fact, we might expect the procedural narrative to be *more* tied to this specific region (rather than the broader region of residence of the Minnesota Anishinaabeg), as the consequences of the legal and infrastructural developments are actually more specific to the proposed corridor route than would be the presentations of cultural information in the cultural narrative. Instead, the procedural narrative is distributed well beyond the boundaries of the local environment, throughout the state of Minnesota and beyond, including across the US-Canadian border and into the stream of US national news media. Rather than conforming to the spaces over which Honor the Earth holds significant influence, the procedural narrative is distributed much more according to the more general sphere of (admittedly thinner) influence of the Enbridge corporation, which holds significant economic and political power in the United States and Canada as one of the largest energy and crude oil piping companies in North America.

Both the cultural and procedural narratives are essential to communicating and accomplishing Honor the Earth's goals, but the procedural narrative provides a field of battle on which both sides of the pipeline struggle can find traction against their opponent. As a non-Native, capitalist, and colonialist corporation, Enbridge is not in a position to counter Honor the Earth on the discursive field created by Honor the Earth's cultural narrative. The corporation did attempt, somewhat halfheartedly, to negotiate with the Anishinaabeg on cultural terms through the hiring of a tribal liaison to act as an ambassador in dealing with tribal governments and community organizations. This effort did not make much headway, however, earning derision and mockery from Honor the Earth in particular for Enbridge's perceived attempt to hire an "Indian Whisperer" (Campbell November 28, 2014) who would somehow convince the Native people in Minnesota that pipelines were in their best interests. The attempt also did little to engage with Honor the Earth or other native organizations through engagement with the cultural narrative, as the job of the liaison was to conduct mostly closed negotiations on the economic benefits (an explicitly procedural aspect) of the pipeline projects, rather than to debate the cultural significance of the projects or demonstrate that oil extraction was somehow in accordance with the traditions and beliefs of the Anishinaabeg. The relatively expansive distribution of the procedural narrative is most likely attributable to certain aspects of the mainstream news media which inform their capacity and willingness to engage with cultural content – perhaps especially indigenous content.

One of the central principles of the "straight news" reporting tends to be an attempt at journalistic objectivity and dispassionate provision of various perspectives without taking a particular

side. For local media, the pressure to provide multiple perspectives is lessened, but for the larger media outlets, reporting the cultural narrative – especially focusing heavily on the cultural narrative without much recognition of the procedural narrative – would not provide much opportunity to represent both the perspectives of Honor the Earth and their opponents. This is an opportunity which is much more effectively opened by focusing on the procedural narrative. However, this does not explain why some coverage of the cultural narrative is not at least present in the stories being distributed on a wider range. The presence of some cultural content does not preclude the presence, or even the prioritization of the procedural narrative, nor would it necessarily indicate an expression of partiality on the part of the news outlet toward Honor the Earth’s side of the conflict. The absence of the cultural narrative from the wider spread of media coverage on the pipeline fight in Minnesota is also likely due to perceptions within the media about the kind of content that is important and/or of interest to audiences outside the local environment, as well as the kinds of information about which media operatives are prepared or qualified to provide commentary. The implication of this omission is that the cultural roots of Honor the Earth’s opposition to Enbridge’s pipeline projects are less important to people outside the region in which the conflict is taking place, either in terms of what the media believes that people should know, or – more likely, based on my interviews with various news media professionals – in terms of the topics about which the general public outside the local spaces is interested in learning. The cultural narrative is, thus, treated not as essential to understanding the conflict at hand, but rather the “local flavor” surrounding the conflict; peripheral information which might be of local interest but which is not an integral component of the “real” battle taking place on the field of lawsuits, bureaucratic decision-making, and infrastructural logistics.

*i. Stories pertaining to Honor the Earth as an Anishinaabe cultural organization*

“As Anishinaabe Robert Shimek explained in a KKWE radio interview, “this is the classic clash between the culture of the state of Minnesota, the US, and those of our Indian people who uphold our Anishinaabe belief system and way of life. This is where we keep colliding in the courts, because we were instructed to take care of this earth in a certain type of way. And to respect and honor all things in the creation in a certain kind of way and to utilize these parts of the creation in a certain kind of order to sustain ourselves. It’s about two different ways: our life – an indigenous way of life - and the other way of life”” (Excerpt from the Grand Rapids Herald Review, Nov. 22, 2013)

The parts of the broad Honor the Earth narrative that directly pertain to the indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions on which the organization was founded and which inform both their ethical and – to a lesser extent – methodological *modus operandi* are inextricable from the figure of

Winona LaDuke herself. These segments, which I will refer to as the “cultural narrative,” tend to follow the specific spaces in which LaDuke travels, particularly as they appear in the news media. When LaDuke shows up in a particular location, either as part of a protest event, fundraiser, or other public appearance, the articles covering the event almost invariably describe it in ways that prioritize the cultural narrative. The cultural narrative is also ubiquitous throughout the organizational media, to the extent that it is difficult to make a comparison between the appearances of the cultural and procedural narratives in these modes of communication because instances of the latter are so rare. Notably, the overwhelming majority of the organizational media is distributed by Winona LaDuke, or at least has her name attached to it.

The extent to which the cultural narrative follows LaDuke appears intentional; as mentioned previously, although there is nothing in her organizational title that necessarily demands she be so, LaDuke is explicitly the cultural and spiritual face of Honor the Earth, and the version of the organizational narrative that she espouses is consistently one rooted more in *ethos* and *pathos* than *logos*. This is not to say that she does not discuss the legal or procedural aspects of Honor the Earth’s campaigns – she holds a law degree in environmental economic development and can speak eloquently and at length on the procedural minutia of the fight against Enbridge, but as far as the public is concerned, this job is left first and foremost to the organization’s lead attorney, Frank Bibeau. Despite the intentional employment of LaDuke as the cultural face of the organization, it remains unclear whether the corresponding relegation of the cultural narrative to the somewhat limited space in which LaDuke travels is also intentional, though it is possible that the spaces in which the cultural narrative moves – primarily in northern Minnesota and, to a lesser extent, in the Twin Cities – are those in which this half of the organizational narrative conveys an effective message.

Geographically, the cultural narrative circulates mostly pervasively in northern Minnesota, along the route of the proposed Sandpiper pipeline. This is partially attributable to the presence of a large Anishinaabe population along the route, but the cultural narrative does not spill over into other regions of the state (or further, across state and national borders) where there are also such populations. In the course of their fight against the Enbridge pipelines, Honor the Earth has made appearances along the proposed corridor route, which are largely characterized by displays of Anishinaabe cultural and spiritual practice, but these are not the only means by which the cultural narrative remains rooted within this particular geographic space. In news media following the organization’s movements, it is primarily those outlets existing within the corridor that include or prioritize cultural information about Honor the Earth; as one gets farther from the Line 3 / Sandpiper

corridor, not only do the stories surrounding Honor the Earth become more scarce, but they also become decidedly more legal or procedural in focus, losing the cultural information more quickly.

Along with its location primarily in northern Minnesota along the route of the proposed pipeline corridor, the cultural narrative of Honor the Earth tends to follow the locations of culturally and spiritually-based protest events. These include the various events along the Love Water Not Oil tour, but they also include events in the Twin Cities, in the Dakotas, and in Wisconsin – to the extent that the cultural narrative leaves northern Minnesota, it does so largely through the protest events. It should also be noted that the cultural narrative is maintained in the organizational media, which – given that it takes place almost entirely online – is potentially global in terms of its scope of distribution, and certainly enjoys some level of national distribution through the campaigns with which Honor the Earth has allied itself throughout the US, and even international distribution given the network connections that exist between US and Canadian indigenous environmental and political movements. In combination with the concentration of the cultural narrative in the spaces in and immediately surrounding the proposed corridor for the Sandpiper and new Line 3 pipelines, the attachment of the cultural narrative to the protest events held in as well as outside of this local region is a strong indicator that the cultural narrative relies on the organization itself for distribution and propagation. Intuitive though this may sound, the same does not necessarily hold true for the legal/procedural narrative, as I will explore below, suggesting differences in the patterns of authorship and agency between the cultural and procedural narratives.

Interestingly, throughout the communications of the Honor the Earth cultural narrative, the level of detail and complexity of the cultural narrative increases as the level of engagement of the audience increases. This is not necessarily true of the legal/procedural narrative, or at least not to the same extent. The legal and procedural information is made available to Honor the Earth constituents and to the general public through a variety of organizational news media, as well as through certain events that Honor the Earth either hosts or attends. However, the forms of engagement that require a greater degree of direct engagement from the audience (i.e., attending fundraisers and other public events, participating in protests) do not necessarily deepen the audience member's understanding of the legal nuances of Honor the Earth's lawsuits against Enbridge, or the technical details of pipeline construction, or the ecological science at the heart of the fight to protect the environment from potential oil spills or other disasters. Exposure to the cultural narrative, on the other hand – that is, the story surrounding the indigenous cultural roots, the effects of the pipelines and their potential damages on the lifestyles of the Anishinaabeg, and other aspects of cultural and spiritual identity that

drive the efforts of the organization and its leadership – tends to become much more intensive as supporters engage in these more direct modes of involvement with Honor the Earth.

Within the geographic regions in which it circulates, the cultural Honor the Earth narrative tends to be pervasive regardless of most political or social borders or boundaries. Its patterns of distribution do not seem strongly affected by state boundaries, though the narrative is understandable grounded primarily in northern Minnesota in particular, and the cultural narrative is not strictly contained either within or without the borders of the Ojibwe reservations. Organizational media distributed to supporters through e-mail and social media obviously has a diffuse viewership, but this would not necessarily be so if those supporters themselves were relegated to particular social and political spaces. The support-base for Honor the Earth includes many people who live on the reservations as well as those living in rural non-reservation spaces and urban areas. The fight against the proposed pipeline corridor is likely a significant factor in determining the extent to which the cultural narrative spans several discrete indigenous communities as well as non-Native communities throughout northern Minnesota, as all of these would be directly affected by the implementation of the pipeline plan. Honor the Earth itself being both based in the White Earth Reservation and directed by Winona LaDuke, who is herself an enrollee at White Earth, the organization is somewhat more imbricated in the political life of the White Earth community than it might be at, for instance, Leech Lake, Red Lake, Fond du Lac, or Mille Lacs, but all of these communities have a vested interest in the outcome of the fight against Enbridge, and are thus visited by the cultural narrative of the organization as well.

Similarly, the cultural narrative makes no particular distinction between urban and rural communities; it is distributed and finds traction in both spaces, though the audience in rural areas are sometimes more directly engaged with Honor the Earth and the broader process of pipeline implementation, as their lands and communities tend to be the ones through which the pipeline corridor has been routed.

There are certain borders and boundaries that the cultural Honor the Earth narrative, for the most part, does not cross. The nation-state border between the United States and Canada is one of them. Mentions of Honor the Earth north of the Canadian border are rare regardless of the particular content, but those stories that do contain some information about Honor the Earth and their fight against the Enbridge pipelines are virtually devoid of any recognition of the cultural elements upon which Honor the Earth bases its oppositional stance: the relationship of the Anishinaabeg to the wild rice beds and waterways in which they grow; the resurgence and protection of indigenous lifeways in

the face of colonial exploitation and eradication; the spiritual and ontological beliefs of the Anishinaabeg about the relationship of humans to the rest of the natural world. The omission of cultural information from the Canadian news stories covering Honor the Earth's actions may have to do with the lack of direct comment from Honor the Earth representatives themselves, as the cultural narrative is (as previously mentioned) most strongly tied to the statements and movements of Winona LaDuke in particular, and other organization members who can comment directly on Honor the Earth's cultural roots. Few of the Canadian sources contain comments directly from LaDuke or other members, although it is difficult to say for certain whether this is a causal factor in the lack of cultural information or if it is simply correlated and both the omission of cultural information and direct input from Honor the Earth stem from a disinterest on the part of the reporters producing the stories in the indigenous perspective of the group.

In terms of social boundaries, while the cultural narrative does draw a certain kind of cultural and even ethnic boundary through the strong grounding of the organization and its endeavors in environmental and specifically Anishinaabe cultural communities, this boundary is highly malleable, and its defining characteristics are neither racial nor – more interestingly – colonial/decolonial. Throughout organizational events, appearances, and media, Honor the Earth has engaged in outreach efforts to communities of both Native and non-Native supporters, to Native communities outside the local Anishinaabe population, across boundaries of class and even politics, as investment in environmental concerns is not necessarily associated with particular political party membership or political perspectives in other areas, as Heywood (2012) demonstrates in his discussion of “Ecologism” as a political ideology related to such environmental concerns, but containing a plethora of sub-ideologies, of which “environmentalism is but one example. The inclusion of both indigenous and settler voices in the Honor the Earth organizational community interrupts certain social borders that might otherwise exist between these communities, but it is in this very inclusiveness through the sharing of the Anishinaabe and other indigenous cultural roots of the organization that a number of different divides are erected. Specifically, the cultural narrative Honor the Earth puts forth fosters divides between (A) people with and without an interest in the lived experiences of the indigenous peoples of the region, and (B) people within the Anishinaabe community who find it either acceptable or unacceptable to present Anishinaabe cultural identity and practice publicly in the way that Honor the Earth has been doing.

Irrespective of racial lines, the cultural narrative of Honor the Earth helps to create (or recreate and reinforce) a social boundary between potential audiences who – put simply – care about

indigenous culture, history, and lived experience, and those who do not. On the one hand, this can be said of most narratives – that they create boundaries between those who care about the constituent subject matter and those who do not, wherein those who are not interested generally are exposed less to the narrative itself because they don't seek it out, and the distributors of the narrative may tend not to target them. On the other hand, this otherwise relatively mundane social function of all narratives carries certain interesting and analytically worthwhile implications when applied in the case of indigenous cultures, about which the presence or absence of interest among both indigenous and settler audiences has real political and social consequences for those very cultures (Berkhofer 2011; Borrows 2002; King 2012; Moore 2003; O'Brien 2010). For indigenous people, cultivating an interest and investment in indigenous cultures, histories, and identities, particularly among younger generations, can be a powerful tool for combating the legacy of assimilation and cultural genocide that has characterized much of the American colonial project (Archibald 2008; Vizenor 1999; 2008; Wetzel 2015). By centering the ecological, political, and economic struggles of the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota around a cultural core, Honor the Earth ties traditional practices and beliefs tightly into what it means to be Anishinaabeg, and to be indigenous, drawing a boundary between indigenous people who invest in *mino-bimaadiziwin* (the good way of being/living) and those who don't.

For the settler audience, expressions of interest and investment in indigenous cultural traditions can mean something quite different – indeed, it can be tied to a number of trends in settler culture, including some that are contradictory to one another. Historically, there has been a fascination among settlers (and Europeans in general) with indigenous cultures, spiritualities, traditions, and identities (Berkhofer 2011; Deloria 1998; Ellingson 2001; Graham & Penny 2014; Huhndorf 2001; Strong 2012). Scholars have theorized on the role of this fascination in the settler colonial project, demonstrating it to have served diverse purposes ranging from a means of distancing American identity from its British roots to providing a symbol of naturalness and authenticity lacking in American industrial life (Deloria 1998), from “attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity” to attempts to resolve “anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation's origins” (Huhndorf 2001:2), all depending on the particular historical and social context. Among non-Native people interested in the Honor the Earth cultural narrative, there is certainly some continuing colonial fascination in the seemingly mystical nature of the indigenous traditions at the heart of Honor the Earth's organizational identity. In this sense, Honor the Earth's cultural narrative may serve to create a division between those settlers who continue to harbor Orientalist fantasies about an exotic indigenous culture, and those who do not, ironically settling the former category in the same political

space as the indigenous organization and the latter outside of it. On the other hand, however, many (if not most) of the non-Native audience members and supporters of Honor the Earth's cultural narrative also represent another increasingly popular trend among the American settler population: settlers who are invested in the resurgence of indigenous knowledges and traditional practices in the face of a capitalist colonialism that they see as inherently destructive on a global scale. For these audience members, indigenous cultures hold great draw not because of some sense of fetishized mysticism, but rather because of the ideological, practical, and political efficacy that it may represent, as well as the ethical responsibility that many non-Native supporters feel concerning their position as settlers on indigenous territory, that they should do what they can to support indigenous peoples' movements. In the case of this segment of the audience, the cultural narrative creates a divide – quite different from the one described immediately prior – between the supporters of the organization whose interest comes from an investment in something akin to postcolonialism with an anti-capitalist bent, and those uninterested in undertaking this kind of political and cultural project.

Through interviews with Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota, as well as observations at Honor the Earth events, it became evident that the ways in which Honor the Earth propagated an indigenous and particularly Anishinaabe cultural narrative in the course of the fight against the pipeline projects reflected something of a generational divide among Minnesota Anishinaabeg. To an extent, the heavy investment in the cultural heritage of the organization in Honor the Earth's actions and self-presentations to the public help to connect the organization with the indigenous communities from which the traditions that the organization draws upon originate. However, among the Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota, there is a significant generational rift that exists between older and younger people in terms of their relationship to the cultural traditions and, in particular, the extent to which sharing of those practices is considered acceptable outside the ceremonial and other traditional contexts from which they originated. Many of the most elderly members of the Anishinaabe community are old enough to have experienced the trauma of forced assimilation in the boarding schools, and those who did not personally experience it themselves certainly had parents, grandparents, and other close family members who did. In the boarding schools, indigenous children were taught what Bob Jourdain refers to as the “colonized mind” (personal communication April 20, 2016): an indoctrinated perspective that forbade traditional spiritual practices and use of the Anishinaabemowin language, and trained children to see indigenous identity as something innately shameful, to be stamped out or covered over to the furthest extent possible.



For many elders, in the Minnesota Anishinaabe communities, the open sharing indigenous cultural traditions, language, or spiritual practices and beliefs was associated during their formative years with systemic punishment and shaming, to the extent that parents and grandparents would refuse to teach their children these traditions. During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, following the establishment of the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act (1978) which made legal once more the religious traditions of American indigenous peoples, Anishinaabe traditional lifeways, beliefs, and spiritual practices made a resurgence in Minnesota (Graves & Ebbott 2006). Nevertheless, many among the older generations continued (and still continue) to believe that these traditional practices are best kept out of sight of the settler population. To paraphrase a number of interviewees with whom I spoke about this divide, the white people had taken everything else from them and there was every reason to expect that, given the chance, they would take this as well. Stemming from the trauma of boarding school repression and indoctrination, and the corresponding urge to keep traditions as close and closed as possible, Honor the Earth may have a much more difficult time connecting with members of the older generations in the Minnesota Anishinaabe communities, given the extent to which the organization's Anishinaabe and broader indigenous roots are shared openly with Native and non-Native audiences alike, and the innately multicultural, transnational, and (in some ways) postcolonial nature of the organization's membership.

Honor the Earth's relationship with younger generations is, by comparison, quite different. With the boarding schools in Minnesota having closed down one-by-one during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the last of them closing in the 1970s, an increasing proportion of the Anishinaabeg never personally experienced the kinds of genocidal assimilation that occurred in these environments, and indeed, ever fewer parents and grandparents are living to pass along the consequences of that historical trauma directly to their descendants. To be clear, this is not at all to say that Anishinaabeg of younger generations are not deeply and sometimes devastatingly affected by historical trauma and systemic oppression, but the character of their experience is wholly different from that of their predecessors. For many younger Anishinaabeg, and even many well into their middle-age, an instilled sense of pride in their heritage (communicated either by family or simply by the more militant politics of the 60s and 70s) may have actually been a significant part of their childhood or young adult experience, and the systems of cultural and spiritual eradication that characterized their parents and grandparents generation were gone – at least in form, if not wholly in intent (Eagle 2012). Racist and colonialist oppression remained, and remains, a tremendous obstacle for many Anishinaabeg, but the absence of an indoctrination device as brutally efficient and efficiently brutal as the boarding schools meant that

many also grew into adulthood investing in traditionalism in ways that were highly public: open language programs (e.g., the Fond du Lac Ojibwe Language Camp), powwows of various types, public blessing ceremonies, and incorporation of indigenous traditions into the routine practice of daily life; these were all parts of the normative (if still risky and frowned upon within the dominant settler social and political spheres) environment for Anishinaabeg of younger generations that marked a sharp distinction from the lived experiences of their elders.

It is also important to note here that this generational difference has not created an exclusive and absolute rift between those above and below a certain age, or within a certain number of generations of those who personally experienced boarding school indoctrination and violence. Particularly for Anishinaabeg living on the reservations or, more specifically, in primarily Anishinaabe local communities, the persistence of a social structure which relies heavily on local leadership translates into some towns, regions, or Mide lodges taking a fairly conservative approach to the protection of traditions while others may take a more open, progressive approach, these differences being based largely on the perspectives and opinions of the locally-powerful elders within the particular communities in question.

Resulting, at least in part, from this generational and normative divide in the lived experiences and the subsequent impacts on the beliefs of younger and older Anishinaabeg concerning the value and risk of outwardly displaying, sharing, and inviting settlers to take part in indigenous traditions, Honor the Earth's cultural narrative helps to maintain many ties within the indigenous communities of northern Minnesota and communities further afield, but this connection is not without its complications nor its dissidents among the Anishinaabeg.

The exact location of this boundary that the Honor the Earth cultural narrative makes apparent in the indigenous communities in northern Minnesota is difficult to determine with any level of certainty, in part because it does not always follow the paths we might expect based on indigenous studies literature or Minnesota indigenous history. In some ways, the split between the more conservative and more open factions among the traditional Anishinaabeg is reminiscent of the factional divide Meyer (1999) has written about between the so-called "mixed-blood" and "full-blood" Anishinaabeg who, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took vastly different paths in response to colonial pressures – a factionalization analysis offered as well by Deloria & Lytle (2013) in their engagement with Native politics nationwide. However, the situation illuminated by the transmission of the Honor the Earth cultural narrative is also distinct from the comparison Meyer posited in a

couple of key ways: (A) the divide is not even nominally a racial one,<sup>38</sup> and (B) it is also a divide taking place primarily between people of different generations with different perspectives on their shared traditionalism, rather than between traditionalists and assimilationists. The boundary is complicated yet further by internal differences within these communities in terms of the relationship that many traditional people as well as the more assimilationist or integrationist Anishinaabeg have with political action. Honor the Earth's campaign supporters are, generally speaking, both politically active and invested in treaty rights, indigenous sovereignty, and (of course) environmental protection. The cultural narrative may appeal more to the Anishinaabeg more comfortable with the idea of open sharing of cultural traditions – for clarity's sake, we may call them “integrationists” – and less to the more conservative traditionalists, but on the other hand, there are conservative traditionalists who actively participate in political and environmental struggles in other ways, and integrationists who are either politically inactive or even supportive of the kinds of corporate capitalism which is the direct opponent of Honor the Earth. In sum, the internal boundary illuminated by the organization's cultural narrative within the Minnesota Anishinaabe communities is not a neat border, but rather a complex, shifting, and continuously renegotiated cultural and political divide.

*ii. Stories pertaining to Honor the Earth as a political/legal action organization*

“Climate change activists have been campaigning against Canada-to-U.S. pipelines, hoping that stopping them will slow or halt production in northern Alberta. The Natural Resources Defense Council says producing oil from tar sands releases three times more greenhouse gases than conventional oil production. The oil industry disputes those claims” (Excerpt from the Crookston Times, July 18, 2013)

The cultural and procedural narratives of Honor the Earth show a variety of similar patterns of distribution and ways of interacting with various geographic, political, and social spaces – an intuitive finding given that, for all their differences in form and function, both narratives describe the same conflict between the same parties: Honor the Earth and Enbridge. However, there are certain notable differences that speak to the means by which the two central narratives are distributed, and

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<sup>38</sup> Meyer' (1999) insistence that the terminology of “mixed-blood” and “full-blood” had little or nothing to do with actual racial divisions, and was rather a language of ethnic difference stemming from the mixed-blood Anishinaabeg following the culture of the Métis traders rather than the indigenous ways, might suggest that the divide in that case was more comparable to the one addressed here than I give credit for, but the assertion that the language of “mixed-blood” and “full-blood” had nothing to do with racial tensions during a time when the treatment of particular Native people by settlers was determined largely by their physical appearances (Fabian 2010; Fitzgerald 2007) strains credulity. I am certain that ethnic differentiation played a significant role in the factioning Meyer found, but I am also unconvinced that racialization was not also an important factor.

give some indication of the possible consequences of engagement with the cultural and/or procedural narratives in terms of shaping perceptions of the Honor the Earth organization itself, and of the organization as a representation of indigenous cultural and political identity. The procedural narrative is distributed through most of the same modes of communication as the cultural narrative, including certain particular outlets within each of the five modes of communication discussed in the previous section: public demonstrations, town-hall meetings, fundraising events, organizational media, and news media. The levels of legal, procedural, economic, and scientific ecological information offered through each of these modes varies from one to the next, as well as between particular instances within each mode.

The procedural narrative is most pervasive in the town-hall meetings, where the form and function of the event encourages the dissemination of “factual” information rather than opinions or beliefs, and also tend to be fairly restrictive in terms of sharing information or expressions that are outside the designated topic at hand. These events are invariably controlled by moderators whose task is to keep the discourse limited to the topic at hand – a strategy which, notably, tends to put the Honor the Earth representatives at something of a disadvantage as their cause is informed by a holistic understanding of the relationship of water and land to all life in the region and therefore most effectively asserted when given some flexibility of movement. The procedural narrative is pervasive, as well, in the news media distributing information about Honor the Earth, although as with the news stories covering the cultural narrative, the amount of procedural information offered in a given news segment tend to be fairly low, with reporters most often speaking in generalities (or very selectively speaking in local details) about actions and events related to the lawsuits, pipeline planning and infrastructure, and legislative maneuvering. Fundraisers and public demonstrations sometimes contain procedural information, though this information tends to be relatively brief and bracketed by displays of the cultural identity of the organization. Organizational media can sometimes also contain a great deal of procedural information, though it varies a great deal from one instance to the next.

It is admittedly rare that a news media outlet will share the cultural narrative without also including some level of engagement with the procedural narrative as well, although the opposite is not necessarily the case – there are a number of media stories covering procedural aspects of the battle between Honor the Earth (and allies) and the Enbridge corporation that make no particular mention of the cultural roots of Honor the Earth, save perhaps a nominal mention of the organization as being “Native-led” (i.e., Dunbar November 12, 2014; Krugel September 8, 2015). Honor the Earth’s self-presentation through organizational media and public events tends to operate in the opposite way,

never reporting procedural information without some element of the cultural narrative involved in the discourse, but in certain settings communicating the cultural and spiritual grounding of the organization without providing any particular information about the procedural aspect of their work, other than general campaign slogans or similar broad signifiers of the political and environmental goal at hand. The news media, based on these patterns of communication, tends to prioritize the procedural narrative, believing (perhaps rightly) that a greater proportion of the readership will be interested in legal and infrastructural developments than the cultural element of the conflict at hand. Honor the Earth tends to prioritize the cultural narrative insofar as it is more ubiquitous in their communicative engagements with the public, and in general shorter messages from the organization to supporters tend to lack procedural content, but the procedural narrative is not dispensable to the organization the way its cultural narrative might be to many of the media outlets (particularly those operating on a larger scale and serving a more diverse audience).

As they appear in the news media, stories framing Honor the Earth's battle and identity as a fundamentally procedural one most often are focused on the lawsuits, governmental decisions, and pipeline development and infrastructure using something of a wide-angle lens, covering major milestones in the course of the procedural struggle as it unfolds over time. They are in some cases responsive to particular events as they take place, but they also tend to cover the overall process from a broader perspective. The stories helping to frame the cultural narrative tend to be much more idiographic, responding to particular (usually local) events taking place on the ground, involving protest actions or public events that are visible, and directly and immediately applicable to communities on the local level. This is especially true of the media outlets serving a wider audience, which are more likely to distribute stories on the procedural narrative providing a general overview of the legal battle or another procedural aspect of the situation than would be the local media.

Like the cultural narrative, the procedural narrative is presented to the public largely through the voice of Winona LaDuke, but is also – increasingly, in fact – voiced by other members of the organizational leadership, most notably Honor the Earth attorney Frank Bibeau, and National Campaigns Director Tara Houska. Bibeau appears as a voice of the organization mainly in the local context of northern Minnesota, in his capacity as the legal representative of the organization as well as director of the allied organization, the 1855 Treaty Authority, which conducts legal and protest actions pertaining to Ojibwe usufruct rights within the ceded territories under the Treaty of 1855. In connection with Honor the Earth, Bibeau most frequently appears as an organizational representative in the town-hall meetings along the route of the proposed Sandpiper corridor, and in local news stories

throughout the same region during moments in the campaign when there is substantial movement in Honor the Earth's legal battle against the Enbridge Corporation. Through his production and distribution of the procedural narrative in the local environmental and primarily within the communities and social settings most directly invested in the pipeline battle, Bibeau represents an intensifying voice in creating an organizational identity for Honor the Earth that is heavily embedded in local legal processes. In the course of his participation in town-hall meetings, public demonstrations, and news reporting, Bibeau – who is a well-known if somewhat controversial figure in local legal and political circles due to his history as tribal attorney for both the Leech Lake and White Earth bands as well as his vocal opposition to the recent attempt by members of the White Earth tribal government to establish a new national constitution – has reached a number of audiences throughout the pipeline corridor, most of whom are people already deeply involved in either tribal, municipal, or environmental politics. His involvement in the production of the procedural narrative serves to create a deeper sense of legal and political action from Honor the Earth within the core of both the organizational base and the core of the opposition.

Where Bibeau's role in the production of the procedural narrative is an intensifying one, Tara Houska's is, by contrast, one which is fundamentally extensive (in the sense of spreading the procedural narrative beyond the social, geographic, and political boundaries of the proposed Sandpiper/Line 3 corridor in northern Minnesota). Outside of the local environment, Houska becomes a much more significant voice in representing the organization and its goals. Houska spent a period of a few months as the Native American Advisor to the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign, gaining attention in the news media – a fact which has been useful to Honor the Earth in their broader campaigns outside of Minnesota, most of which have involved assisting other Native environmental and social campaigns. Toward the end of my time in the field, the now widely publicized protest camp to combat the attempted "Dakota Access Pipeline" was being established by the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota, and Honor the Earth was shifting its attention somewhat from the struggles in Minnesota to their allies in the Dakotas, an effort led in large part by Houska, which led to a yet greater level of publicity for Honor the Earth as stories from the Standing Rock camp exploded throughout social media (McCauley August 28, 2016; Medina & Rafolz-Nunez September 9, 2016).

The alliance of Honor the Earth to the recent protests at Standing Rock in North Dakota is not the only one to foster the production and distribution of the procedural narrative. Broadly speaking, the procedural narrative tends to be connected to the stories of connection between Honor the Earth and other organizations that either provide support to or receive support from Honor the

Earth. This is especially true of the points of connection to allied organizations that are not specifically indigenous, such as the Friends of the Headwaters (an environmental organization invested in protecting the water and land surrounding the Mississippi headwaters in northern Minnesota) or Interfaith Power & Light (a loosely Unitarian organization engaged in various progressive political and social projects). An examination of the history of the organization and its presentation to the public is illuminating on this subject: prior to the pipeline battle in northern Minnesota, Honor the Earth was primarily a supporting organization, providing necessary money and other resources to other organizations fighting for environmental justice and indigenous rights. In examining stories from before 2012, it becomes evident that the cultural narrative of Honor the Earth didn't enter the public eye in any substantial way until the fight against Enbridge and the Sandpiper line began. These cultural roots which had always been integral to the organization's identity began to be presented to the public as the organization itself began to take a more direct role in local environmental activism, and as the media began covering their movements in greater detail. It is impossible to say with certainty what changes the Honor the Earth narrative will experience in the future as the organization either continues to take direct action or returns to their role as a granting and support structure for other organizations, but if the latter happens – as some in the organization have suggested it may, pending the outcome of the pipeline fight in Minnesota – it seems likely that the procedural narrative will once again take a dominant position in how Honor the Earth is presented to the public.

Tara Houska as a representative of the Honor the Earth procedural narrative is most often present in news media pertaining to environmental concerns linked with but not necessarily coterminous with those being raised directly by the Minnesota campaigns. Because the content of these stories generally pertains to non-Anishinaabe communities, and often to diverse communities from various cultural backgrounds (and because the presence of Honor the Earth innately enhances the diversity of these movements as they lie outside of Honor the Earth's home turf in northern Minnesota), the narratives are rarely focused on the cultural aspects of the various struggles, and instead tend to focus on the legal, political, economic, and logistical aspects. Houska's presence in these narratives is, thus, correlated with their procedural character, but not a causal factor. The audience being reached by Houska's representation of the Honor the Earth procedural narrative extends far beyond northern Minnesota, and are actually scattered throughout the United States and (in some cases) beyond. The national and even international media coverage of the campaigns allied to Honor the Earth – particularly the fight in the Dakotas over the Dakota Access Pipeline project, as well as the Keystone XL pipeline battle that took place in 2012-2015 - brought Honor the Earth a

level of attention which they don't normally possess, given that up until recent years their work had involved providing funding and support to other organizations rather than engaging in direct action themselves. However, although the procedural narrative to which Houska is most often connected is spread widely, it is also exceedingly thin. The news coverage in which Houska appears as representative of Honor the Earth are, for the most part, not about Honor the Earth in particular but rather about whatever larger campaign the organization is supporting (e.g., Hasemyer March 16, 2016; Houska August 5, 2016; April 6, 2016), resulting in a generally small amount of information being provided about the supporting organization itself – generally a brief mention of the organization's name, Houska's position within the group, and perhaps a small quote or other mention of the pipeline fight in Minnesota.

While the cultural narrative of Honor the Earth tends to be fairly localized, the narrative covering the organization primarily in its capacity as a legal and political entity enjoys a much wider range of distribution, encountering significantly fewer spatial restrictions in its patterns of distribution.

As with the cultural narrative, the procedural narrative of the Honor the Earth fight against Enbridge's pipeline projects still does experience certain constraints on the kinds of social and political spaces in which it is able to move, and on the particular means by which it does so. The cultural narrative, while not necessarily bound entirely by state borders, demonstrated a strong dominance within the region of northern Minnesota along which the new pipeline corridor had been proposed, and did not spread far into neighboring states (including North Dakota, the home of the Bakken oil field from which the Sandpiper line would pipe tar sands oil through Minnesota and to Superior, Wisconsin). It also butted up against the Canadian border, on the northern side of which the cultural narrative covering Honor the Earth was entirely absent. By contrast, the procedural narrative not only extends outside the bounds of the local environment surrounding the pipeline corridor, but crosses into other states through larger media outlets, is distributed nationally through major outlets include the Huffington Post (Nienaber September 15, 2014), Financial News (Krugel September 8, 2015), and Indian Country Today (Rose September 10, 2015), and even manages to cross the US-Canadian border (if only just), appearing occasionally in news stories in locations tied to the Enbridge corporation (particularly the corporation's headquarters' hometown of Calgary (Gordon May 13, 2016; The Canadian Press September 9, 2015; September 14, 2015)). The versions of the procedural narrative that extend across the border into Canada are generally stripped of cultural content, and pertain primarily to the lawsuits brought by Honor the Earth and other organizations and political entities in



Minnesota and Wisconsin over the proposed pipeline projects, as well as the infrastructural and economic developments pertaining to the Enbridge corporation's movements. Insofar as Honor the Earth crosses the border of the US nation-state into other nation-states around the globe, it has been exclusively in its capacity as an ally in the protests against the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, rather than the primary agent in the fight against the Sandpiper, Line 3, or Alberta Clipper. This raises certain questions about the kinds of indigenous environmental justice movements that the global media and their varied audiences are interested in pursuing, and, when combined with the comparatively low level of coverage of the Minnesota battles against those located in the Dakotas, suggest that the global fascination with American Plains Indian cultures, and the Sioux in particular (Calloway, Gemünden, & Zantop 2002; Graham & Penny 2014; Huhndorf 2001) extends to their environmental justice struggles as well.

In addition to its passage across the borders of states and nation-states, the distribution of the procedural narrative doesn't seem to distinguish between on-reservation and off-reservation spaces, appearing within and without reservation borders through local, state, and national news-media, Honor the Earth events including fundraisers, public demonstrations, and town-hall meetings, as well as in the Honor the Earth organizational media distributed primarily through internet sources. There is a fairly sharp division between internet access between urban and rural communities (Cohen 2008), divided as well between households and communities of varying socioeconomic status (Warf 2013), but based on interviews and observations throughout poor, rural, and reservation spaces, most people in these spaces do have some level of access to the internet, even if it is not always available in private homes. This access may come in the form of a local library, school, workplace, or mobile devices such as cell phones, but the Honor the Earth organizational media is generally not out of reach for people in rural reservation spaces. The depth of detail in the procedural narrative as it is distributed throughout these spaces does depend to some degree on the level of direct engagement with the pipeline projects or conflict thereon by the individual resident, but this engagement is not apparently determined by resident's location with respect to reservation borders. Nor, as mentioned briefly above, is it determined by the division between urban and rural spaces, although the means by which the procedural narrative is received by a given audience may differ between these spaces – for instance, in urban areas relatively unaffected by the infrastructural development of the prospective pipeline projects, residents may be more likely to receive the procedural narrative through Honor the Earth organizational media or news media, as opposed to rural or small-town residents along the route of

the proposed pipeline who might be more likely to attend the PUC meetings and other town-hall meetings and be exposed to the procedural narrative through these venues.

In general, the distribution of the procedural narrative seems less affected by (and less formative of) the kinds of social borders interacted with by the cultural narrative. Interest in the procedural aspects of the conflict over the pipeline projects in northern Minnesota is not specific to populations with particular cultural and political perspective, as are the levels of interest in the cultural narrative, and the stories about the details of construction, legal and bureaucratic actions, and so forth carry weight and significance not only for people engaging directly with Honor the Earth, but for people whose lives rarely (if ever) intersect with the organization or its movements. For these people, the fact that the procedural narrative describes Honor the Earth's history of conflict with Enbridge is incidental; their investment in the procedural narrative is rooted in their own attachment to the conflict through other social, economic, or political channels. Increased exposure to the procedural narrative also doesn't seem to create the same kind of internal rift within the Anishinaabe communities of northern Minnesota that are shaped (in part) by the cultural narrative. Divisions do exist, as there are Anishinaabeg who are in support of the pipeline projects and, of course, many who are against them, but while the increased access to detailed procedural information tends to make these parties better informed and more invested, it is not generative of the divide.

The social boundary most clearly interacting with the procedural narrative would perhaps better be called a social gradient, involving (unsurprisingly) people with different levels of engagement with the procedural aspects of the conflict between Honor the Earth and Enbridge. People with high levels of engagement with these aspects of the conflict might include legal representatives from both sides, ecological and infrastructural experts involved in the review process, government officials involved in the decision-making process concerning the use of land in northern Minnesota, or reporters for media outlets covering the procedural elements of the struggle. People with low levels of engagement with the procedural aspects of the conflict include, principally, laypeople who are not structurally connected to Honor the Earth or Enbridge, would not be directly affected by the infrastructural developments in the course of pipeline implementation, and do not live in areas where Honor the Earth tends to stage organizational events.

### **c. Influencing Perceptions of the Anishinaabeg**

“I think there's a...for a lot of white people, like me, I have this basic understanding that the indigenous people were here for millennia without creating all of these problems that the colonizers have created, and is speeding up so rapidly, change is

happening so rapidly, that I think we have this core understanding that indigenous culture and philosophy holds the key to being able to live in a sustainable way, or to be able to look back to some different values that will help get us out of this mess that the colonial values have created. And so, I would say, as much as – I’m a little uncomfortable with your word “fascination,” but, because fascination so much to me is like this shiny object that glints in the sun, and that has this surface appeal, and so, I don’t know, I’m sure that for some people there is, it’s just a surface appeal, but I would say for a lot of the people who are attracted to helping support Honor the Earth, it’s this deeper understanding that this is the philosophy that can help lead us to a more sustainable future” (Participant/Honor the Earth core member, Aug. 14, 2016).

W. LaDuke: “I can only be who I am. And our organization can only be who it is. I feel like our story is compelling, and I feel like who we are is compelling. I try to reflect that in what it is that we’re doing, and, you know, the non-Native community and the Native community have a history of both working together, up here, and a history of a lot of racism. I am not – you know, I’m 57, tomorrow’s my birthday. At this point, I’m not in a position to help people unpack their racism. They’ve gotta do that themselves.”

[...]

N. Cragoe: “What is it about [the Honor the Earth narrative and its indigenous roots] that is so compelling to non-Native audiences?”

WL: “You would have to ask white people. That’s not my business.

(Excerpt from interview with Winona LaDuke, Aug. 17, 2016)

The cultural and procedural versions of the Honor the Earth narrative, as well as the holistic version of the narrative combining the two into a mutually supportive whole propagated in some of the organization’s own engagements with the public, contain understandably varied implications with regard to Anishinaabe cultural, historical, and political identity in the eyes of the audience receiving these diverse pieces and interpretations of the larger organizational narrative. Members of the diverse audiences exposed to a given narrative frame will receive a perhaps very different presentation of who and what Honor the Earth is, and how their identity and actions relate to and reflect the wider Anishinaabe or indigenous identities upon which the ethical and methodological base of the organization rests.

It is important to mention at this point a striking dissonance that arose during the course of interviews with Honor the Earth leadership: the organization is not, and was never, explicitly intended to be an Ojibwe, or even broadly Anishinaabe organization. At the time of writing, there are three Anishinaabe members among a core staff of approximately seven: Winona LaDuke, Frank Bibeau, and Tara Houska. In my discussions with her, LaDuke was insistent that not only is Honor the Earth not an Anishinaabe organization, but that representing Anishinaabe culture to the public and thereby

shaping people's perceptions of Anishinaabe identity has never been of any interest to the organization. This does not mean, by any means, that the organization is *not* rooted in Anishinaabe cultural values and traditions, that their struggles do not directly pertain to the struggles of the Anishinaabeg, nor that the organization does not act as a representation of Anishinaabe political and cultural identity for the audience members who encounter the Honor the Earth narrative through the variety of means by which it is distributed, but these elements and consequences of the organization's actions have never been manifest functions as far as the Honor the Earth leadership is concerned. The impacts about which I have written below are unintentional, and perhaps even undesired by Winona LaDuke and other members of the organizational core. This does not, however, diminish their analytic significance, nor the extent to which Honor the Earth acts as an influential force in shaping public perceptions of the cultural and political role of the Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota.

LaDuke's leadership of the organization, not only in terms of her position as founder and director but as both the creative force behind the character and method of the organization as well as Honor the Earth's primary face through which they engage with the public, takes its form from LaDuke's own cultural and spiritual perspective. Regardless of the pan-indigenous and humanistic environmental convictions underlying her efforts through Honor the Earth, LaDuke's firm grounding in her own Anishinaabe identity, community, and lifeways is perhaps the most significant shaping factor in determining the content of the organization's presentation to the public. Honor the Earth organizational media, public events, and other means of narrative distribution are replete with uses of Anishinaabemowin, discussions of Anishinaabe traditional lifeways, spiritual beliefs, treaties and other historical context surrounding the present struggles of the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, and news from the Anishinaabe communities throughout northern Minnesota. At fundraisers and other public events, the food that is served is, at minimum, heavily informed by traditional Anishinaabe cuisine (i.e., wild rice, white fish, venison), and when traditional indigenous musicians have performances for the organization, they are often (though not exclusively) Anishinaabe drummers and singers from Wisconsin and Minnesota. The transnational and pan-indigenous principles of Honor the Earth and its leadership provide a strong philosophical basis for the kind of intertribal support and networking that the organization takes as its primary function, but there is no denying the centrality of the geographic and cultural context from which the organization was formed in determining the form of its engagement with its audience.

The cultural narrative speaks most strongly to the character of Anishinaabe identity in the contemporary world – an effect which is therefore centralized in the region of northern Minnesota in which the organization is most active; that is to say, people outside the region of the proposed pipeline corridor, or at least outside the state of Minnesota, are more likely to have their perceptions of indigenous (and specifically Anishinaabe) politics influenced by the procedural narrative than their perceptions of Anishinaabe cultural identity influenced by the cultural narrative. To recipient audiences already familiar with Anishinaabe history, culture, and contemporary experience, the implications of the cultural narrative are somewhat different than they would be for audiences less knowledgeable in these topics, in spite of the similarities in content shared by audiences from different social spaces.

For audiences unfamiliar with the cultural context of Anishinaabe relationship to the land, the seasonal round, the importance of *manoomin* to the health and prosperity of the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, and the spiritual traditions that, in large part, provide the motivation and even the methodology for Honor the Earth's struggle to protect the land and waterways of northern Minnesota, the cultural narrative communicates essential information about some of the core principles and practices of Anishinaabe cultural identity. The cultural narrative represents a means by which non-indigenous people (or indigenous people alienated from indigenous traditions) can learn about and invest in Anishinaabe identity, and it therefore communicates a somewhat different set of meanings attached to the same communicative instances than the meanings transmitted to the cultural in-group. For the predominately non-Native (mostly white) audiences receiving the Honor the Earth narrative, Anishinaabe identity is presented as being fundamentally rooted in the principles of protection of nature, the embedding of spiritual tradition in the pursuit of economic, political, and environmental action, prioritization of individual and community health over capital, and concern for local problems driving engagement with macro-level processes.

The discussion of Anishinaabe reliance on healthy water and land, and on the plant and animal life of the region, combined with the interdependence of these components of the natural environment on one another, communicates a representation of a culture that takes holistic ecology as a primary frame, and which positions humans as responsible protectors of the local environments upon which individual communities depend. The use of spiritual stories and traditions, including the Seventh Fire Prophecy, Winona LaDuke's dream of riding her horse against the current of the oil, blessings in Anishinaabemowin at organizational events, and the grounding of organizational planning and action in these spiritual traditions represents a version of Anishinaabe identity that is defined, in

part, by continued entanglement of spiritual belief and practice within the varied practices of the areas of social life that might, from the Western perspective, seem distinct from spirituality (i.e., economic, political, civic life). Honor the Earth also communicates a prioritization of health, both for individual people as well as for communities, the human species, and the whole of the natural world, over the interests of capital accumulation, which is represented as fundamentally fleeting, inequitable, and hugely damaging in the long term. By framing the conflict with Enbridge in terms of both (A) one of indigenous versus corporate-colonial interests, and (B) a question of health versus a question of economic prosperity, the Honor the Earth narrative attaches this sense of health-prioritization and anti-capitalist sentiment to Anishinaabe indigenous identity. Lastly, in the face of a series of pipelines crossing from Alberta and North Dakota through Minnesota, connecting with other existing pipelines at Superior and flowing into the global oil market, Honor the Earth's focus on the protection of the waters of northern Minnesota, especially particular waters that currently provide the local Anishinaabeg with an annual supply of traditionally-harvest wild rice, represents Anishinaabe identity as strongly rooted in the local environment (even when that local environment is understood to be holistically integrated with a larger regional and even global ecology), and Anishinaabe politics as operating by starting with local concerns and looking outward from this local vantage point.

For many Anishinaabeg members of Honor the Earth's narrative audience, while the cultural narrative communicates all of these same messages being received by the non-Native and less knowledgeable members of the audience about the nature of Anishinaabe identity, it also represents a form of affirmation and tradition-assertion – of survivance, in the sense that Vizenor coined the term – perhaps more so than a form of education. Put simply, where the Honor the Earth narrative facilitates the creation of a variably new perception or set of perceptions for the people who were previously unfamiliar with Anishinaabe culture, history, and lived experiences, for those already familiar and even embedded within the culture, the narrative facilitates a reshaping, challenging, or reaffirming of Anishinaabe identity based on its presentation of which among the myriad possible definitions of what it means to be Anishinaabeg are the vital characteristics of that identity when faced with the colonial power struggles of the present day. Also, in addition to what it affirms about Anishinaabe identity in contemporary times, the Honor the Earth narrative may also serve (for those familiar with the variety of sometimes contradictory enactments of Anishinaabe identity) to reject some other identity markers that have become part of life for indigenous people in northern Minnesota in the wake of colonization but which are in contradiction to the kinds of values and practices that Honor the Earth's narrative promotes. Large-scale tribal businesses are often run using

a corporate model, and even the tribal government structures of the MCT and individual Reservation Business Committees are based heavily on the concept of the tribe or band as a corporation (rather than a nation) (Deloria & Lytle 2013; Pritzker 1999). For many, Anishinaabe identity has become compatible with corporate capitalism in both the structure of economic and political action and the capitalist ideological prioritization of wealth-accumulation over other social, environmental, and political concerns. Anishinaabe identity is also, for many Native and non-Native people in northern Minnesota, predicated largely on race, resulting from the centrality of racial logic as perhaps the primary organizing principle for determining belonging, status, political enfranchisement, and even degrees of humanity (Doerfler 2015; Meyer 1999; Treuer 2010; Vizenor & Doerfler 2012). The Honor the Earth narrative directly contradicts these visions of what it means to be Anishinaabeg living in the world today.

The anti-corporate nature of Anishinaabe identity as represented by Honor the Earth is informed as much by the procedural narrative as the cultural narrative, with its emphasis on the extent to which the organization is not only fighting against a major corporate entity engaged in resource exploitation for profit, but also how its own strategies of resistance, gathering support, and spreading awareness are decidedly grassroots, operating on a comparatively low budget sourced from individual supporters and smaller community organizations, keeping the organizational staff and overhead costs fairly minimal, and maintaining an organizational identity as the scrappy underdog fighting the giant, faceless Enbridge corporation. The procedural narrative also helps to facilitate the understanding of Anishinaabe political identity (complementing the cultural identity of the cultural narrative) as something that is innately concerned with environmental protection and the problems of resource exploitation, as well as the inextricability of traditional spirituality from Anishinaabe politics. These factors both speak to an overall cultural and political orientation in Anishinaabe communities toward holism; the relationship of human beings to the natural world is inseparable from the foundational spiritual beliefs, which are embedded in processes of decision-making including within the political sphere, and the primary political responsibility for Anishinaabeg is protecting the environment in which they live, for the sake of both their own survival and the sustained health and vitality of the spiritually-imbued animals, plants, and whole of the ecological system. This holism is further supported in the ways in which Honor the Earth weds the cultural and procedural narratives, which does not occur in other presentations of the organizational narrative.

In addition to its similarities and overlaps with the kinds of identity information presented by the cultural narrative, the procedural narrative also suggests some additional traits specific to the

character of Anishinaabe – or, depending on the level of specificity in a given narrative instance – indigenous politics. In particular, it is presented in such a way as to suggest that Anishinaabe politics, or indigenous politics more broadly, tends toward grassroots-style activist movement. For many of the people encountering the procedural narrative, news of Anishinaabe politics is scarce, especially for those living outside the regions of northern Minnesota where there are large populations of Anishinaabeg residents. Moreover, Honor the Earth's actions are often highly visible and designed to attract media attention, increasing the proportion of exposure to Anishinaabe political life that is devoted to specifically covering Honor the Earth's actions. Particularly in combination with other well-publicized stories covering protests by affiliated organizations such as the 1855 Treaty Authority (i.e., Pioneer Press January 1, 2016; Thompson July 22, 2016), the Honor the Earth narrative as a dominant Anishinaabe political narrative playing out in the media communicates a vision of Anishinaabe politics as grounded in activism. This is made yet more specific by the particular style of legal and political engagement in which Honor the Earth is engaged, the rhetoric used by organizational representatives in communication with the public, and some of the media stories covering these actions, all of which depict the organization's political goals as innately obstructive. In the face of a corporation of overwhelming size and economic clout, and colonial bureaucratic and legal systems which often make it difficult for indigenous concerns to carry weight on a large scale, the most effective strategy in the fight against the proposed pipeline projects through northern Minnesota is for Honor the Earth to harry Enbridge at every turn, using obstructive tactics to make the process of planning and implementation so slow, expensive, and unpopular for the corporation that even if they were able to enact their original plans from a legal perspective it is no longer a worthwhile option. This representation of indigenous political action as obstructive is further supported by a long history of grassroots activism involving obstructive tactics of refusal, obfuscation, counter-narrative dissemination, and physical occupation (Cobb 2008; King 2012; Rader 2011; Simpson 2014; Treat 2016), along with ongoing actions mentioned above (see page 182) taking place north of the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, where indigenous peoples are using obstructive tactics to slow and, hopefully, cease construction of the Dakota Access pipeline (Democracy Now! September 7, 2016).

Honor the Earth and the other narrative producers (mostly in the news media and organizational media of allied groups) have created a particular narrative community bound together by the shared investment in the production, dissemination, and reproduction of the organization's defining narrative. Compared with the narrative communities created by the traditional story of



Wenabozho and the Flood and the biography of Shaynowishkung, the Honor the Earth versus Enbridge narrative community is highly heterogeneous along a number of social axes, as well as being very geographically diffuse (although the level and type of engagement with the Honor the Earth narrative changes significantly depending on the physical proximity of a given audience to the main region of northern Minnesota in which Honor the Earth carries out the majority of actions in this battle). Within the Honor the Earth organization support-base, the community that is created through the sharing of the organizational narrative(s) involves some elements of shared history in the experiences of environmental devastation during industrial and post-industrial capitalism, as well as a history – for many supporters – of interest and involvement in indigenous peoples movements (albeit not always stemming from the same relationship to those struggles). It also involves elements of shared political ideology, in that the support base has appeared in interviews and observations to be almost uniformly oriented toward environmentalism as a primary orienting framework for political thought and action. Many members of the Honor the Earth narrative community also share certain lifeways, although this is strongly affected by their particular geographic locations, being much more applicable for people living in the rural parts of northern Minnesota than elsewhere within the larger milieu of the narrative community. Many of these members, both Native and non-Native, practice some degree of subsistence living through the harvesting of wild rice and maple sap, herb and berry gathering, hunting, and fishing. They also tend to live in small towns and other rural areas in which social networks of families, friends, and neighbors are often quite close-knit, overlapping the Honor the Earth narrative community with small residential communities in particular areas, as well as some of the traits of small-town Minnesotan culture.<sup>39</sup>

There are also two important traits that this narrative community does not possess: racial or politico-spatial homogeneity. Like the Flood narrative, the ongoing saga of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge not only reaches across the artificial boundaries of race and political space through communication between divided populations, but also interrupts the legitimacy of those divisions by bringing together advocates from varying racial identities and politico-spatial communities in support of the Honor the Earth campaigns. Despite the significant grounding of Honor the Earth's image and rhetoric in Anishinaabe culture-specific lifeways and concerns, the support-base for the

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<sup>39</sup> The social support networks, family dynamics, and community structure of small-town Minnesota has been left mostly unstudied within academic work, but has provided fodder for fiction and popular nonfiction for decades, exemplified best by Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* radio series (1974-present), Donald Petrie's *Grumpy Old Men* comedy films (1993), and (from the Anishinaabe perspective) the late Jim Northrup's *Fond du Lac Follies* syndicated newspaper column (1989-2014).

organization consists of enrollees from various Anishinaabe reservation-based polities as well as other indigenous polities, non-enrolled indigenous people, and non-indigenous people, all of whom come from myriad towns and cities, states, and even from across the borders of nation-states. The narrative community created by the Honor the Earth narrative unites people of various racial categorization, and intersects in no discernible way with the politics of blood quantum. The extent to which the narrative shapes perceptions of indigenous, Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, or Chippewa identity does not stretch so far as to distinguish race as a meaningful prerequisite for inclusion in indigenous/Anishinaabe/Ojibwe/Chippewa political action or investment in the survivance of indigenous/Anishinaabe/Ojibwe/Chippewa traditional beliefs and lifeways.

#### **4.5 Discussion of Theoretical Implications**

Through the analysis of data within the Honor the Earth narrative and its patterns of distribution and influence, as well as comparison with the implications of the previous two narrative cases, certain theoretical conclusions bear discussion with regard to how the Honor the Earth narrative interacts with social and political spaces, concepts of property and capital, and its relationship to the ongoing structures of colonial control and counter-colonial cultural and political actions in the Anishinaabe communities of northern Minnesota.

##### **a. Reification of the US-Canadian border, and contradictions in organizational logic**

Politically, despite the Honor the Earth procedural narrative crossing the border between the US and Canada to some degree in news coverage of the procedural blockages that Enbridge (as a Canadian company) is encountering on the US side of the border, the complete absence of the cultural narrative north of the border, combined with the focus on Minnesota-specific concerns in Honor the Earth communication with the public, and the specific applicability of these concerns to the lifeways of Anishinaabeg living in Minnesota and Wisconsin (as opposed to southern and eastern Ontario), helps to reinforce the power and legitimacy of the US/Canada border. This reinforcement is further supported in Honor the Earth organizational media and direct communication at Honor the Earth events, during which the anti-corporatist rhetoric not infrequently takes on a vaguely xenophobic tone.

First, Enbridge plans to build use eminent domain to take the property rights needed to build these new pipelines under the theory that it is a public utility providing a public benefit. “Shockingly, the state legislature allows private for-profit oil pipeline companies to take private property under the same terms that governments use to take property for roads and other public uses. This seems problematic as Enbridge is a

Canadian corporation that will earn billions of dollars in profit by carrying privately owned oil for a limited number of oil companies. There are a lot of legal and constitutional questions in this case,” Frank Bibeau an attorney for Honor the Earth said.

(Maxwell April 13, 2014)

Enbridge however won on the big issue of whether or not their taking of our land was an abuse of the governmental power of eminent domain. We think it was because it was a foreign corporation taking our private property for their corporate profit purposes. We wanted the Court to allow us to present our reasons for saying NO to participating in this pipeline project, from its foundation in atmospheric carbon and climate change to the abuse of the governmental power of eminent domain. But the judge denied us the opportunity.

(Littleredfeather Kalmandson January 18, 2016)

As these excerpts from Honor the Earth organizational media demonstrates, there is a level contradiction within the rhetoric used by Honor the Earth in characterizing the nature of the threat posed by the Enbridge corporation and the proposed pipeline projects in Minnesota. An organization which not only makes strong claims about inclusiveness and the universal human imperative to protect the natural environment but actually manages to maintain a highly diverse support base also uses, from time to time, language of exclusion, trading on the common cultural fear in the United States of foreign corporations coming to exploit American resources (Salacuse 2013; Veseth 2002). This rhetoric also, curiously, seems to support the very colonial concept of the sanctity of private property – a language of support which is strange to hear from an organization that is both rooted in Anishinaabe traditions (which did not include concepts of private ownership, particularly of land, until after colonization changed the culture (Copway 1851)) and anti-capitalist. The contradictions involved in the organization’s characterization of the dangers at hand are likely a product of a large number of convergent factors, but there are two in particular that stand out based on the research conducted for this study.

First, these contradictions speak to the very personal, and in some ways non-rational (not to say *irrational*, as it is not based so much on emotion per se as on intuitive and normative judgment) nature of Honor the Earth’s organizational structure. A great deal of what the organization does, and what the organization *is*, comes down to what Winona LaDuke and a handful of other founding members and organizational leaders believe needs to be done. The the way in which the organization conducts its affairs is not rigidly structured, and may be prone to the kinds of contradictions that can arise not through failure to produce a coherent and cohesive message, but through the kinds of contradictory beliefs, prejudices, and priorities that are likely to take place in the mind of a single

individual or small group of individuals. Second, the heterogeneity of Honor the Earth's support base is likely to require a variety of rhetorical strategies to appeal to audiences with differing perspectives and interests. In conversation with the organizational leadership, the assertion was made on a number of occasions that the message Honor the Earth is putting out to the public is not designed to appeal to demographics, nor does the message change substantially from one audience to the next. From my own experiences in the field, observing Honor the Earth events, discussing the Honor the Earth narrative with organization members and supporters, and from extensive reviewing of organizational media, I do believe that what I have been told by the group's leadership is true, at least insofar as it was never the intention of the leadership to conduct the affairs of the organization in a way that prioritized being able to appeal to the largest and most diverse possible audience; I believe they are genuinely speaking on subjects that are important to them, in ways that stem from their own cultural, political, and educational backgrounds, and for the most part trying to communicate the same information to all audiences without particular regard for whether that message may alienate some potential constituents. That being said, there are certainly small variations in the semantics of communication with different audiences, including focuses on particular aspects of the admittedly complex Honor the Earth narrative depending on the particular interests of the audience at a given moment. Thus, even with the most honest and straightforward of intentions in the dissemination of information about the fight against the pipelines, the diversity of the array of audiences is likely a contributing factor to certain contradictions in the Honor the Earth narrative.

The Honor the Earth versus Enbridge narrative also serves to subordinate various other political and economic concerns to the primacy of environmental protection. This, too, presents something of a structural contradiction, given the organization's emphasis on holism as a foundational philosophical principle that might otherwise suggest that political, economic, and environmental concerns are all part of the same interdependent system. To an extent, the organization does recognize this interdependence, through its strategic collaboration with tribal governments as well as the emphasis in Honor the Earth media and public engagements on the investment in renewable energy sources and, in some cases, the jobs that such an investment would supply. However, there is a high degree of emphasis in Honor the Earth's communication with the public on not only the detriments of allowing corporate capitalism to exploit natural resources and pollute the land, but on the broader message that water itself is fundamental to all life, and the protection of waterways and all the life they sustain is of paramount importance. The Honor the Earth narrative posits that the political concerns of municipalities, of the state of Minnesota, and of the tribal governing bodies are all of little

consequence if they are cannot or will not adequately protect the degradation of the natural environment in which they live and operate; providing jobs, boosting the national and/or local economy, and providing the supply to answer the consumer demand all mean nothing in the long term if they depend on the destruction of the vital natural resources upon which all life depends. This kind of back-to-basics rhetoric responds to the instrumentality of corporate and bureaucratic thinking upon which entities like Enbridge and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources operate.

**b. Negation of political bodies, emphasis on replacement of political ties with affective, normative, and humanistic ties**

In the process of communicating the Honor the Earth narrative, from the origin of the organization to the ongoing and constantly updated most recent events in the protests, legal actions, and other events as they unfold, the organization itself, as well as the media stories covering their movements, have only rarely engaged in discussion of particular political entities, and when they are forced by circumstance to do so, it is often from a stance of antagonism (i.e., Littleredfeather Kalmandson May 22, 2016; Neary January 21, 2014).

In Winona LaDuke's acclaimed book, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (2005), the Honor the Earth director discusses the importance of indigenous people reclaiming the practices, beliefs, objects, and especially lands, that were part of their sacred connection to their lived environments. The book advocates a form of decolonial action than, at its root, draws on the active assertion of indigenous cultural presence and the power of indigenous communities (as distinct from polities) to create structural political and social change. Honor the Earth's efforts in averting the planned Sandpiper, Line 3, and Alberta Clipper pipeline projects are deeply connected to this effort for the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota, albeit in ways that are somewhat less directly about refuting colonial practices of naming, per se, than some of the other political and cultural projects that LaDuke describes in the book. The Honor the Earth narrative, in both the cultural and procedural variations, is invariably about using the power of cultural and spiritual tradition as a means of combatting colonial appropriations and mismanagement by corporate and political entities, and while the organization has at times allied itself with various polities for different political and legal projects (i.e., the inclusion of the Mille Lacs and White Earth bands in the original lawsuit against Enbridge), both the message and the practice of Honor the Earth's activism has been strongly oriented away from an organizational identity and network that rely on institutionalized political power, depending instead on relationships based on cultural, experiential, spiritual, humanist-ideological, and affective ties.

On the one hand, the distancing from political entities referenced in the quote above could be easily explained by simply assuming that Minnesota, the RBCs, and the MCT all have an innately antagonistic relationship with Honor the Earth, or more generally that bureaucratic political structures and grassroots organizations are naturally antithetical to one another. If this is the case, then it follows logically that Honor the Earth would not legitimate the power of political organizations in its communication of its own narrative to the public, nor ally itself with political entities for fear of losing its credibility as a subversive grassroots movement. And, to be sure, there is likely some element of these intuitive explanations involved. On the other hand, however, Honor the Earth has also allied itself from time to time with various political entities at moments in various campaigns that suited the legal and political projects of the organization. The White Earth and Mille Lacs bands have been directly involved in the fight against the proposed Sandpiper/Line 3 corridor (ICTMN June 3, 2015), and in early 2016, the organization began a collaboration with the Mille Lacs band on the “Anishinaabe Food Sovereignty Project” (Littleredfeather Kalmandson January 16 2016). Despite these instances, state and tribal governance are not only often vilified (in many instances justifiably so) in the Honor the Earth narrative, but undermined by the fundamentally environmental humanist and populist philosophy undergirding Honor the Earth’s organizational identity and network structure.

When Honor the Earth does incorporate other organizational entities into its own narrative (which is itself distinct from incorporating them into the Honor the Earth network or engaging with them, as not all inter-organizational engagements are incorporated into the narrative of Honor the Earth’s battle against Enbridge in northern Minnesota) in the capacity of allies, promoting these type of organizational ties in the process, the entities in question are almost always other community organizations, grassroots movements, local businesses, and informal networks of friends and family throughout the region in which Honor the Earth is most actively carrying out the fight against the pipeline projects. Organizations such as the 1855 Treaty Authority, Friends of the Mississippi Headwaters, and Interfaith Power & Light provide Honor the Earth with a significantly wider base of support and recipient audience for the Honor the Earth narrative than the organization might have been able to achieve alone, and particularly during the annual Love Water Not Oil tour and other public demonstrations that involve travel, Honor the Earth depends heavily on the material and moral support of small businesses owned by supporters, venues willing to host events, and allies of the organization with space to put up traveling Honor the Earth “protectors” overnight in the course of multi-day series of events.

By positioning political bodies as pro-corporate, and innately inimical to Honor the Earth's efforts and to environmental protection in general, and by positioning community and grassroots organizations, local businesses, and members of the family-and-friends network supporting the organization as the primary support-base by which Honor the Earth is able to carry out its campaigns and achieve success, the organizational narrative accomplishes a battery of rhetorical and material uses. In terms of using narrative production and communication to foster a particular organizational identity, this style of storytelling facilitates the creation of an identifiable villain (Enbridge) set against the destruction of the protagonist (Honor the Earth), weapons with which the villain asserts its dominance over the protagonist (the bureaucratic mechanisms and innate capitalist greed of political entities), and a diverse and – crucially – relatable cast of side-characters supporting the protagonist in their uphill pursuit of justice against the oppressive weight of overwhelming state and economic power. It is a narrative that meaningfully humanizes Honor the Earth, its allies, and its interests, while dehumanizing the villainous and faceless corporate and political entities.<sup>40</sup> As with the simplification of Anishinaabe culture for the purpose of presenting a coherent and easily digestible organizational identity and succinctly reminding audiences of the indigenous roots of the struggle at hand, Honor the Earth is also able to leverage the narrative simplification of its own relationships to government, corporate, civic, and cultural entities in order to further facilitate a clean definition of its own organizational identity. (This kind of simplification is also amenable to the news media outlets covering the Honor the Earth environmental campaigns, as in contemporary news media there is seldom sufficient space in a given report to cover significant organizational or relational complexity unless the outlet is willing to run a feature-series, which, as discussed above, media outlets thus far have not done (see page 163).)

By positioning political entities as essentially outside the basic functioning of the organization, and lionizing the importance of individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, and cultures – in short, the human element – Honor the Earth also manages to communicate to its base a sense of personal empowerment for supporters, and to associate its own organizational identity with the familiar and comforting themes of kinship, friendship, camaraderie, and populist justice. The structure of the organization depends on acts of material and human support by individual members, providing funding, attendance at events, participation in petitions and letter-writing campaigns, and other forms of direct support. In order to achieve this necessary goal, Honor the Earth stands to benefit greatly

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<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that these characterizations are fair or unfair, but simply that they are effective rhetorical tools toward the accomplishment of Honor the Earth's indigenous environmental goals.

from creating a narrative that represents the opponents within the political and economic spheres as violently opposed to the cultural, ecological, affective, and health-related aspects of human life – all things which are both more relatable to individual people and which people as communal beings are normatively trained to value and protect – and then associating Honor the Earth’s organizational identity with these exact social qualities.

**c. Anti-corporate decolonialism, Humanistic postcolonialism**

“There are some good people in the sciences, but let me tell you this, you know as well as I do, science does not know everything. And you don’t know what the long-term impact of a pipeline spill is? You don’t know what the long-term impact of a pipeline abandonment is? So let’s just not do it. So, to me, I’m not going to wait for science to prove it, I’m just going to stick to the fact that that’s a really dumb idea. My ancestors told me it’s a bad idea. My ancestors told me, ‘don’t do dumb stuff.’ That’s a direct quote” (Winona LaDuke interview excerpt, Aug. 23, 2015).

Honor the Earth presents us with a complicated case when it comes to understanding its relationship to ongoing structures of economic, political, and cultural colonialism. The organization is vehemently anti-capitalist, particularly anti-corporate, and is consistently opposed to the colonial structures of power that allow corporate capitalism to flourish and stand to profit from its successful hegemonic grip on American ideology. Yet Honor the Earth cannot, at the same time, be said to be wholly decolonial in the sense of the term used by scholars like Glen Coulthard (2014), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), or Walter Mignolo (2011), as the organization also embraces a philosophy characterized by a kind of holistic, “One World” humanism through its narration of the united responsibility of all humans to protect and preserve the rest of the natural world. Similarly, the rhetoric and practice of Honor the Earth’s activism, despite being rooted in indigenous empowerment, is pragmatically inclusive of indigenous and settler supporters alike, and is based on a strongly multicultural, transracial ethic of human oneness in the face of corporate exploitation and capitalist greed.

Where the narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood primarily functions as a decolonial narrative, and the biography of Shaynowishkung functions as a simultaneously postcolonial narrative (in the case of the original narrative) and a decolonial one (in the case of the counter-narrative), I will assert that the ongoing saga of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge over the protection of northern Minnesota lands and waterways is also simultaneously decolonial and postcolonial. Unlike the Shaynowishkung biography, however, which was divided into decolonial and postcolonial versions of the narrative, Honor the Earth contains elements of both within the single, complex narrative that describes the history of its struggles, the support it’s received, the goals it plans to accomplish, and the judicial,



legislative, and ideological roadblocks it has had to overcome. Within the Honor the Earth narrative, aspects of decolonial and postcolonial storytelling are woven together into an inextricable whole, reflecting somewhat aptly the holistic philosophy upon which the organization is founded.

The multicultural humanism Honor the Earth applies to the production and communication of its own narrative, along with the incorporation of non-Native staff members into the organizational core and the extent to which the organization relies on support from non-Native environmentalists in order to continue to carry out its missions, seems decidedly postcolonial. This is nowhere demonstrated more concisely than in the telling of the Seventh Fire Prophecy from Anishinaabe spiritual tradition, telling of a time when a new generation of people will be born who will set aside the damaging beliefs and practices of the past that have brought the world to the brink of destruction, and will walk the green path together into a healthier, more peaceful future (Benton-Banai 2010). The pipelines proposed by Enbridge hold unique dangers for the Anishinaabeg of northern Minnesota who depend, physically, culturally, and economically, on the existence of healthy wild rice beds throughout the lakes of the region (not to mention the health of the rest of the ecosystem), but non-Native people of all backgrounds are shown in the Honor the Earth narrative to have a vital stake in the preservation of a healthy ecosystem, with the consequences of failure being dire indeed (demonstrated in the prophecy by the alternate path which is well worn and scorched, where nothing can live). Honor the Earth emphasizes this shared threat and shared responsibility in their appeals to the public for support of their efforts and opposition to the pipeline projects.

Imagining Honor the Earth without these elements of postcolonialist rhetoric and networking structure is difficult, for in spite of the importance of the sovereignty of indigenous lands, emphasis on treaty rights, and assertion of cultural survivance within the Honor the Earth narrative, grounding their campaign in a critique of settler society (rather than a critique of capitalist exploitation coupled with the lionization of environmental protection) would likely alienate a massive proportion of the non-Native support base upon which the organization depends. It would be logistically inviable to propose more radical solutions to the problem than the current solution of ceasing the overexploitation of oil as a natural resource and construction of dangerous pipelines, as the more radical solutions targeting, for instance, the ongoing occupation of indigenous lands by colonial populations, could very quickly go awry when it is pointed out that all of the land on which settlers live today is indigenous land taken through force, coercion, and perfidy by the government they continue to support and from which they continue to benefit.

Despite the need (and, based on extended conversations with Honor the Earth leaders and supporters, apparently genuine interest) for multiculturalism, humanism, and universalism as guiding principles of the organization, Honor the Earth does practice a variety of decolonial action and narrative production, most having to do with the anti-corporate and anti-political (or at least selectively apolitical) nature of their work. While the organization is committed to bringing people together at the grassroots level, regardless of status as settler or indigenous and regardless of other markers of social division, they are also committed to challenging the structures of colonial power that rest in the hands of corporations and state bureaucratic institutions – a commitment which is fundamentally decolonial, as the ongoing processes of colonial domination are wholly dependent on the economic ideology upon which institutions like Enbridge were founded, and the political ideology supporting the ability of the state of Minnesota to determine what can or cannot be done with indigenous lands by the exploitive corporation. The solutions being proposed in the long term by Honor the Earth are rooted in Anishinaabe spiritual and cultural tradition – a tradition which does not call for the necessary ouster of all non-Native people from indigenous lands, but rather for the creation of a new generation of people who have moved beyond the harmful practices and beliefs of the past, and can be prepared to overthrow the systems of exploitation and violence that have characterized colonial history. In this sense, the Seventh Fire Prophecy might be seen as decolonial itself, despite its similarities with indigenous theoretical descriptions of postcolonial thought and its compatibility with some of the kinds of postcolonial projects that settler societies are invested in for their capacity to move beyond the unpleasantness of the past and absolve the present-day settler population of historical guilt (Coulthard 2014; Barker 2011; Byrd 2011; Simpson 2011). In practice, Honor the Earth has also relied on both capitalist enterprise (in the form of support from businesses as well as the production and sale of Honor the Earth merchandise to fund the organization’s campaigns) and on established political structures (including tribal governments, state offices, the laws and treaties of Minnesota and the United States, and most notably the judicial system). However, within the more simplified Honor the Earth organizational narrative, corporations and political bodies are made to represent that which Honor the Earth and its diverse, populist base must overcome.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have engaged with the ongoing and developing narrative of the indigenous environmental organization, Honor the Earth, in their conflict with the Enbridge Energy corporation over the implementation of oil pipelines through territory in northern Minnesota that includes

Chippewa treaty lands, reservation lands, sacred wild rice beds, and watersheds crucial to the ecological health of the region. The structure of this narrative differs greatly from the two previous case studies; while the Flood and Shaynowishkung narratives involve single, cohesive stories focused on a particular narrative arc, the Honor the Earth narrative is comprised of a vast compilation of individual stories and narrative fragments, informed by the different perspectives of members of the organization, media outlets, and moments of dialogue between various interested parties discussing and debating the pipeline projects at the center of the conflict between Honor the Earth and Enbridge. The fragmented nature of the Honor the Earth narrative, as well as the presence of narrative producers and distributors with different vested interests in the events around which the narrative circulates, has resulted in differing (and sometimes conflicting) ways of framing the pipeline conflict, producing cultural and procedural narrative frames that have overlapping but distinct modes of operation among the diverse narrative audience.

The Honor the Earth narrative presents a further complication of the role of the narrative as a colonial, postcolonial, or decolonial tool, as unlike the Shaynowishkung narrative, which demonstrated competing versions serving different political purposes, the Honor the Earth narrative demonstrates a synthesis of decolonial and postcolonial elements within the same political project, each element employed at specific times for specific purposes depending on the needs of the movement at a given moment. In the following chapter, I will address these different political roles that narratives play in the course of shaping Ojibwe politics and identity in northern Minnesota, alongside consideration of a number of other theoretical contributions that the combined and comparative analysis of these three narrative cases may yield for narrative sociology, indigenous critiques of national and transnational studies, and ways of defining the borders, membership, and formative processes of indigenous nations.

## 4.7 Figures

Fig. 7. Love Water Not Oil Tour map, 2016.



Line indicates route taken by canoe and horseback, with small points indicating stops along the route. Larger circles indicate independent feasts, concerts, and fundraising events associated with the tour. Map created using “Nations Online” Reference Map of Minnesota, and nodes along the route based on 2016 Love Water Not Oil tour itinerary at <http://www.honorearth.org/lwno2016>.

## Chapter 5: Theoretical Synthesis

### 5.1 Introduction

In this culminative chapter of the dissertation, I will take a step back from the three narrative cases, and examine the impact that the findings from this study may have, both in answering the research questions that drove the study design in the first place, and in engaging with the scholarly literature in narrative sociology, national and transnational political sociology, collective identity, and indigenous cultural and political theory. The chapter will be broken into sections addressing particular theoretical concerns, beginning with each of the three foundational research questions:

- (1) What are the most important narratives defining Anishinaabe/Ojibwe identity as perceived by Anishinaabeg and non-Native people in northern Minnesota? What are the criteria that make a given narrative an influential force in shaping these perceptions, and do these criteria differ depending on whether the audience is Native versus non-Native, or whether they live on a reservation or not?
- (2) By what processes and means do these influential narratives travel from one physical or social space to another? Are their means of mobility determined by the content of the narrative, its origin, or the identity of the distributor?
- (3) What social, geographical, and political boundaries do the narratives cross in the course of their transportation from place to place, and which ones don't they cross? How can we identify the boundaries of a community by the patterns of distribution in a given narrative? What happens to the content of the narrative when it crosses borders between Native and non-Native social and political space, and does the level and type of change depend on the nature of the story?

This will be followed by theoretical themes arising from comparison of the findings and theoretical implications of the three case studies. These latter sections covering these comparative theoretical discussions will each be further divided into subsections addressing specific theoretical contributions. The first section will address the theoretical contributions to the idea of “nationhood” and “nationalism,” critiquing the centrality of the nation-state as well as definitions of nationhood as singular and fixed; the subsections addressed here will consist of engagements with the concept of narrative nationhood, nationhoods as plural projects within a given polity, the concept of “nationing” – nationhood as a practice rather than a fixed political reality – and, lastly, the implications for transnational studies given the aforementioned shifts in the concept of nationhood. The second section will address the role of narratives in negotiation and maneuvering by different parties within

the colonial system. This section will be divided into two subsections examining, first, the use of narratives for colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial political purposes, and, second, the question of whether decolonial and postcolonial politics necessarily need be in opposition, or if narrative sociology provides new insight to suggest that these political projects can at times be complementary.

Each section (in the case of the research questions) or sub-section (in the case of the comparative themes) will be organized to respond directly to theoretical discourse in the fields of scholarship informing this study, with the hope that this direct engagement with the scholarship will provide a clear assessment of how the results of this study can benefit from, build upon, and enrich the critical work already working toward a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between culture and politics, of the struggles for control and assertion of identity in colonial systems, and of the potential of narratives as a methodological and epistemological tool with which to loosen the Western hegemonic grip on definitional power.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, following this chapter, I will discuss some of the practical uses I see for this research, including some of the community partnerships through which I hope to give back to the communities of northern Minnesota from whom the data was derived.

## **5.2 Research Question: Power & Purpose in Storytelling**

Addressing the original research questions from the beginning of the study one at a time, the first task at hand is to consider the relative influence of different narratives and narrative types in shaping perceptions of indigenous, Anishinaabe, or Ojibwe identity, and the narrative characteristics that tend to increase the level of influence that a given narrative may have in the political, social, and cultural environment of northern Minnesota communities. Given the unique social and political context of any given narrative case study, although it is possible to some extent to compare the relative importance of the three narrative cases examined in this dissertation research, the relative importance of an individual narrative compared with another can say nothing about the relative importance of its narrative type relative to another type. However, there are important elements of the specific *ways* in which each narrative manifests its influence that stand to tell us a great deal about the different contexts in which a given narrative type is likely to be more or less useful, depending on the particular use to which it has been applied. Put more simply, although it is not possible to say, for example, that current events narratives are a more powerful force in determining perceptions of indigenous identity than historical narratives, it would be possible to demonstrate that in the pursuit of influencing perceptions of the nature of contemporary indigenous political movements, current events narratives

are more powerful than historical narratives as a result of their more direct coverage of the movements as they occur as well as their greater depth and breadth of distribution. Before I am able to address these questions, however, I would like to provide theoretical context for the question itself by engaging with some of the scholarship concerning the relative importance of narratives and narrative types, both in the narrative sociological and indigenous studies literature.

**a. Thinking about what stories are important and why:**

Particularly within the growing body of scholarship in narrative sociology, there has been some substantial consideration to the question of how to determine the impact of narratives, and particularly determining the kinds of narratives that carry influence in particular aspects of social life. In *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Frank 2010), for instance, the task of narrative sociology is framed as focusing on the actions of narratives themselves as “living things” (20) with certain capacities to influence the social world in the course of their communication, rather than on the content of narratives as reflections of the world. In this, narratives are taken to perform different actions and have different qualities and levels of influence, changing the social world in particular and variable ways depending on their “narrative equipment” (27) – the characteristics of the narrative that connect its content to human troubles, character, point of view, sense of suspense, control, morality, memory, relationships to space and place, individuality, concepts of truth, and imagination. Frank does not in this text discuss the relative importance of different kinds of narratives in shaping the social world, but in outlining the ways that particular capacities of narratives allow them to perform context-specific functions, his theoretical analysis lays the necessary foundation for this kind of comparative way of thinking.

Frank cites, for instance, Kermode’s (2000) way of understanding narrative as formative of the relationship between people and the concept of time. “[W]hen narrative contains time within the sequence of *tick tock*, narrative *humanizes* time” (47, emphasis in original). In order for narratives to accomplish the task of “humanizing time” and thus making it habitable for people, the narratives in question must contain chronology and some semblance of causality (or, as Frank describes it, the “tick” indicating the imminence of the “tock” that will follow). To extend beyond Frank’s analysis to the kind of comparison with which I am concerned, it is possible to say that in a circumstance in which the primary function of narrative communication is to create or maintain a hegemonic concept of linear time (for example), the most effective narrative type will be the one which relies on a clear linear chronology and causal sequencing. A traditional Anishinaabe narrative would be relatively ineffective in this endeavor, by comparison with, say, a standard Western history text.

To return to the question at hand for the current study, however, what would be the most effective narrative type for influencing perceptions of Anishinaabe cultural, historical, or political identity? Frank makes clear that the three primary ways in which narratives make the world a habitable place for people are by teaching people who they are, connecting people to one another, and teaching people to distinguish what is “good” about life from what is “dangerous.”<sup>41</sup> All three of these functions of narratives play a role in determining perceptions of the identities of others. Logically, for determining Anishinaabe identity, we might expect that the most influential types of narratives are those in which (A) the Anishinaabe identity presented therein seems generalizable to the level of the collective, (B) the messages contained therein are most conducive to absorption or internalization by the audience, and (C) the content of a narrative in the given type contains an adequate answer to the three central questions of *who the Anishinaabeg are, how the recipient audience is connected to the Anishinaabeg, and whether and how the Anishinaabeg are “good” and/or “dangerous.”*

It would be reductive to simply say either that a particular narrative type emerges from this as the most influential, and equally reductive to simply say that a comparison can only be made on an individual narrative case-by-case basis. I would suggest that a given narrative type may indeed be more effective than another at influencing perceptions of Anishinaabe identity based on these particular capacities, but that which narrative type that might be depends entirely on the characteristics of the audience and the context of its telling. For instance, for an audience comprised predominately of non-Natives socialized within a colonial culture in which generalization of indigenous identity from extremely limited information is the norm (Berkhofer 2011; Huhndorf 2001; King 2012), the Shaynowishkung biography in either of its iterations – a story which communicates primarily the traits, actions, and experiences of a single individual – would likely hold much greater power in shaping their perceptions of Anishinaabe identity than it would for an audience comprised mainly of Anishinaabeg and non-Native people socialized in such a way that generalization of indigenous identity from limited information is not the norm.

In a sense, this emphasis on the characteristics of the audience in determining the level of influence of a given narrative contradicts the pure focus on narratives as the primary, if not only, agent of change to which Frank (2010) would like us to pay attention, and indicates that, even for narrative sociology in which the focus is expressly on the actions of the narrative itself, the importance of

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<sup>41</sup> This latter dichotomy of “good” and “dangerous” qualities of life and of people is inadequately supported for such a non-intuitive pairing, but seems to draw significantly from the narrative tradition in many cultures of omitting the discussion of good and evil for one of order and chaos.



audience interpretation in determining the relative influence of a narrative or narrative type cannot be so easily discarded as some may believe. Polletta et al. (2011) recognize the human element in the influence of narratives, though their interest has less to do with the power of the audience to dialectically determine through interpretation of the narrative the extent of its impact, but rather a trait they refer to as “narrative competence” (116), or the ability of a given storyteller to tell the right story at the right moment in order to achieve the desired effect.

As mentioned previously (see page 9), the field of narrative sociology itself has as yet been relatively unconcerned with issues of power and conflict, instead focusing on the capacity of narratives to communicate and reciprocally shape individual and collective identity, to facilitate connections between individuals and groups, and to cope with adversity. Narrative studies in general have not left the questions of conflict untouched, however, even if the particular works were drawn from a more interdisciplinary spectrum rather than being strictly concentrated within the boundaries of sociological discourse. Given the overtly political nature of narrative communication shaping perceptions of indigenous identity in a settler society, it is crucial to consider the relative power of particular narratives and narrative types in shaping not only perceptions of identity, but also the power relationships between and within indigenous and settler communities.

In the edited collection *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense* (Bamberg & Andrews 2004), an interdisciplinary group of authors produced commentaries surrounding six original essays published in a special issue of *Narrative Inquiry*. These essays, and the numerous responses from diverse scholars, address the ways in which people employ counter-narratives in order to resist more dominant cultural narrative – particularly “master narratives” that have been internalized and through which all other narrative information is meant to be seen. These counter-narratives vary widely and are fundamentally reactive; that is to say, the counter-narrative is, by nature, created in response to a failure of the dominant or master narrative to account for the experiences and problems of our lives. In a way, this defining trait reveals the most important narrative type within the context of resistance through counter-narratives: the master narrative itself. Paradoxically, in processes of using counter-narratives as tools of resistance, self-identification, and sense-making within one’s own life, the most important narrative type is the master narrative, without which the counter-narrative could not, by definition, exist. This seems to demonstrate the enduring asymmetry of power in narrative relationships, except for the fact that, as various authors in this volume attest, the determination of which narrative is dominant and which is the counter-narrative is almost always a matter of perspective, and the power dynamics involved tend to shift over time.

The chapters in this collection do address issues of power in narrative more thoroughly than most narrative sociological work, but they are also overwhelmingly focused on the narrative experiences, perceptions, and creations of the individual; in short, they are concerned exclusively with micro-level analysis – at least as far as the counter-narratives themselves are concerned, as the dominant or master narratives are often produced, distributed, and maintained by larger institutional actors. The engagements with counter-narratives in *Considering Counter-Narratives* all pertain to circumstances in which dominant narratives or master narratives fail to adequately explain or justify the experiences of life for particular individuals, causing a level of crisis in these individuals' self-perceptions. These crises are meant to demonstrate the necessity of the internalization of narratives for social and psychological health, without which we cease to have an adequate sense of self, of belonging, of support, and of reality. The counter-narratives produced serve the purpose of filling the spaces in individual experience left vacant by one-size-fits-all dominant narratives that miss the nuance and variability of local circumstance. In these cases, autobiographical narratives and biographies of those close to the narrator become essential for the production of local meaning and significance missed by the larger master narratives. They also function to allow the narrator to be freed from the determinism of the master narrative, allowing space to create their own vision of success and meaning rather than ascribing to a singular dominant ideal.

In the transmission of narratives that shape Anishinaabe identity and politics in northern Minnesota, and define the edges of cultural and political communities, autobiographies and biographies of those close to the narrator are essential, to be sure, but the Shaynowishkung biography may suggest an interesting expansion of this shared finding in the Bamberg & Andrews volume. Shaynowishkung was not a personal acquaintance of anyone alive today, and even his descendants living in northern Minnesota did not know much about his life until the recent project to replace the cartoonish statue in Bemidji was underway. In general, the counter-narrative that is currently gaining popularity in and around the city of Bemidji carried very little weight or influence until the last six years, prior to which it was occasionally employed by Anishinaabe historians in the course of educating students at the Leech Lake Tribal College. The historians communicating this counter-narrative – who are, incidentally, the same historians driving the recent distribution of the narrative to a wider audience – have no personal connection to the narrative of the kind described by the authors in *Considering Counter-Narratives*, and while these authors may be employing Shaynowishkung's biography as a means to explain failures in the dominant narrative, it has significantly less to do with making

sense of the experiences in their own lives than creating awareness of the historical roots of current inequalities and hostilities that characterize life for indigenous people in northern Minnesota today.

The communication of the Shaynowishkung biography as a counter-narrative suggests a couple of important developments to the understanding of biographical narratives as influential narrative types in attempts to resist dominant narratives. First, it suggests that under certain circumstances, the biographies that facilitate resistance of master narratives shaping meaning in the lives of individuals and groups may pertain to figures much more socially and historically distant than the authors in *Considering Counter-Narratives* account for. The theoretical importance of biographical counter-narratives in this volume seems predicated on a concept of “closeness” of the narrative subjects that is based on Western patterns of social and familial association; in other words, it assumes that in order for biographical narratives to carry significant influence as counter-narratives shaping a person’s life and self-perception, they must pertain to the narrators themselves, relatives with whom they have a personal relationship, and close friends or acquaintances. This makes sense within some Western cultural norms of the location of strong ties, but for many indigenous individuals and communities – including many Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota – connection with historical figures and with ancestors in general, and the remembrance of these individuals’ lives and stories, carries significantly more weight than it might to the average Western settler individual or community (Alfred 1995; Allen 2002; Johnston 2004; Rappaport & Tavuzzi 1998; Wilson 2013).

Second, the use of the Shaynowishkung biography as a counter-narrative also challenges the notion that the function of biographical counter-narratives is primarily to operate on the micro scale, facilitating the reinterpretation of personal experiences in order to counteract the anomic effects of not fitting into the deterministic path of dominant narratives. The Shaynowishkung biographical counter-narrative holds, for most individuals, relatively little significance as an interpretive device for understanding their own lives and experiences; rather, its primary function is challenge the much larger colonial master narrative of northern Minnesota settler history as characterized by cooperation, friendship, and multicultural camaraderie.

**b. Indigenous narratives of various kinds used for various purposes:**

Indigenous studies has, in general, done much more theorizing on the various uses of narratives for different purposes than narrative sociology, owing to a longer history in the field of indigenous studies as well as the much more substantial size of indigenous studies as a discipline unto itself, as opposed to narrative sociology which has positioned itself as an alternative methodological alcove in the labyrinth of the larger sociological discipline. Even without these justifications, however,

it should be unsurprising that indigenous studies has produced such a formidable volume of texts on the cultural and political role of narratives, given the explicit centrality of storytelling as a cultural and political practice for many (perhaps all) indigenous peoples, as described by a goodly number of indigenous scholars (e.g., Allen 2002; Archibald 2008; Cook-Lynn 1996; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013; Goeman 2013; King 2003; Sarris 1993; Simpson 2011; Vizenor 1999; 2008; Weaver, Womack, & Warrior 2006).

For the most part, those scholars addressing the role of narratives for indigenous peoples – particularly the scholars coming from indigenous communities themselves – discuss the storytelling practices as tools of conflict in colonial/decolonial struggle. To an extent, many of these scholars agree with the analyses performed in the *Considering Counter-narratives* collection (Bamberg & Andrews 2004), though much of the analysis done in indigenous studies has to do with much more macro-scale processes and practices, some of which I will address below by way of example.

Many critiques of colonialism aim directly for the various ways in which storytelling manifests as a primary tool for exercising erasure and/or control of indigenous peoples and identities. Among the more prominent scholars addressing colonial narrations are Vine Deloria Jr., Philip Deloria, Shari Huhndorf, and Thomas King. Though their approaches to the subject differ somewhat, particularly in response to the different historical moments in which each author was producing the particular works examined here, all level pointed critiques at colonial storytelling practices as well as discussing some of the ways that indigenous peoples produce their own counter-narratives.

Vine Deloria Jr. was one of the most prominent scholarly and activist voices during the 1960s and onward covering issues of American Indian history, politics, and religion, and the experience of colonial indoctrination for Native people in the US. In his seminal text, *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (2003 [1972]), Deloria renders a powerful critique against the ontological beliefs of Judeo-Christian religions and Christianity in particular, and the formative impact that these beliefs had on the creation of the Western colonial and imperial projects. Deloria's analysis is more theological than literary, but is grounded nevertheless in direct engagement with competing narratives – one of a particular vision of history which fostered the growth of Western human exceptionalist philosophy, and the other an indigenous vision of history which instead was critical, Deloria claimed, to the creation and maintenance of a healthy and sustainable balance between human beings and the rest of the natural world. For Deloria, unquestionably the most influential narrative type is the spiritual narrative, although he makes clear that within most indigenous ontologies, spiritual existence is

inextricably linked to all other parts of life, thus making all traditional indigenous narratives “spiritual” narratives by definition.

The importance of mythic traditions of Western and indigenous storytelling in shaping ontological perspective is also discussed by Smith & Fiore (2010), who demonstrate that for many Native peoples, traditional storytelling serves to mediate not only their relationship with the natural world, but with the physical spaces in which they make their lives as well. “The stories that contemporary Native Americans often need to hear are ones that acknowledge dislocation and isolation while enacting healing for both the individual and a community that includes the natural environment. By definition, these stories must grow out of the landscape—indeed, must participate in the landscape—in order to be efficacious” (60). These narratives are contrasted with the Christian mythos and writing which has created an entirely different landscape and served largely to alienate indigenous peoples from indigenous space and place.

The traditional Anishinaabe narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood certainly informs the kind of holistic indigenous worldview that Deloria describes, and for many Anishinaabeg – especially among the older generations – the assertion of that indigenous spiritual history represents an active rejection of the Christian history to which many living and deceased Anishinaabeg were forced to adhere through boarding schools and missions in the earlier part of the twentieth century. This narrative and the Christian religious history have both represented counter-narratives to each other in different historical moments and particular social circumstances, and to be sure, both have had tremendous impact in shaping the perceptions of Anishinaabe cultural, historical, and political identity in the long-term. However, the data from the narrative cases in this study suggest that the traditional narratives hardly hold a monopoly on this influence, with both empirical histories and narratives surrounding more current events circulating widely and carrying significant weight for many people, at least within the region of research in northern Minnesota.

Despite the apparent contradiction to the theory of the primacy of traditional narratives in shaping perceptions of the social world, there is the potential for a theoretical synthesis here that would actually build on Deloria’s writings rather than contradicting them. Although the Shaynowishkung and Honor the Earth narratives both demonstrated significant capacity within their respective environments of distribution to shape perceptions and even to challenge hegemonic representations of Anishinaabe identity and long-standing colonial institutions, there is little evidence in this study to suggest that the influence these narratives (or similar historical or current events narrative types) have on the perceptions of audience members is permanent, or even long-lasting. As

prior research on the subject has suggested, public attention on even momentous events in the news tends to be fleeting (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham 2016), and while the same cannot necessarily be said of historical narratives as well, it is conceivable that the kinds of spiritual narratives Deloria is examining have a more enduring impact on the worldview and perceptions of the audience, given their description of universalistic ontological and axiological principles, than historical or current events narratives that specifically describe idiographic phenomena.

Although Deloria focuses primarily on religious and spiritual narratives' role in the formation of American colonialism, these are not the only narrative types that have been essential in shaping the character of colonial expansion and domination, or counter-colonial resistance. In *The Truth About Stories* (2003), Thomas King quotes Gerald Vizenor in saying, "You can't understand the world without telling a story" (32). In this text, King uses various stories, Native and non-Native, traditional and modern, his own and those of others, to make a pointed argument about the nature of the relationship between people and stories, including Christian and indigenous creation myths that shape our ontological perspectives, but not at all limited to this narrative dichotomy or the narrative types it represents. These creation myths may have laid the groundwork for the worldviews that allowed colonialists to behave as they did, and provided the justification and methodology for indigenous resistance, but the actual process of carrying out the colonial and anticolonial projects that have comprised the ongoing struggle are far more diverse. King points in particular to the ways in which colonial social scientists, politicians, artists, and literary authors have employed characterizations and caricatures of American Indian people and peoples in order to separate the Indian of the collective imagination from the "Indian of fact." "One of the favorite narrative strategies was to create a single, heroic Indian (male, of course)[...]who was the last of his race" (33). This Indian imaginary fostered the concept of the Indian as something on the verge of inevitable disappearance, something to be mourned and memorialized, and something for which nothing could be or needed to be done.

This damning critique of the colonial imaginary is echoed in similar works by Shari Huhndorf (2001) and Philip Deloria (1998). Both Huhndorf's *Going Native* and Deloria's *Playing Indian* address various moments throughout American colonial history when, in the course of narrating and imagining indigenous identities, settlers have not only created all-new colonial fictions to suit the political, cultural, and social needs of the time, but have overlaid the qualities they imbued in these identities upon themselves, appropriating and claiming the very fictionalized identities they had themselves created. Neither author focuses exclusively on a single type of narrative, though the narratives that concern Huhndorf and P. Deloria are explicitly those that can be embodied by the

narrator and/or audience. In a sense, all narratives have this capacity, but it is admittedly more difficult to embody a current events narrative or a personal biography than a traditional narrative, a well-established fiction, or a more generalized history. For both of these authors, as well as Thomas King the relative power of different types of narratives is not the central question, but they do nevertheless demonstrate that for the purpose of incorporating the fictionalized traits of indigeneity-through-colonial-eyes into settler identities, narratives that depict non-Natives as Natives themselves, or at least as having potentially fluid identities, are particularly powerful.

We might also consider the role of narratives in such scenarios in a different light. If a narrative is, by definition, a collection of information conveying meaning through its chronological organization and selective communication of pertinent details, the acts of appropriation described by Huhndorf and P. Deloria could well be seen as benefitting from the *rejection* of narrative rather than from its use. Take, for instance, the propensity among colonists prior to American independence to stage political and economic protests (including the Boston Tea Party) in American Indian costumery (Deloria 1998). In this practice, the costumed settlers were not enacting a particular story. Their choice of appearance did indeed convey meaning (albeit often unexplained meaning), but lacked any semblance of chronology or narrative reference through which to interpret their dress as a storytelling act. Unlike the use of Shaynowishkung's image as a narrative fragment referring to the broader tale of his life, the imagery evoked in these early colonial instances referred to identity *without* story. If one were to tell the story of the people and history from which those costumes were derived, the meaning of their appropriative presentation would be complicated past the point of usefulness. In short, in these instances of identity-appropriation, the colonial project relies on the rejection of narrative rather than its selective use.

To be clear, this is not to say that colonial projects solely rely on this kind of narrative abnegation. In many of the instances described by Deloria and Huhndorf, indigenous identities have served colonial purposes by being stripped of their stories, but these hollowed-out identities are then attached to other stories – the “Indians” at the Boston Tea Party become part of the narrative of the event at the same moment that they are divorced from the reality of their origins. There are also innumerable examples of colonial powers employing (often fictionalized or distorted) Native narratives to further their own purposes. Such instances are described in detail, for example, in Jean O'Brien's *Firsting & Lasting* (2010), or Pauline Strong's *American Indians and the American Imaginary* (2012), among many others.

There is some empirical evidence in the present study for the importance of narrative abnegation for colonial purposes. In northern Minnesota, colonial dominance has been informed strongly by ignorance of indigenous narratives, especially when it comes to specific details. Knowledge of Anishinaabe spiritual history is virtually nonexistent among the non-Native residents of the area, and for those non-Native locals who are aware of these narratives, the narratives themselves have often served as the introductory and foundational experience in their path toward decolonizing their own perspectives. Likewise, with the Shaynowishkung narrative, as well as other similar local biographies and histories, the settler population is markedly ignorant of the details of historical narratives, being exposed instead (at least in the case of Shaynowishkung/"Chief Bemidji") to a symbol of identity that has been removed from the chronology in which it finds meaning and context. The Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, by contrast, is overwhelmingly concerned with the recognition of full historical detail, including the various complexities of Shaynowishkung's political and social position relative to the white and Anishinaabe populations of the region at the time. In terms of the Honor the Earth narrative, it is pertinent that the greatest ally of the corporate exploitation of indigenous lands through northern Minnesota is the ignorance of residents in the region concerning what is being done or the potential impacts, and here again, the silence of the colonial party (Enbridge) is being countered by an indigenous movement which is predicated largely on the provision of as much information – particularly narrative information of various stripes – as possible.

For indigenous purpose of counter-narration, it is impossible to determine which are the most important narrative types in accomplishing narrative resistance, primarily because in order to counter the intentional reductionism, selective memory, and erasure of colonial storytelling, indigenous peoples must by necessity use a broad array of storytelling techniques and narrative types. Among indigenous scholars, there are few topics that have been so thoroughly or emphatically addressed as the importance of narratives and storytelling practices as means of decolonial resistance. A full survey of this literature is not necessary, but a few particular examples are instructive regarding the variety and depth of functions that these practices serve for combating colonial ways of understanding history and identity.

In *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary & Activist Texts* (2002), Allen describes in detail how indigenous people have used specific narrative tactics in order to resist colonial assimilation and erasure at particular moments in history. Allen makes clear that there is no one strategy by which literary resistance can be achieved; instead, the strategy must always be suited



to the context of the political and historical moment. In the years immediately following World War II, for instance, it was unfeasible for American Indian and Maori writers to lobby direct form of resistance at colonial structures of assimilation, and thus many of these authors opted for forms of resistance that involved subverting these structures from within. These texts would help to navigate the difficult path between asserting full political and legal rights of state citizens to one side, and maintaining distinct indigenous collective identities to the other. For Allen, the relative influence of narratives in determining indigenous identity and political or social status is situationally-determined, though he makes explicit that the provenance of the stories – coming from the minds of indigenous writers – is key to their impact.

Although it is only a Master's Thesis, Anastacia Schulhoff's *More than Bows and Arrows: Subversion and Double-Consciousness in Native American Storytelling* (2010) echoes some of Allen's arguments in interesting ways, relating the position of American Indian people to the condition of "double-consciousness" described by W.E.B. DuBois (1909), given that American Indian people must be both "American" and "Indian" – two opposing identities, the contradiction of which allows them to be fully neither. Schulhoff points out that, as with the literary activist texts of Allen's analysis, storytelling often acts as a means for navigating this relationship through appropriation and subversion of the colonial representations of Native people by Native storytellers.

There are also more specific examinations of particular types of narratives facilitating decolonization and the prevention of assimilation and erasure. One such study is Peter Nabokov's *A Forest of Time* (2002), in which the author discusses the role of histories in particular as means of keeping the past alive and relevant, and also of coping with historical trauma. In examining "histories" as Native narratives, Nabokov uses a fairly broad definition of the term, referring to various styles of narratives that refer to events from the past, including both what I refer to as "traditional" and "empirical" histories. Crucially, Nabokov discusses the importance of *remembering the past* – of not letting the complexities and details of history be lost to time. This is an assertion that came up frequently in the conversations surrounding the Shaynowishkung Statue Project in Bemidji, with advocates of the counter-narrative being adamant about the necessity of recognizing not only the pleasant and palliative moments in history, but all the damage that was done as well. In discussing the relative importance of traditional and historical narratives with Leech Lake elder Elaine Fleming, I suggested that traditional narratives might have greater capacity for decolonizing minds of settlers, at which point Fleming argued pointedly that bringing the *whole truth* of history to light is absolutely

indispensable for decolonization, as without understanding and acknowledging the past it is impossible to move forward.

Analyses of narratives at the heart of indigenous resistance have also been applied specifically to the Anishinaabeg, both in the US and Canada, through works such as Leanne Simpson's *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* (2011) and the recent collection of essays from various Anishinaabe scholars on the various functions of storytelling for Anishinaabeg and Anishinaabe communities, *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies* (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013).<sup>42</sup> In the latter volume, as discussed earlier in this dissertation (see page 17), various scholars including John Borrows, Basil Johnston, Kim Blaeser, Leanne Simpson, and others present various ways in which stories and storytelling are at the heart of the Anishinaabe lifeworld as much today as in precolonial times. All the uses of narrative for indigenous communities outlined above, including remembering the past, reclaiming and reinventing indigenous identities, and resisting colonial practices of erasure, are applied here to the situation of the Anishinaabeg today. In Simpson's book, too, narratives are positioned as critical for the Anishinaabeg to continue to thrive, though her focus is narrower, concerned primarily with critiquing political marginalization and disenfranchisement in Canada, and critiquing as well the politics of reconciliation that often don't go far enough toward accomplishing the real resurgence of indigenous communities and lifeways. With this latter point, Simpson aligns her work with that of other indigenous critical scholars including Jodi Byrd (2011), Audra Simpson (2014), and Glen Coulthardt (2014).

All of these sources on narrative resistance discuss the importance of narratives, and the purpose to which they are applied, but few discuss the relative merits of different narratives types in accomplishing particular goals of decolonial resistance. It is noteworthy that, most commonly, these scholars have written primarily about either traditional indigenous narratives and storytelling techniques, about personal narratives (memoirs and the like), and about fiction-writing among indigenous authors. Also important to note is the common implication throughout the literature that decolonial literature must come from indigenous authors. This point makes intuitive sense, and moreover, seems necessarily correct when we consider that sovereignty is innately a condition or a project that must be asserted by those seeking it, and cannot be given (Alfred 1995; Byrd 2011; Calarco 2007; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Simpson 2014; Trask 1999). However, this raises the question, is it possible for narratives not produced or distributed by indigenous authors to accomplish acts of

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<sup>42</sup> It is also worth mentioning briefly doctoral candidate Chelsea Mead's dissertation work, *Zezüikižit Kchininaabe: A Relational Understanding of Anishinaabemowin History*. Mead is not explicitly concerned with narratives, but performs instead a cultural analysis of how the continuation of the Anishinaabemowin language depends largely on the presence of strong relationships in Anishinaabe communities – a principle which might easily be applied to traditional narratives as well.

decolonization? Can current events narratives written by non-Native members of the media, like many of those surrounding the Honor the Earth organization, serve decolonial functions? I would argue that not only is it possible for these narratives to serve decolonial functions, but it is in fact the very intention of organizations like Honor the Earth to rely on the reach of the news media to accomplish these goals.

Given the importance of other narrative types in shaping public perceptions of indigenous identity, it is interesting that indigenous studies scholars have focused primarily on traditional and literary storytelling. To some extent, these narrative types allow the indigenous storyteller to exercise the greatest amount of license over the content and use of a given narrative, but even in this process, the indigenous voices often remain mediated by publishers, editors, and even by the English language. In a sense, although the author of a given article may not be Native or have any particular ties to the Native community, the voices shaping the article's content are those making the decisions about what to do or not to do in the course of the action being covered by the news outlet. In this way, the subjects of current events narratives themselves act as kind of shadow-authors, determining the direction of the narrative without actually writing the story.

**c. Specific narratives used for specific purposes:**

In addition to the more general theorizing on the power of narratives to assert identity, to navigate trauma, and to struggle for power, both in indigenous studies as well (to a lesser extent) in narrative sociology, there have been a variety of studies addressing particular functions of specific narratives in various social and political contexts. The examination of these cases, when done in comparison with the findings from the narrative cases in this dissertation research, help to further elucidate the importance of particular narrative types, particularly those influencing perceptions of indigenous identity.

Two particular examples stand out from the field of narrative sociology. First is *Storied Lives: The Cultural Politics of Self-Understanding* (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992). This collection of essays addresses a variety of perspectives on the role of narratives in shaping self-identity, and, in particular, focuses on the importance of personal autobiography. The autobiographies of concern are not published works by people of great fame and power, but rather the humble stories people of varied backgrounds tell themselves about their own lives in order to make sense of their own identities and experiences, and through which they may shape not only their self-perceptions but also, in certain cases, the social and political structures in which they live. *Storied Lives* is not dissimilar to Bamberg & Andrews' *Considering Counter-narratives* (2004), though where the latter is concerned exclusively with

autobiographical rejection of norms and creation of counter-norms, the former primarily addresses how individuals create their own identities with narratives *mediated by* the cultural norms of their particular backgrounds. According to Rosenwald & Ochberg, the level of power and influence that a given narrative has for the individual at its center, and for the wider social world, is dependent largely on the cultural frames through which its details are interpreted. To use an example pertinent to the present study, the extent to which a particular recounting of the Shaynowishkung biography has the capacity to shape the perceptions and relationships of the storyteller(s) and audience(s) depends on whether the modes of narrative framing familiar to those involved in the telling are met to a sufficient degree that the story is, as Frank (2010) puts it, “narratable” – that is, culturally coherent.

While none of the three narrative case studies examined in this dissertation are autobiographies, *Storied Lives* still makes a point that is relevant for comparing the relative influence of each of the cases, and the narrative types they each represent. Namely, the central argument of the collection is that the influence a given narrative will have in shaping individual and group perceptions and relationships, and the extent to which that influence is empowering or disempowering, is dependent largely on the norms, values, and expectations imbued in the given autobiographer by their own cultural background. In the case of, for example, the dominant account of the Shaynowishkung biography, which lionizes the man’s passivity, compassion, and cooperativeness, and provides only enough details about Shaynowishkung’s life to depict a pointedly rosy picture of the early days of colonial settlement in the Bemidji area, the particular cultural background and social position of both storyteller and audience is as much a determinant of the narrative’s influence as the narrative content itself. The dominant narrative has held hegemonic sway among non-Native residents in the area for an exceedingly long time, yet the depth of its influence has been quite weak, with most residents content to let “Chief Bemidji” fade into the background as set-dressing for the local cultural scene. The storytellers circulating the Shaynowishkung biography in non-Native spaces have, up until recently, been almost exclusively non-Native. However, if a Native storyteller were to get involved in the production of the narrative, telling the story as an act of collective autobiography, the weight of legitimacy lent to the dominant narrative would increase immeasurably, potentially drowning out the voice of the counter-narrative. The ability of the counter-narrative to exercise the kind of change that it has been able to accomplish thus far has had a great deal to do with the relative weakness of the dominant narrative, and to the cultural authority with which its producers are able to speak.

The second example is an article appearing in *Sociological Review*, titled “Social capital as collective narratives and post-disaster community recovery” (Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2011).

Chamlee-Wright and Storr conducted a series of qualitative interviews in St. Bernard Parish, east of New Orleans, in the wake of the devastation wrought there by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They found that the particular collective narrative that community members used to characterize their own collective identity was comprised of principles of self-reliance, the telling of which helped to inform the strategies used by these residents in rebuilding their lives after the hurricane. Here, again, we have a form of narrative sociology focusing primarily on narratives as a source of self-definition and personal interpretation, but with underlying principles that can be extended to the role of narratives in determining the shape of power relationships and meso- or macro-level social structures and processes. Examining this case in relation to the Honor the Earth narrative is most useful for illustrating this point. The authors suggest that narratives can function for individuals as a catalyst for action and a source of resiliency, even when material resources may not be available in order to accomplish their narrative aspirations. In the case of the residents of the St. Bernard Parish, this meant that the narratives of resiliency, family cohesion, and independence from the outside world acted as self-fulfilling prophecies at a time when the community had been devastated and was receiving woefully little external support. For Honor the Earth, narratives such as Winona LaDuke's dream of riding against the current of the oil, or of the history of environmental devastation by oil pipelines, have acted in a similar capacity, but rather than convincing the storyteller of the organizational ability to create change, these narratives have been used in ways that help to galvanize the support base and expand the community. Collective histories functioning as social capital (insofar as they facilitate and embody the connections between community members) have tremendous capacity to solidify and even create an internal, insular identity at times of crisis (i.e., strengthening the collective core), but they are equally effective in the pursuit of creating an expanding base for group action (i.e., broadening the collective periphery).

**d. Specific indigenous narrative cases:**

Specific studies of narrative cases and narrative types influencing perceptions of identity and social action are myriad, but a few examples will be sufficient to raise some relevant points concerning the Flood, Shaynowishkung, and Honor the Earth narratives.

There can be no question about the importance of oral narratives for indigenous communities, not least of all those living under colonial states in which systematic attempts have been made to wipe out indigenous oral literature altogether. Any number of studies have been done documenting the role of oral literature and its potentially limitless functions for different indigenous peoples, but to illustrate this, I will draw from Jo-Ann Archibald's *Indigenous Storywork* (2008), concerning Coast Salish

storytelling, and Greg Sarris' *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* (1993), which discusses the importance of oral narratives in case studies among Alaska and Yukon tribes.

Archibald's book is an interesting case in the context of discussing the qualities of narrative that bolster its capacity to influence people's minds, relationships and actions. In an extensive series of conversations with three Stó:lō elders, combined with a large amount of reflexive thought about her own position as a storyteller, Archibald is taught by the elders that in order for stories to have the rejuvenating impact they are meant to possess for individual indigenous people as well as indigenous communities, they must be communicated according to a set of specific guiding principles. Through adherence to these principles, the narratives take on a life and an agency of their own, and develop the capacity to act in ways that meaningfully and positively influence the world. This characterization bears a striking and unsurprising resemblance to the way that Anishinaabe elders talk about traditional oral narratives (*aadizookaanaag*) like Wenabozho and the Flood, which is imbued with spiritual independence only when told in the "proper" way.<sup>43</sup> The principles apply specifically, in this case, to oral narratives, but this raises the question of whether there are a particular set of principles to other forms of narrative communication, or even to specific narrative types, that govern the level of impact of a given narrative. The answer is not contained in these pages, but it is important to note that the concept of narrative influence being determined by certain identifiable factors of the storyteller's approach to the telling and relationship with the narrative was present in multiple indigenous epistemologies and storytelling methodologies long before it ever became a topic of Western sociological concern.

In Sarris' *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, the author is also engaging with indigenous elders – in this case, Cache Creek Pomo elder Mabel McKay – but instead of examining the practice of "proper" storytelling and the characteristics of traditional narratives that allow them to create change in the world, Sarris considers the impacts themselves that indigenous narratives (and cultural production in general) can have, particularly pertaining to cross-cultural communication. Part of the point that Sarris is trying to make is that any given talk-instance contains various layers of meaning and significance, not all of which are ever successfully communicated. In a given instance, such as the telling of a story, there isn't just one intention on the part of the storyteller and one reception on the part of the audience, but an array of intentions, meanings, consequences, and so on, all of which have to pass

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<sup>43</sup> This concept has interesting implications for the epistemological grounding of narrative sociology, particularly as Arthur Frank (2010) describes it, given that the foundational assumption of the subfield is that narratives should be defined, studied, and understood as possessing tendencies, dispositions, and even agency independent of their authors – in short, as *doing* things in the world, rather than as *being done*.

through (or fail to pass through) a series of socially and culturally determined barriers that stand between storyteller and audience. In her communications with Sarris, with students, and with other people she meets day-to-day, the meanings and impacts of Mabel McKay's words are doubly filtered through her own changing intentions and the variable and plural interpretive frames through which the listener makes sense of what has been said. Sarris talks in particular about the ways that McKay uses her awareness of the barriers between herself and her interlocutors to craft language that forces the interlocutor to become aware of the barrier as well, thereby facilitating a critical reflexivity in conversation.

This practice that Sarris uncovers, of challenging cultural and social boundaries by making them visible through language, is demonstrated as well in the narrative cases addressed in the previous chapters. The Flood narrative is particularly well-suited for comparison, given that Sarris is talking to a large extent about the contemporary communication of traditional indigenous knowledges. The Flood narrative is told in a variety of different ways, orally and in text, but by the standards of Anishinaabe Wenabozho narratives, it is often one of the more serious. However, in the rendition by John Borrows in the preface to *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies* (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark 2013), Wenabozho is portrayed as a scholar with writer's block, who goes for a walk in the woods and winds up floating in a foul substance at the bottom of an outhouse, convincing his animal companions to dive down to find the stories they were all trying to find. They manage to escape when enough scholarly papers rain down from above that the knowledge covers the sludge and makes the world new again. The account is a fairly clear metaphor for Borrows himself (as "Nanaboozhoo") and the three editors of the collection (as "Lynx, Fish, and Bear"), and the process of assembling the collected essays, but the humor, the vulgarity, and the modernity of this account defies what would normally be expected from traditional indigenous storytelling (particularly to those who are unfamiliar with the frequently lewd and scatological humor of Anishinaabe stories (Gross 2009; Johnston 1996)). By presenting a narrative so jarring and unexpected to the reader, Borrows accomplishes with this traditional narrative (and even traditional narrative stylings of Anishinaabe storytelling practice) an illumination of the expectations themselves, inviting the readers to realize that they hold certain notions about what both Anishinaabe and academic writing should look like, and presenting them with the opportunity to question and change those expectations within themselves. This is also a demonstration of one way in which the decolonial and the postcolonial may be more tightly entwined in practice than they appear in much critical indigenous theory (Byrd 2011, Coulthard 2014, Melamed 2011; Povinelli 2011), given that decolonization taking place in the mind of the reader depends in part

on the demonstration of indigenous tradition through postmodern symbols, and at the same time, moving toward cross-cultural understandings and postcolonial respect requires awareness of and radical challenge to the continuing erasure of indigenous narrative traditions.

One last type of indigenous narrative has had a tremendous impact on perceptions of indigenous identities, while simultaneously discussing the relative impact of different narrative types (and communicative forms) within its own content: these are indigenous critiques of Western academic research and writing. There are numerous works within indigenous studies addressing the damage done by colonial research, the marginalization of indigenous knowledges in the academy, and ways of performing research with and about indigenous communities that can be empowering for the communities of concern as well as effective at decolonizing research practice in the academy. Among the most important of these works was and continues to be Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012 [1991]), in which the author discusses the history of the Western "cultural archive" (42) and the establishment of Western research ideology, the impact that this research has had toward the marginalization of indigenous knowledges and indigenous scholarship, and numerous example of indigenous (primarily Maori and American Indian) research that have made strides toward the decolonization of research practice. In *So you want to write about American Indians?* (2005), Devon Mihesuah presents a work that involves less narrative content than Tuhiwai Smith's text, but takes a more direct approach toward educating not only indigenous scholars but also non-indigenous scholars and students attempting to conduct research and writing on indigenous communities in a respectful way free from the kinds of colonial appropriations that have characterized such projects in the past.

Both of these texts establish the potential of a particular narrative type, the academic research narrative, to influence not only perceptions of indigenous identity, but the social, political, and even physical reality of life for indigenous people in settler states. Western academic research narratives, largely in the form of ethnographic and biomedical texts, have had a truly devastating effect on indigenous peoples through their complicity in all forms of colonial expansion, control, and eradication. From anthropological descriptions of indigenous cultural and religious practices, to cartographic research into the contours of indigenous lands, to pseudoscientific racial classification schemes that established legal and social divisions both between settlers and indigenous people and within indigenous communities as well, there have been few forms of narrative communication so integral to colonial domination as the scholarly research report. Paradoxically, however, the importance of these narratives for colonial powers makes them equally important sites of contestation against those same powers, as indigenous scholars and activists are able to mount an incisive attack



on the dominance of colonial structures by undermining the systems of epistemological domination upon which they have been constructed.

Each of the three narratives at the center of this study have, at various points, been subject to academic scrutiny and retelling. The Flood narrative has appeared in a number of ethnographic texts (e.g., Kohl 1860; McNally 2009; Parkman 1998; Wilson 1886; Sawyer 1911), and the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative biography was organized first as a pedagogical project for Leech Lake Tribal College students, while the battle between Honor the Earth and Enbridge over the placement of oil pipelines through northern Minnesota has appeared (albeit scarcely) in scholarly work (Black, D'Arcy, & Weiss 2014; Smithers 2015; Stoscheck 2015). It is interesting to note that, while the historical and current events narratives have both appeared in more contemporary scholarship and have to varying degrees played more decolonial or at least postcolonial roles in their capacity as academic narratives, the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood only appears as part of an academic narrative in earlier ethnographic texts, most of which were produced by non-Anishinaabe scholars and all of which are characterized by the kind of colonial gaze critiqued by authors like Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Mihesuah (2005). It seems possible that although traditional narratives have been studied and written about by indigenous scholars for decolonial purposes, it may be more difficult to accomplish purely decolonial strides through scholarship on traditional narratives than on other narrative types, given that the very publication of these narratives in written form, in English, using academic language to describe and interpret their meaning, is considered an inherently colonialist appropriation in and of itself, and potentially damaging to the spirit and potential of the narrative. This is, at least, true of a not insignificant number of Anishinaabe elders in northern Minnesota (which was, as previously noted, a primary reason for the general omission from detailed renditions of these narratives in this dissertation manuscript).

### **5.3 Research Question: Narrative Mobility**

The second and third research questions posed at the beginning of this study were addressed more fully than the first in the preceding chapters, and thus require less exploration here. However, there remain certain lessons that can be derived by comparing the empirical patterns identified for how the three primary narrative cases move through and between political, social, and physical spaces, and the theories concerning narrative mobility already existing in the literature.

Considerations of the mechanisms by which narratives move from one place or space to another have been woefully few and far between.<sup>44</sup> A handful of books and essays have addressed the means and patterns of mobility, in oral narrative form specifically but also occasionally through other media. Although the collection does not generally address the issue of narrative mobility in particular, there is a passage introduced by Jeffrey D. Anderson in the edited volume *Native American Language Ideologies* (Kroskrity & Field 2009), in which he discusses changes in the linguistic culture of the Northern Arapaho that is a pertinent place to begin this discussion:

“The reservation has also experienced a loss of permanent communal social spaces. During the early reservation period families gathered at various sites along the various rivers in recognized camps. Today the flow of life has shifted from the rivers to the roads and modern housing patterns. Still, many extended families form clusters of houses on shared housing sites or allotted lands still held in the family. Before automobile travel came to predominate, the towns and missions on the reservation were also thriving social centers of activity, from trade to work and social interaction. Today, the once-vibrant town of Arapahoe, for example, has ceased to exist, though prior to World War II it had a railway station, a hotel, several stores, and a government subagency office. Elders today recall the ‘old-timers’ sitting around the town for hours on end talking in Arapaho accompanied by sign language. Arapahoe, along with several other camps and centers, has dissolved into an aggregate of buildings or function sites as time-space zones for specialized events in the daily and weekly cycle. In their daily life paths, people move in and out of these zones for different functions without a common gathering point or center of communication for the community or tribe” (Anderson, in Kroskrity & Field 2009: 61).

In this passage, Anderson notes the persistent loss of communal spaces of communication in Arapaho reservations, but he could just as well have been describing Ojibwe reservations in Minnesota (albeit to varying degrees in different reservations, towns, and more general geographic regions). Between allotment, agriculturalist assimilation, and capitalist ideological indoctrination, the structure of Anishinaabe communities have changed drastically since the early days of colonial contact. This is not exclusively true of indigenous peoples, however, as communal structures for settler agricultural areas, small towns, and perhaps especially large cities have undergone drastic change as well. The relevant point for our present discussion is that these changes – the loss of communal spaces of communication (particularly oral communication) and the proliferation of spaces of specialized and private communication (i.e., private homes, offices) – have had massive influence on the ways that narratives may be and are communicated within and between social and political spaces. With the loss

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<sup>44</sup> Also exceedingly difficult to locate, as “narrative mobility” or “mobile narratives” as search-terms tend to turn up narratives *about* mobility.

of communal spaces comes a diminishing and specialization of oral narrative communication, given that the moments of oral storytelling become more rare and assigned to more particular social spaces. Conversely, opportunities for written storytelling as well as digital storytelling have increased exponentially with access to the internet. The combination of these factors indicates that, spatially speaking, oral narrative mobility has decreased at the same time that written and digital narrative mobility has increased dramatically.

The shifting away from a broad oral narrative practice at the center of indigenous communal life (if not also the communal life of settler societies) raises certain questions in light of Niles' (1999) assertion that the sharing of oral narratives is the very foundation of culture and cultural distinctiveness. In particular, the role of non-oral narrative practice in the formation of culture is called into question, as surely alternative narrative forms are not merely vestigial organs in the process of shaping and reshaping the beliefs, values, knowledges, relationships, social structures, and behavior of culture-groups. Niles does not explicitly deny the importance of non-oral narratives, but nor does he address the subject. One of the central discussions in his seminal text, *Homo Narrans* (1999), posits that the distribution and social function of a narrative depends in large part on the developed skill of the storyteller – a theory which has seen significant traction in narratology and folklore studies (Bauman 1986; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Chambers 1984; Dorson 1982; Frank 2010). The importance of storytelling skill extends not only to the impact of a given narrative, but to the renown of the storyteller and the subsequent potential for spreading their narratives to a broader audience. Certainly, this principle holds true as much for written narrative as for oral narrative, though in both cases the actual traits determining the level of skill are wholly determined by the narrative norms of the particular cultural environment.<sup>45</sup>

This historical change in the patterns of narrative mobility become yet more significant when considered in combination with Marie-Laure Ryan's *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (2004), which contains perhaps the broadest consideration of the patterns of narrative mobility by various means of communication. In this collection, scholars from media studies, literary studies, and cultural studies examine different forms of narrative communication, including oral narration, still and moving visual media, digital media (including video games), and music. Much like the work in narrative sociology, *Narrative Across Media* seeks to distance itself from the dominant media studies discourse and take a more inductive approach to storytelling techniques, finding among the collected

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<sup>45</sup> Niles notes that the ability to adapt narratives to different normative environment is itself a critically important skill for an oral storyteller, which may hold true for authors of written works as well.

essays support for the notion that the medium of communication is not only the means by which the narrative is transferred from one space to another, but also deeply imbricated in the process of shaping the content and meaning of the narrative itself. Ryan's collection also establishes a solid basis for understanding images as narrative carriers, since the mark of narrativity is the capacity of a given narrative text to evoke story and meaning in the mind of the audience.

In the introduction to the text, Ryan evokes the metaphor of a tube or pipeline (coincidentally enough, considering its application here) to discuss the collection's response to structuralist narratology, which viewed media as simply the conduit through which narrative essences were transmitted to the public. To the contrary, Ryan (and the assembled authors suggest that the shape of the different "pipes" allow particular narrative meanings to pass through to the audience, while filtering other narrative forms and meanings that don't fit the particular shape of the particular "pipe." Although *Narrative Across Media* never directly addresses questions of mobility across space, it does provide meaningful insight into the importance of particular media in determining the role that a narrative is to play in the world – insight which, taken with the argument in this dissertation, that narratives are innately mobile, and that different narrative media spread narratives across space in different ways, would indicate that particular forms of narrative media have particular forms of influence on narrative content, meaning, and social influence. The critical addition I would bring to the discussion in this text is the consideration not only of the shape of the "pipes," but the breadth and locations of their reach.

For the purpose of illustrating the concepts at hand, consider the most medially diverse of the three narrative cases: the narrative of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge Energy. In *Narrative Across Media*, the criteria of a given medium that determines the content and meaning of its communicated narratives seem to fall along two main axes. First, whether the medium in question has only one "channel" (linguistic, acoustic, visual, static, kinetic) or multiple, and second, which particular "channel(s)" it employs. These traits, combined with the content of the narrative itself, help to determine its level of "narrativity," or potential to successfully communicate narrative meaning. For the Honor the Earth narrative, there are two discrete but overlapping narrative accounts, the cultural narrative and the procedural narrative, which carry in some cases profoundly different messages concerning the organizational identity, and the nature of indigenous, Anishinaabe, or Ojibwe identity, politics, and culture. According to the principles laid out in *Narrative Across Media*, the division of the Honor the Earth narrative into these two linked but oft-conflicting accounts could be attributable to

the particular media through which the accounts are communicated – a theory which is borne out by the evidence, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The procedural narrative primarily appears in news-media and, to a lesser extent, in organizational media produced by Honor the Earth primarily for the purpose of educating their support base on the dangers of the proposed pipeline projects and on information concerning the ongoing status of the legal and procedural blockages that Honor the Earth uses day-to-day in order to slow down the process of planning and implementation. The cultural narrative, on the other hand, is propagated through a variety of media, including face-to-face talk, visual media, music, and non-procedural forms of digital communication. The qualities of these different media – of print media, oral, visual, aural, and so on – allow for particular kinds of information to be communicated, and thus the differentiation between cultural and procedural narrative is born. News media is defined along one axis by its capacity for multiple “channels” of communication (in this case, linguistic and visual in the case of printed media, linguistic and aural in the case of radio, and linguistic, visual, and aural in the case of television news), and along the other axis by the particular “channels” employed in a given news media format. Consequently, the Honor the Earth narrative that is produced may not include the musical elements when in print, the visual symbolism when on the radio, or even the gustative element so critical to traditional Anishinaabe gatherings including many Honor the Earth events when in any of the available news media. These crucial components of the cultural narrative are filtered out by the shape of the “pipe” through which the Honor the Earth narrative is distributed by the news media.

In addition to the criteria identified in *Narrative Across Media*, the Honor the Earth procedural narrative is informed by the constraints of capital, by designations of column-space for particular stories, and by cultural expectations for style and content (e.g., impartiality) – all characteristics of the particular narrative media, rather than the essence of the narrative itself. As for the cultural narrative, the various forms of media through which this account is communicated to the public help to determine the extent to which certain elements of narrative information (cultural, procedural, or otherwise) are included in a given instance of narration, as well as the level and type of influence that the narrative may have, just as with the procedural narrative. The additional factors of cultural expectation, temporal and spatial storytelling constraints, and so on are as present here as in news media reporting on developments in Honor the Earth’s legal actions, or movement by Enbridge toward the implementation of pipeline plans.

It is also important to note that the edited collection on narrative media does not adequately address the role of agency on the part of either the storyteller or the audience, choosing instead to focus their analysis on critiquing the notion of essential elements that remain at the heart of every narrative regardless of its medium of communication. The authors rarely touch on the subject of how the choice of media is made prior to the dissemination of a given narrative or narrative type – a subject which certainly has a great degree of bearing when considering how meaning and interpretation are manufactured through the strategic use of narrative communication.

#### **5.4 Research Question: Narratives Crossing & Creating Boundaries**

Concerning the third and final research question, compared with the relatively meager volume of work on the means by which narratives move through social and political spaces, there is considerably more literature covering the subject of the relationship between different types of narratives and the social and political borders and boundaries that the narratives encounter in the course of their mobility, and the ways that communities with borders of varying definition are created by the communication of narratives. The latter topic is particularly pertinent to the questions of narrative nationhood, which will be addressed in detail in the next section of this chapter. Much of the literature on this topic, and the findings pertinent to it from the narrative cases of the Flood, the biography of Shaynowishkung, and the Honor the Earth environmental campaigns, has been addressed in the preceding case-study chapters. However, in stepping back from the individual cases and examining the “big picture” in relation to current literature, it is possible to build up existing theory and provide further support for the notion of mapping communities through patterns of narrative communication.

##### **a. Thinking about narrative interaction with borders and boundaries:**

Most of the relevant scholarship on the interactions and relationships between narratives and social and political borders comes from the field of indigenous studies, but the subject has also been of some interest to scholars in international and transnational studies, global literature, and even narrative sociology. Despite these engagements, however, while studies have dealt on some level with the relationship between narratives and borders, there remains a serious dearth of scholarship, either theoretical or empirical, on the impact that the movement of narratives itself has on those very relationships.

In *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States* (2008), Claudia Sadowski-Smith considers how the relationship between the US and both its neighbors and

other countries around the world from which people are consistently seeking to emigrate to the US influences the kind of narratives that are produced both within and about the border spaces at the edge of the central nation-state. In the introduction to the book, the author posits that the narratives examined within “suggest that the transnational nature of borders significantly affects those who reside or travel through these areas, both their views of themselves and their relationship with these locations. At the same time, however, the specific cultural beliefs, histories, and material circumstances of individuals and communities also produce diverse conceptions of border spaces” (3). Put more pointedly, the political reality of border spaces at the edge of the US nation-state has a strong influence on the perceptions of identity, culture, belonging, and nationhood of those who regularly interact with those borders, and these effects are reflected in the narratives that are produced by and about these people.

Sadowski-Smith’s analysis is dependent on the power of global geopolitics and macro-scale cultural and political discourse to shape perceptions and narrative production, but there is no reason to suspect that these effects are only felt at the boundaries between nation-states. The analysis of US “border fictions” as a phenomenon primarily seen in reference to the border between the US and Mexico, or the ports and urban hubs through which Asian immigrants enter the country, serves to feed the perceived primacy of the nation-state as the macro-level unit of analysis, but this is certainly not the only environment in which the politics of borders influence narrative production. Just as the dominant rhetoric in the US surrounding fears of terrorism and the supposedly overly porous borders of the country have, as Sadowski-Smith explains, strong influence on the kinds of stories people on either side of the borders tell about the border and its abutting nations, political and racial discourse have incredibly strong formative effects on the kinds of stories that are told about reservation spaces in northern Minnesota, about the relationship between Native and non-Native spaces, about border enforcement, and other aspects of life in this region of the state.

A common perception among non-Native residents in northern Minnesota, particularly in urban areas, is that the reservations in the area are fundamentally dangerous places, to the extent that some non-Native residents in the region go out of their way to avoid going to (non-Casino, non-resort) reservation spaces. The perception is particularly strong in reference to the Red Lake Nation, but is also not infrequently applied to particular regions on the Leech Lake and White Earth reservations as well. On the main highways through which non-reservation residents might enter reservation spaces, the boundaries of the reservations are clearly marked, and these people from outside the reservation are often reticent to travel through outside of these main thoroughfares. These

perceptions of spatialized risk have extraordinarily strong influence on local narrative practice, both in terms of the narratives produced by people outside the reservations who hold these (largely mistaken) perceptions, and those produced by reservation residents (Native and non-Native) who have a very different perspective on the character of these spaces, and are often keenly aware of the division between their own experience of reservation living and the stereotypes that abound in narrative circles outside the “rez” borders.<sup>46</sup> These perceptions also shape how the narratives that are told about reservation spaces (and, indirectly, their borders) are received and interpreted.

For instance, there is an overwhelming sense among Anishinaabeg and those supportive of Anishinaabe communities that the media is implicitly biased against Native people, and that the local media outlets almost exclusively report on stories of crime, poverty, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and violence with regard to Native people and reservations. Interestingly, this sense is largely shared by the non-Native people who are more ignorant of Native spaces and lives, although while this perceived bias is condemned by the former audience, the latter seems to see it as an accurate reflection of the social reality, and uses it to inform their beliefs about the Anishinaabeg and their reservations. The reality of what appears in the media, however, is often quite different, with feature stories about powwows and other community events, social programs, educational programs, reservation politics, and other broadly positive stories about reservation life. To be sure, there is a high frequency of reports on crime and other social issues, but the presence of these stories in the news media nowhere near matches the public perceptions from variously-positioned audiences.

The three main narrative cases are also affected by the political and social status of not only reservation borders, but state and national borders, as well as less definite and nebulous boundaries between various communities in the region. Consider, for example, the spread of the Shaynowishkung biography (in text) across the state border into northern Wisconsin, where the texts containing some reference to Shaynowishkung are nearly as well-distributed as they are in northern Minnesota, contrasted with the complete lack of these narrative sources north of the US-Canada border. The nature of the dominant (colonial/postcolonial) narrative is such that it appears with greatest frequency in travel books, touting “Chief Bemidji” as a local eccentricity of the Bemidji area. Both the content and the patterns of distribution of these books are strongly affected by the foundational importance of the US national borders, which very few travel guides providing information on attractions both

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<sup>46</sup> Good illustration of insider perspectives (as well as keen insight into the nature of the outsider perspectives) pertaining to northern Minnesota reservations can be found in the works such as David Treuer’s *Rez Life* (2012), or Jim Northrup’s *Walking the Rez Road* (1995), *Rez Road Follies* (1997), and *Anishinaabe Syndicated* (2011).



inside and outside of these borders. Thus, in distribution as well as perception, Shaynowishkung's biography becomes (at least in some cases) a US national narrative, and certainly a regional narrative, but never an international one.

Mezzadra & Neilson also discuss the importance of borders in narrative production, albeit from a very different angle, in *Border as Method* (2013). This text challenges the dominant globalization narrative that the world is becoming more homogeneous, asserting instead that the expansion of global capitalism and the migration of labor forces into spaces where formerly distant communities are brought into proximity with one another is actually facilitating the continuous creation of new borders in these spaces of contact. The concept of a "border," for Mezzadra & Neilson, is increasingly detached from nation-state divisions, and increasingly determined by the political heterogeneity created by the transnational movement of global capital. "The instances of bordering that we analyze in the following chapters are selected according to the intensity with which the relation between the two poles of border reinforcement and border crossing manifests itself in border struggles" (9). The authors of *Border as Method* aim to understand the fluid conditions of global capitalism through an epistemology and methodology that prioritize analyses of border reinforcement and border crossings, an effort which I wholeheartedly support. However, where their focus has been primarily on the movement of labor and financial capital, I take a similar approach to the movement of narratives. Despite the differences in the particular target of our research and theorizing, the work done by Mezzadra & Neilson provides strong theoretical support for the idea that communities, identities, and cognition are constantly being shaped by the mobility of capital and information within and across borders, and that it is possible to remap the social and political environment according to the ways these movements encounter, cross, or bounce off existing social borders.<sup>47</sup>

From a narrative sociological perspective, Arthur Frank most directly addresses the role of narratives in making or breaking borders between communities of people. In *Letting Stories Breathe* (2010), amid a broader proposal for the study of narratives as independent agents shaping the social world, Frank also discusses the narrative function of marking the boundaries of communities – boundaries which frequently differ from the political and geographic borders drawn between people by state powers. "[Socio-narratology] studies how stories create and play with boundaries: who defends which boundaries, who crosses boundaries, and what effects those boundaries have" (71).

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<sup>47</sup> It's also notable that Mezzadra & Neilson are themselves using ethnographic narratives as the primary source of data for their development of the "border as method" approach, as analysis of the stories we tell about particular social and political spaces is essential to understanding the movements of labor, of economic capital, and of information, and the locations of the various heterogeneous and shifting borders that these movements make visible.

Not only is it possible to identify the borders of communities without resorting to fixed geopolitical designations, but there are few social processes so constant and foundational to the make-up of society that they would be suited to the task of comprehensively locating and analyzing these borders; narrative is perhaps one of the most viable universal mechanisms for doing so, given its ubiquity and power in social life.

**b. Mapping indigenous nations**

The relationship between narratives and borders has been somewhat more thoroughly explored in indigenous studies scholarship, particularly some of the various ways that colonial powers have made use of narrative in order to lay claim to indigenous spaces and relegate indigenous peoples to certain bounded spaces and places, as well as the ways that indigenous storytellers have used their own narratives to combat these claims and to assert indigenous control over space and place. The methods of narrating space and place that they outline can be seen clearly in the examples of the narrative cases of this study, though the three cases in question manifest their own particular twists on the established theories.

A particularly relevant work is Honor the Earth director Winona LaDuke's book, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (2005), in which the scholar and activist considers the many colonial and counter-colonial purposes of naming the Self, naming the Other, naming indigenous spaces and places, and the acts of appropriation and reclamation that take place through these naming processes. LaDuke recognizes naming as an act of narration, of creating a particular narrative identity and history, and associating it with a person, a people, an item, or a place. Among other examples, LaDuke traces the history of Mt. Graham in Arizona, a sacred mountain for the Apache people which was, over time, stripped of its sacred status through a process of colonial naming and narration, and upon which the Catholic Church and the University of Arizona would construct a series of contentious and illegal telescopic observatories and laboratories. Claims of inauthenticity of Apache resistance as well as mischaracterizations and misrepresentations of Apache history, identity, and religion were all essential tools in the process of this colonial appropriation, and, on the other side of the battle, assertions of legitimacy, spatial sovereignty, and accuracy of representation functioned as the means by which the Apache struggled to reclaim the sacred mountain. These processes of colonial naming and claiming were applied to devastating effect against the Anishinaabeg of northern Minnesota as well, as both LaDuke and Melissa Meyer (1999) discuss at length.

In the case of the three narratives discussed in previous chapters, the power of naming in the determination of settler or indigenous control of space cannot be overstated. The Shaynowishkung

biography provides a particularly stark example of the political power of naming in northern Minnesota colonial history. Shaynowishkung's own experience of colonial settlement began and ended with acts of colonial naming, given that the first white settlers to the area immediately renamed Shaynowishkung as "Chief Bemidji" through an act of both linguistic and socio-political ignorance, and that at the end of his life, Shaynowishkung's occupation of his land in the town of Bemidji was designated to be illegal squatting, resulting in his forced removal to allotment land on the Leech Lake Reservation. In recent years, the movement toward the establishment of the counter-narrative biography has relied just as much on acts of renaming and reclaiming; the very act of mis-naming Shaynowishkung by the settlers is held as an example of colonial arrogance in the counter-narrative, and is supplemented with detailed recognition of precolonial social and political structures, the specific processes by which colonial control was extended over the region, the names of political and economic figures who played a role in these processes as well as indigenous leaders who were variously resistant, complicit, or somewhere in between the two with regard to colonial and capitalistic endeavors. LaDuke applies these practices to the struggle over sacred lands, practices, and objects, but the power of naming extends to all components of colonial control and indigenous resistance, and is carried out largely (if not primarily) through narrative communication in various forms.<sup>48</sup>

There have been numerous examinations of specific acts of spatial narration, similar to the "naming" practice that LaDuke describes, and recent scholarship has elucidated the extent to which these acts of indigenous narration have been critical for understanding the shapes of indigenous political and cultural communities, including their borders. Mishuana Goeman's *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013), and Joseph Bauerkemper's article, "Narrating Nationhood: Indian Time & Ideologies of Progress" (2008) are two such examples. Both scholars discuss American Indian literary works, and their implications for the struggle between indigenous and colonial conceptions of indigenous space, in which the colonial powers enact systems of enclosure and confinement, while indigenous resistance often aims explicitly to break down the barriers placed around and between indigenous peoples as well as those placed around concepts of time, space, and place. Goeman specifically considers the literary works of Native women, choosing this narrative form for her analysis in large part because these narratives (as opposed to academic histories, cartographic maps, or other more dominant forms of spatial narration) provide the flexibility to not

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<sup>48</sup> Another striking example of Anishinaabe decolonial naming practice is the use of the term *Anishinaabe Akiing* [Anishinaabe Country/Land] to refer to the diffuse lands occupied by the Anishinaabeg not only in Minnesota but in other states and into Canada. This act of spatial naming has interesting implications for the contours of Anishinaabe nationhood, as discussed further below.

only re-interpret Native spaces in ways that confound colonial enclosure, but also to imagine the possibilities for spaces and places that *could be*, rather than simply those that currently are. Through descriptions of their own experiences and perspectives on Native living across the borders of settler spaces, these authors represent a vision of Native nations (tribal and nontribal) that reject colonial confinement or fixed definition. Similarly, Bauerkemper's work examines the writings of Native authors Leslie Marmon Silko and Craig Womack, illustrating how their writings support visions of indigenous nationhood beyond the colonial nation-state, and approaches to history that reject colonial notions of teleological "progress."<sup>49</sup>

A third noteworthy study is Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996), an ethnographic and narrative study of the relationship of the Western Apache to the surrounding landscape in which they live – a relationship which is mediated and applied largely through traditional storytelling practices. Of particular note relative to this dissertation is the practice of using narrative mnemonics – fragments of narratives that refer back to the larger narrative or to core messages embedded within the narrative – as a means of establishing and policing ethical behavior, providing comfort or admonition, or interpreting the significance of events. Basso refers to this practice as "speaking with names" (80), so called because the Apache will use the name of a particular location as the mnemonic device, evoking the narrative that is associated with the location in order to communicate their point, a practice which is both succinct and tremendously efficient, as the amount of ontological, epistemological, and axiological information that can be communicated with a simple naming is often vast. In Anishinaabemowin, to the best of my knowledge there is no such practice per se, but the practice of using narrative fragments as mnemonics is common in other ways. These narrative fragments are also often deeply embedded in the reinforcement or critique of social and political borders, such as the attachment of "Chief Bemidji" to the town of Bemidji (an attachment which removes his biography and identity from indigenous spaces), the references to "the Canadian Enbridge Energy" corporation in Honor the Earth organizational media, or references to "Turtle Island," indicating both the continent of North America and to the traditional narrative of Wenabozho and the Flood (as well as other similar indigenous narratives).

## 5.5 Themes From Comparative Analysis: Implications for nationhood

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<sup>49</sup> Narrative mapping is one of the more important and well-theorized means of decolonizing space, but it is far from the only method. Chapin et al (2005) review a whole spectrum of strategies used by indigenous peoples to regain control of their own spaces (and place-based identities) through spatial knowledge-production, including GIS technologies, community subsistence mapping, village sketch-maps, and other techniques.

In addition to the answers to the original research questions, certain important theoretical contributions can also be gleaned from comparison and synthesis of the results of the three narrative cases. In analyzing these narratives, it is possible to stretch a bit beyond the foundations of the original study design, and to talk about the implications of this study for larger concepts of the nation, of nationalism, and of transnationalism in the context of indigenous politics. I will address these concepts in turn, responding to the existing literature in political and cultural sociology as well as indigenous studies, beginning with consideration of the theoretical assertion that a national community can be defined by its internal communication of shared narratives, followed by assessment of “nationing” (nationhood as something enacted rather than something created), and concluding with a discussion of the implications of these theoretical contributions for the scholarly understanding of transnational studies and indigeneity in transnational context.

**a. Narrative nationhood**

The theory of narrative nationhood as such has not been suggested in existing scholarship, though scholars from sociology, philosophy, literary studies, and other disciplines have been dancing around the edges of such an idea for decades. In the field of sociology of knowledge, Berger & Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (2011) was one of the first texts in the social sciences to propose a radically subjectivist epistemology for understanding society, laying an important theoretical and philosophical foundation upon which to construct concepts of social structures that are shaped by the transmission, reception, and interpretation of information as much as by fixed and definable characteristics and rules of operation. Berger & Luckmann do not specifically address the role of socialization – a process wholly dependent on storytelling practice – in the construction of the nation itself, but argue more generally for the importance of socialization processes in creating the “society as subjective reality” (147).

Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (2006) doesn’t, somewhat puzzlingly, draw explicitly from scholarship in the sociology of knowledge, though if his work does not acknowledge this theoretical history, it certainly benefits from it. Anderson presses the continued salience of “nation-ness,” which instead of fading away is becoming ever more essential not only for nation-states but for the intra-state nations in varying form who use the concept and rhetoric of national identity to great effect as a means of demanding recognition and asserting legitimacy. Building on the social constructivist tradition and applying it directly to the world of national politics, Anderson states that the nation “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

communion” (6). The nation is not, thus, created as something outside the minds of the individual members *by* the minds of the individual members, as a Durkheimian theorist of collective effervescence might argue, but is rather existent directly and exclusively within those individual members, and is defined through their mutual understanding of it. This understanding is necessarily informed by a variety of national narratives that give the audience of potential citizens a (often muddled and contradictory) sense of collective identity, purpose, and community.

Other scholars have engaged with the concept of reality-construction through the communication and interpretation of narrative information as well, taking the idea beyond the boundaries of sociology and applying it in diverse settings. The famed hermeneutic philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, for example, used similar characterizations of subjective experience and interpretation to describe the relationship between narratives and the flow of time, and this discussion has been carried forward and complicated by the introduction of different (linear and non-linear) ways of understanding time itself (Zerubavel 2012) – a discursive development which has stood to gain greatly from the contributions of indigenous authors and indigenous studies scholars, who have explored indigenous alternatives to linear, segmented time at some length (Alonso 1994; Bauerkemper 2008; Bergman 2006; McGrath & Jebb 2015; Nabokov 2002; Norrgard 2014; Silko 2006; 2012; Womack 2001).

Narrative sociologists have expanded and formalized the theory of the narrative constitution of collective identities and communities, as discussed in previous places throughout this dissertation. These contributions have largely been in response to prior epistemological stances on understanding particular social units. For instance, Margaret Somers (1994) challenges the construction of individual identity by suggesting that one of the best ways to avoid the faulty assumptions of fixed identity would be to understand it as informed primarily through narrative communication – a process which is constantly in motion and under renegotiation. Andrew Brown (2006) extends the suggestion to collective identities, which are similarly prone to fluctuation, as well as being internally heterogeneous and often contradictory. James Wertsch (2008) adds a temporal element to the discourse, examining the role of narratives (especially state narratives) in helping members of political and cultural communities to reassemble collective memories of the past in ways that help to reify or challenge the present shape of the collective identity.

Indigenous scholars have, in some ways, made greater headway in terms of expanding and applying the theory of narrative nationhood than scholars in any other discipline, and have in some cases actually proposed variations of narrative nationalism in essence if not necessarily in name.

Indigenous scholars, largely from the field of literary studies, have argued in various ways that Native narratives have been central to projects of anticolonial resistance in general, and to the constitution of Native nations in particular. The foremost among these texts are Weaver, Womack, & Warrior's *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Womack's *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, and other works by Cook-Lynn (1996), Howe, (1999), and, in the context of Anishinaabeg studies in particular, Leanne Simpson (2011), Jill Doerfler (2015), and Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark (2013). These scholars demonstrate a broad variety of ways in which indigenous peoples have used narratives – through practices of storytelling as well as critique of colonial storytelling – to assert the legitimacy, the reality, the contemporariness, the continuity as well as the flexibility of indigenous cultural communities, and the constitutive character of indigenous nations in the US and Canadian settler states.

One of the most important concepts relevant to narrative nationhood in discussions of non-state nationhood, by both Native and non-Native scholars, has been the theory of “peoplehood.” This theory was discussed briefly in Chapter 2 (see page 63), but bears revisiting. In 2000, Tom Holm produced a brief article for a student publication, entitled “Sovereignty & Peoplehood,” in which he discusses the most common associations of sovereignty with either a state entity or a particular leader, and compares this to the possibility of thinking as sovereignty as a characteristic of a people. He advocates the latter as both the most fundamentally equitable of the manifestations of sovereignty, and the most appropriate for understanding the political life of indigenous communities. This form of sovereignty-imbued-in-people is the genesis of the “Peoplehood Matrix” model, which is expanded up further in later work by Chavis, Pearson, & Holm (2003). The peoplehood model developed by this team of scholars involves four key traits of a group of individuals that allows the collective to be labeled a “people”: shared language, ceremonial cycle or ritual traditions, shared physical territory, and (most crucially for our present purposes) shared history, which we might also more poignantly label “shared historical and spiritual narratives.” These works by Holm and his colleagues distinguish “peoplehood” from the kinds of externally imposed colonialist political categories that have been attributed to indigenous peoples, including most notably the concepts of “band” or “tribe,” as well as from the dominant notion of sovereignty in the modern era as a quality belonging solely or at least primarily to the state. The basic quality that most distinguishes indigenous peoplehood-as-sovereignty from state sovereignty is, according to Chavis et al, the pervasive holism

of indigenous lifeways, which don't distinguish a separate political or militaristic wing of the society in which sovereignty is housed.<sup>50</sup>

Somewhat earlier, Immanuel Wallerstein (1987) also engaged with the discussion of peoplehood, though his discussion of the term was not applied directly to the case of indigenous communities, but rather as a general semantic challenge to the more dominant terminology of “race”/“nation”/“ethnic group” “They are all peoplehood constructs, all inventions of pastness, all contemporary political phenomena” (381). For Wallerstein the category of “peoplehood” is innately fluid, and has no fixed definition but is rather defined (and subdivided into particular political realities) by the character of the historical and geopolitical moment. This understanding of the term is contrasted slightly with the more structurally defined characterization in Chavis, Pearson, & Holm (2003), but it does adequately illustrate an interesting possibility: that “nationhood” and “peoplehood” are not contradictory or mutually exclusive concepts, but rather that the former is a particular political manifestation of the latter, suited to the circumstances in which it is applied.

Corntassel (2003) applies Chavis, Pearson, & Holm's (2003) model once again to indigenous identity and “ethnonationalism,” but does so in a way that allows for the kind of structural and definitional flexibility that Wallerstein (1987) sought earlier. In particular, Corntassel addresses the problem of actually designating a given person or group of people as “indigenous,” an issue with various legal and political ramifications, and one which requires some degree of acquiescence to rigid definition. Expanding on the four-part definition in Chavis et al (2003), Corntassel makes the language of the definition more flexible, allowing specifically for the *beliefs* of the indigenous peoples in question concerning their shared territory and history, the possibility that their shared languages may have been eradicated through colonial assimilation and indoctrination efforts, and that their unifying cultural and spiritual structures will also have come under heavy siege and may lack the contemporary societal integrative power that they would have done prior to colonization. He also discusses the contrasting schools of thought on the formation of nationhood in particular, between the “primordialists” and the “instrumentalists,” although he at no point addresses the separation between peoplehood and nationhood that is marked by the latter's theorization as a political identity innately born of conflict. These opposing definitions are, vexingly, not explained fully in terms of their relationship with “peoplehood,” but it is worth noting that the version of nationhood that is currently manifested most

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<sup>50</sup> In addition to Chavis, Pearson, & Holm's (2003) application of the concept of “peoplehood” to indigenous political and cultural community, Washburn & Stratton (2008) have also usefully applied the concept to American Indian literature and literary practice, further supporting the importance of storytelling practice to the establishment of peoplehood.



strongly by the Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota conforms much more strongly to the instrumentalist view of nationalism, given that the Anishinaabe polities that are claiming national identity for themselves seem to be doing so largely as a means of gaining political leverage for the individual RBCs and the MCT at a particular historical moment when the language of nationhood carries a great deal of weight both in indigenous and colonial politics.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the peoplehood theory is indisputably useful for understanding indigenous collective identity, if not also for understanding other forms of non-state collective identity. However, it does not adequately account for the explicitly political ways in which the term “nation” is being applied, particularly as (at least in the case of MN indigenous polities) the language of nationhood is being used in ways that actually – in some cases – separate the governing structures of the Ojibwe reservations and of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in general from the other aspects of Anishinaabe lifeways in Minnesota, thus interrupting the holistic structure that is essential to almost all definitions of peoplehood as applied to indigenous communities.

In this dissertation, I propose instead the idea of “narrative nationhood” as an alternative, or perhaps merely a complementary partner to the “Peoplehood Matrix” (Chavis, Pearson, & Holm 2003; Cornassel 2003; Washburn & Stratton 2008). Among the primary differences between these concepts is the emphasis that narrative nationhood places on the actions and interactions of individual members of a lived environment, taking the acts of production, distribution, consumption, and interpretation of narratives to be the foundational building blocks for defining the boundaries of a particular community. This practice is contrasted with the attempt by the scholars of “peoplehood” to provide a working definition for the collective term “people,” however rigid or flexible that definition may be, which applies to all peoples in all situations. Washburn & Stratton’s (2008) application of the concept to American Indian literary practices is a step in the direction of narrative nationhood, but it is my argument that this step does not go far enough to account for the extent to which narrative practices – not only in the kinds of written literature that Washburn & Stratton discuss, but also in oral literature, in popular and news media, and in the casual storytelling of day-to-day interaction – are constitutive of the essential but constantly shifting borders of political communities. Peoplehood and narrative nationhood have in common the benefit for indigenous polities that they draw attention away from the hegemonic political identity of the nation-state and allow space for other forms of collective political community to gain legitimacy in academic discourse, but narrative nationhood is particularly effective in the pursuit of this goal, in that rather than take a universalist and definitional approach to

the problem, narrative nationhood focuses on the collective *actions and practices* of indigenous polities in the context of their particular cultural, political, and historical moment.

**b. “Nationing”**

The second theoretical contribution I would like to discuss is the concept of “nationing,” defined as the continuous collective action of creating, recreating, and embodying national political identity through the interactive and communicative practices undertaken in regard to and on behalf of the “imagined community” (Anderson 2006) that is the “nation.” The epistemological purpose of this theory is to serve as a critique and alternative conceptualization to the politically and academically dominant understanding of the “nation” as a geographically fixed and bounded entity, usually attached to and controlled by a strong state apparatus, and embodied in quantifiable ways by a population of citizens whose inclusion in the polity is determined by state-membership.

Related concepts outside of indigenous studies have been relatively sparse, though not entirely absent, and certainly with the postmodern/poststructural turn in the social sciences, a greater resistance to strong, fixed definitions for sociological phenomena and social structures has gained significant traction (Seidman 1994). In *Nations Without States* (2013), Guibernau talks about nationalist movements that take place in some cases within states that aren’t connected to the nations themselves, and in other cases directly against a state apparatus that is suppressing the internal nation(s). Guibernau’s analysis speaks to the possibility that non-state nations are practicing a form of “nationing,” though the main thrust of the book’s argument is that such movements are generally in service of a more fixed nation, even if the national identities that they have built in the meantime have more to do with the actions of the collective than the particular, defined geographic and demographic characteristics of the population.

Alonso (1994) takes a more direct approach, critiquing the “misplaced concreteness” with which academics accidentally reproduce commonplace, common sense assumptions about what things like the nation, the state, and so on are, ignoring the possibility that the empirical reality is much more complicated. “Anderson’s argument that nations are ‘imagined political communities’ has done much to expose the misplaced concreteness in nationalist common sense and scholarly literature. But Anderson does not go far enough in identifying the strategies through which ‘the imagined’ becomes ‘second nature,’ a ‘structure of feeling’ embodied in material practice and lived experience” (382). Alonso asserts that while the nation itself is a social imaginary, its influence in shaping both cognition and action is greater and more enduring than Anderson recognizes. This is perhaps the case, although to this argument I would add that, based at least on the information that has come from the narration

of nationhood in northern Minnesota indigenous politics, if Anderson fails to recognize the endurance of the national-cultural constructs created through the shared imaginary, Alonso fails to recognize the heterogeneity of the information that shapes the imaginary for the individual on a day-to-day basis. The constructs themselves may persist, but their character is highly prone to change based on patterns of narrative communication.

Also worth noting from outside of indigenous studies is Etienne Wenger's theory of "communities of practice" (1999) in some ways an opposing and corollary concept to that of "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006), as Wenger's theory applies specifically to community-forming devices that take place in the interactions between individuals and the environment, rather than within the cognitive life of the individuals themselves. A "community of practice" is a construct that is built particularly around processes of *learning* (Wenger's work stemming, as it does, from education theory, this tracks with his disciplinary focus), and is defined generally as a group of people who are united in their endeavor to learn the means to accomplish some particular (usually comprehensive) task. A tribe who learns to survive in a particular environment together, sharing knowledge and developing lifeways in the process, would be one example of this, as would a tribe (or other indigenous community or polity) who learns how to survive the vicissitudes of colonial systems over an extended period of time. This concept of "community of practice" is certainly applicable in some cases to the kinds of political work that certain collective actors in Anishinaabe politics are undertaking, and thus may be a useful tool in certain cases for differentiating these collectives from one another, but it is not applicable across-the-board. For instance, the "decolonial nationhood" of the Anishinaabe cultural diaspora is so diverse in circumstances, political beliefs, and lifeways that they could not be said to be a community of practice, despite being united by common cultural and colonial histories.

In the field of indigenous studies, there have been numerous applications and demonstrations of the concept of "nationing," albeit never under explicitly similar terminology. The active assertion of national identity and the associated legitimacy and sovereignty that are generally associated with nations has been an increasingly important component of indigenous politics in the United States since the 1960s (Deloria & Lytle 2013), and as Guibernau (2013) has effectively pointed out in relation to other "nations without states," an active and energetic assertion of this collective nationhood as such is an absolute necessity for these polities, which are often under considerable strain from conflict with other non-state nations, with nation-states in which they are housed, and with the internal pressure of maintaining formal organization. For indigenous nations, the latter complication is often

further compounded by the internal conflict within tribes and larger culture-groups (like the Anishinaabeg) between the drive for political formalization and the drive to root indigenous nationhood in cultural, historical, and spiritual identity (Alfred 1995; Deloria & Lytle 2013; Doerfler 2015; Meyer 1999).

In essence, this kind of active assertion of indigenous nationhood is a corollary and more specific application of Vizenor's theory of "survivance" (1999; 2008) – a particularly apt comparison considering the weight that Vizenor lends to narratives as both a means of enacting dominance, false representation, and simulations of indigenous absence by colonizers (a.k.a., "manifest manners"), and of enacting the forms of resistance, accurate representation of identity, and demonstrations of presence that he terms "survivance." To say that the Anishinaabeg in northern Minnesota are enacting "nationing" is, simply put, to say that they are combining the practices of survivance with practices of political autonomy. This kind of indigenous nationing has been demonstrated in a number of places in academic work, including analysis of literature such as those of Bauerkemper (2008), who examines how indigenous concepts of time are tied to national identity and independence in literature, and Cook-Lynn (1993), whose work on "The American Indian Fiction Writer" advocates literary cooperation across indigenous and Third World spaces in a way that both supports the independence of indigenous nations but also suggests a kind of networked political action that, following our present terminology, might be called "transnationing." Graham & Penny take the discussion out of the literary realm and into the world of lived performance, in *Performing Indigeneity* (2014), though many of the same concepts apply in these discussion. In contrast to texts on colonial performances of appropriated indigenous symbolism (Deloria 1998; Huhndorf 2001), Graham & Penny's work examines indigenous performances by indigenous performers, ranging from individual performance of identity in everyday settings to macro-scale demonstrations of peoplehood and nationhood in settings of tremendous historical and political power. The editors of *Performing Indigeneity* point out, however, that these performances are not unidirectionally or homogeneously critical of all colonial or Western establishments and structures, as many performances of indigeneity require a level of acquiescence to the kind of romantic essentialism that other performances are trying to combat – a level of multivalence within the enactment of indigenous political identity that further demonstrates the importance of understanding these diverse political projects using theoretical and discursive practices that account for their myriad internal conflicts, contradictions, and plurality.

In the case of the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, Chantal Norrgard's book, *Seasons of Change: Labor, Treaty Rights, & Ojibwe Nationhood* (2014), brings a fascinating and important factor to the discussion

of how nationhood is enacted and embodied: the centrality of indigenous labor practices. For the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota (as well as Wisconsin, as Norrgard includes the Ojibwe communities in both states in her analysis), asserting the legitimacy and autonomy of indigenous nationhood in response to colonial appropriation, attempts at eradication, assimilation, termination, and the breaking of numerous treaty agreements was, in all cases, wrapped in the politics and protection of Anishinaabe labor. This is not to say that labor concerns were the only issues involved in Anishinaabe assertions of sovereignty and national identity, but at each point of conflict, the Anishinaabeg's rights and ability to carry out the labor practices that would allow their continued survival were central points of contention. A particularly stark example has been the battles over the usufructuary rights guaranteed to the "Chippewa" in land cession treaties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all of which relate to the kinds of subsistence labor practices that were both traditional, spiritually essential, and necessary to the survival of the Anishinaabeg in Minnesota. The curtailing and ignoring of Anishinaabe treaty rights in the ceded territories has occurred throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, and is perhaps the greatest source of political friction and misunderstanding between local Native and non-Native residents (as Honor the Earth attorney and director of the 1855 Treaty Authority, Frank Bibeau, can attest).

Perhaps the most thorough demonstration of indigenous "nationing" has been undertaken (at separate times) by Mohawk scholars Taiaiake Alfred (1995) and Audra Simpson (2014), each of whom has performed extensive political analysis of the Mohawk nation, albeit at quite different moments in its history. Alfred's book, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors* (1995), frames nationalism as an essential and enduring feature of the social structures of Mohawk life, and of Mohawk identity more broadly, positioning his characterization of this political identity as part of what Corntassel (2003) referred to as the "primordialist" school of thought. The book discusses the rise of a more militant and separatist nationalist movement within Kahnawake Mohawk politics, arguing that this movement constitutes a resurgence of traditional Iroquois forms of governance. For Alfred, the kind of nationhood that is being enacted in this circumstance is not the establishment of a new kind of political entity, but the refusal of Canadian colonial attempts to render the Mohawk indigenous government more compatible and integrated with the Canadian system, and the assertion of a form of indigenous Mohawk nationhood that is rooted more deeply in precolonial and enduring traditional forms of governance and social relations than in the umbilical political apparatus that pins Kahnawake to a particular time and place and keeps it connected to the settler state. Simpson's book, *Mohawk Interruptus*, follows a similar line of inquiry, pertaining to the same political community, and drawing from Alfred's work (among others), she engages with the contemporary political struggles of the Mohawk Nation,

focusing particular attention on the acts of *refusal* that are taken in order to bravely and stubbornly enact sovereignty, even when it is inconvenient, difficult, and renders the practitioner illegible in some vexing ways to the settler state. In both of these books, the practice of “nationing” is demonstrated with extraordinary clarity and force, as the Mohawk Nation is far more something that is *done* and something that a given citizen *embodies* than it is a fixed political, geographic, or demographic reality.

### **c. Extending implications to transnationalism**

With the sizable and growing debate in macro-level social, political, and cultural studies over the role of the nation-state in an increasingly globalized (and, according to some, localized and heterogeneous (Burawoy (in Steinmetz) 2005)), the substantial critique of both the centrality of the nation-state in considerations of nationhood and of the epistemological basis for dominant definitions of nations and nationhood requires as well at least a brief discussion of the implications of this study for transnational discourse and the role of indigenous critiques in its development. In this final section of the chapter, I will discuss some of the critical perspectives on transnational discourse, and other scholars who have engaged with this discourse through alternative conceptualizations of nationhood. I will focus particularly on indigenous critiques of transnationalism, which have been relatively numerous and valuable for both transnational studies and indigenous studies in transnational context. The findings from this dissertation will be juxtaposed within the literature, demonstrating the necessary (and admittedly problematic) changes to transnational studies that would be necessary if we were to fully embrace the kind of dynamic, plural narrative nationhood that is embodied by Anishinaabe polities in northern Minnesota.

For many individuals living in the escalating complexity of global systems (Urry 2002), constructing identity involves navigating the vast array of competing national and ethnic markers of identity while also adapting to the circumstances of a political status that is dependent on mobility within and between political spaces – a task which is illuminated in a variety of ways in the edited collection, *Growing Up Transnational* (Friedman & Schultersmandl 2011). The gathered authors in this volume discuss the construction of individual and collective identity in an era when the socio-political categories that one once might have used as foundations for construction self-definition are becoming unstable and permeable. Most notable of these is the category of national identity, which for many is increasingly interrupted by the reality of transnational lifeways under circumstances that require movement across national borders and may even witness the dissolution of national collective polities. One of the central features of transnational life is often the fortification of the particular national identities that, together, form a sense of self in the individual, and in this, the authors in *Growing Up*

*Transnational* demonstrate personal practice of nation-creation that dovetails neatly with the concept of “nationing.” One of the byproducts of a world in which transnational identity is a requisite for many people is the reinvention and fortification of particular forms of nationalism; to put it simply, in circumstances in which people are increasingly rootless, there is an ever greater search for one’s roots.

This theory has interesting applications when viewed in the context of indigenous nationhood and indigenous nationalist movements. At the same historical moment that much of the world has been breaking away from isolated nation-states and entering ever more into the realm of the transnational and the global, indigenous movements (particularly in the US) have been increasingly relying on the rhetoric and politics of nationhood (Deloria & Lytle 2013). However, this also comes with certain complicated forms of transnational identity as well, given that in some cases (i.e., Simpson 2014), investment in indigenous nationalism necessarily involves the challenge to and refusal of other national identity with reference to the settler state. For the Minnesota Anishinaabeg, “nationhood” as such has primarily been a strategic political identity evoked in certain forms of postcolonial indigenous governance associated with federally-recognized tribal and reservation polities. However, the popular sentiment that they are not truly members of reservation polities but rather members of the larger cultural, spiritual, and political community of Anishinaabeg – itself a polity which spans through the US, Canada, and a number of other distinct, internal political realms – speaks to a kind of transnational identity that is very different from that categorized in *Growing Up Transnational*. Quite contrary to the characterization of transnational identity as something which is formed in the intentional attachment to multiple national identities, Anishinaabe transnational identity is formed (at least for some people) in the rejection of this very possibility, and the insistence on a unified cultural and/or national community that is independent of the settler nation-states in which it is housed.

The collection by Friedman & Schultermandl (2011) is not alone in noting the influence of transnational mobility on the formation of identity, though other scholars have engaged with the subject from different angles. In *Culture, Globalization, & the World System* (King 1991), a variety of influential cultural and sociological scholars engage with national, transnational, and global identities, grappling with the fact that the opportunities to form identities that are either tied to borders or transcend borders are distributed very unevenly throughout the nations of the world. The volume does not specifically address the condition of indigenous peoples relative to this geographic grounding of particular identity-shaping opportunities, although notably it does discuss these issues in terms of colonial and postcolonial states and societies – a somewhat dubious combination of inclusion and omission. The authors, particularly King and Hall, are concerned largely with English class culture in

the global world system. On the other end of the colonial relationship, the perspectives of indigenous peoples might lend an interesting dimension to the discussion. For many people in colonial states, the production of identity is imposed from without, with colonizers and colonial structures acting in ways that foster the production of colonized identities for the purpose of capitalization (see also Comaroff & Comaroff 2009). For indigenous peoples in many circumstances, however, the production of identity is generated from within, and explicitly serves the resurgence of internally coherent, traditionally-oriented, and actively decolonial peoplehood and nationhood, as is the case (in various ways and to varying degrees) in Minnesota Anishinaabe politics.

The implications of narrative nationhood and some of the other more specific findings concerning Anishinaabe nationhood (and “nationing”) reach beyond identity as well. Where Anderson theorized the nation as a massive social imaginary, Canclini extends the theory to the phenomenon of the “globalized world,” in which not only must economic and communicative capital transcend local and national borders, but so too must there be a common understanding among the people of the world that they belong to a global order. Despite the necessity of this collective imaginary, Canclini’s version of cultural and cognitive globalization is not a universalist model, but rather prioritizes the increasing transnational heterogeneity of experience and identity that accompanies economic globalization, the decoupling of capital (of all stripes) from fixed geographies, and the growth of communication technology and networks. In *Imagined Globalization*, the role of narratives in this process is actually explicitly recognized, which is a surprising and welcome component of the author’s theoretical contribution. “Every economic discourse can be read as narrative (as opposed to paradigm, as I stated earlier), and even more so when it refers to globalizing movements, regarding which discourse as a bearer of meaning and reference is indefinite.” This argument expands the application of “narrative” in an interesting direction, suggesting that the theory of the “collective imaginary” is applicable far beyond the scope of collective identity, and can be usefully applied to understanding the root of powerful, central social structure (i.e., economy or, pertinently, the “nation” itself).

This is a complicating notion relative to the theory of “nationing,” falling somewhat more in line with the classic Durkheimian concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 2000) than the form of analysis in which I have invested in this dissertation. However, there is something valuable in the application of the concept of the social imaginary to the creation not only of a collective community, but of structural processes and even social institutions, provided that this application doesn’t go so far as to advocate understanding these structures as fixed. The overlapping political and cultural collective



identities that are informed by narrative communication in northern Minnesota are only able to accomplish a level of cohesion and directed action through the simultaneous production of real political and cultural structures, which, although they are innately dynamic and prone to shifting boundaries, membership, purpose, and forms of action, must necessarily exist outside of and in addition to the political and cultural imaginaries and the narratives that shape them. The Shaynowishkung counter-narrative informs a kind of simultaneous decolonial and postcolonial form of Ojibwe nationhood, but in order to do so it must also help to create the structures of the Shaynowishkung Statue Committee, the physical object of their attention, the city of Bemidji, the Leech Lake Reservation, the towns of Inger and Cass Lake, and so on. The Honor the Earth narrative informs a series of collective imaginaries including multiple layers of belonging in Anishinaabe communities as well as a separation between Native and non-Native political communities, and in other cases the unity of segments of these distinct groups, but in order to accomplish these tasks within the minds of audience members, it also requires the creation and re-creation of the organization itself, and of all the related political, cultural, and economic structures with which it interacts. The use of Canclini's work is included here to demonstrate, in addition to its supplemental value within the theory of narrative nationhood and the power of narrative to shape social and political life, that the relationship between this study and the transnational discourse is not necessarily a one-way street, but rather that there is existing work in transnational and global studies that can reciprocally influence the applications of the theories being developed here.

The kind of national identity and political structures that are being created in the context of this "imagined globalization" are certainly changing in order to adapt to the increasing interdependence of nations and nation-states, but this does not necessarily imply that the nation as a unit of macro analysis is fading in importance – an argument made by a variety of transnational scholars, and one to which the information in this dissertation has relevance. In *Beyond the Nation-State* (2012), David Kamens argues that through various forms of education, national citizenship is not being demolished to make way for a world order, but rather that nations themselves, and the collective identities (and imaginaries) that form them, are opening up and becoming increasingly networked with one another in the global context. In many parts of the world, these collective identities may be transnational but exist within a single-state context, as in the United Kingdom, in Spain, or in Canada. Such is the subject of Gagnon & Tully's *Multinational Democracies* (2001). This volume focuses on the plurality of political identities that can exist within a given democratic system, and how that very plurality is not necessarily in contradiction with the singularity of the (ostensibly) democratic state, but

these circumstances may also be viewed as limiting the extent of the “globalized identity,” demonstrating a significant and oft-unrecognized rift between transnational and global theories of identity and political community. As with Lionnet & Shih’s discussion of “minor transnationalism” (2005), the works in Gagnon & Tully’s collection do touch on the presence of indigenous peoples in these complex multi-nation state circumstances, but the implications of indigenous nationhood itself are never fully taken into account, as indigenous people are discussed more in the context of their subjection to the colonial state than the collective political agency that indigenous *peoples* may exercise on either the national or transnational front. As demonstrated by the multiple (sometimes cooperative and sometimes competing) national identities and movements within Minnesota Anishinaabe politics suggest, the kinds of competition between “minority” groups that Lionnet & Shih describe can also take place not only between what the state deems to be minority groups, but also within them, further supporting the indigenous critique that the racialized concept of “minority” does both political and epistemological violence to the reality of their diverse situations.

The foregoing analysis of the Anishinaabe polities in northern Minnesota is far from the only critique of dominant transnational discourse stemming from indigenous studies. Various scholars have, particularly in the past 10-15 years, undertaken valuable and incisive critiques of transnational studies, demonstrating myriad ways that the movements of indigenous people across social and political space, and the developments of indigenous national and transnational communities interact with the kinds of transnational networks and flows of capital that are generally the primary focus of transnational sociological, anthropological, and economic scholarship.

The structures of economic and cultural power in the world system, and the globalization of identity so lauded by some (Kamens 2012), are distributed unequally in different parts of the world – a disparity which has not gone unnoticed by dominant scholarship, but the character of which is far more strongly defined by the extension of colonialism than most recognize. In *The Transit of Empire* (2011), Jodi Byrd examines how the United States continues to practice colonial expansion in an era when the domestic spaces in which expansion can occur have been largely saturated. US colonial expansionism is carried forward through mechanisms of imperialism, by which foreign peoples are transformed in the eyes of the US colonial state into “Indians” (or have “Indianness” thrust upon them), creating a form of multifaceted dominance that is both transnational and deeply rooted in American nationalism, particularly in the dominant narrative of US paternal colonialism that has been formative in shaping the past, present, and future of colonial practice. In relation to studies of globalization and the breakdown of nation-state borders, Byrd’s analysis suggests that these networks

of transnational and global relationships are not breaking away from the nation-state, but are rather wholly informed by the dominant narratives defining the imperialist nation-states, and are attached to those nation-states by tentacular reach of colonial logic through which imperialism (by the US, according to Byrd, but by other nation-states as well) is constructed. In short, the historical and contemporary struggles of indigenous nations, and the form of their subjection to the dominance of colonial states, may indeed constitute the basis for the new world order.

Where Byrd “foregrounds the transnational within American Indian Studies” (2011:177), Robert Warrior has, in a number of locations, engaged in a critique of the importance of transnational discourse itself for American Indian scholarship (2007; 2009). Warrior makes clear that he is not interested in entirely ignoring transnationality in indigenous studies, as there are various useful applications for such discourse, but theorizes on some of the reasons why indigenous studies scholarship has largely avoided the topic, focusing instead on the conditions of indigenous communities and polities relative to the colonial nation-state (rather than to transnational and/or global systems). In some ways, the resistance to investment in the world of transnational theory has followed a history of such resistance to new and dominant theoretical movements in academic discourse by Native scholars, which Warrior attributes in large part to the “ungovernable, unpredictable, and obdurate” (127) means by which indigenous peoples have fought back against colonial control in the past. Put simply, the position of academic marginalization of indigenous scholarship yields certain benefits for its practitioners in terms of continuing to critique the systems of epistemic dominance that may be exercised by the Western academy. Warrior addresses the utility of omitting transnationalism from indigenous scholarship, but on the other side of the relationship, it must also be noted that indigeneity is often omitted from transnational scholarship as well, and while the end result of a body of indigenous literature and a body of transnational literature separate from one another may be the same either way, the source and subject of the omission matters. In “Narrative Nationhood: Indian Time & Ideologies of Progress” (2008), Bauerkemper uses analysis of indigenous literary writing to demonstrate how indigenous authors have critiqued the dismissal of indigenous nationhood from macro-level analyses, including transnational discourse (a dismissal which Warrior has addressed as well in greater length elsewhere (2007)).

The applications of transnationalism to the political situation of Anishinaabe polities in northern Minnesota are relatively limited, but given the various definitions and geographies for the overlapping Anishinaabe nationhoods represented in this space, it is worth taking a moment to consider the ways in which these polities experience and embody transnationalism in ways that

challenge dominant working definitions of the concept. The most common employment of the “nationhood” concept in Anishinaabe politics in Minnesota pertains to particular reservation-based polities, led by the “tribal councils” (Reservation Business Committees). “Transnationalism,” relative to these “nations” would include structures, networks, and flows that cross reservation borders, particularly those that cross from one reservation to another, by which the Anishinaabe nations in Minnesota would constitute a kind of transnational network within the state of Minnesota, within the US (if the network extends to reservations outside the state), and within the North American continent (if the network extends to reserves in Canada as well). Despite its popularity with the governing bodies of the reservations, this tends not to be the way that nationhood is conceptualized by the Anishinaabeg residents of the region, particularly those who are invested in a more traditional concept of cultural and spiritual community. For these people, the “Anishinaabe Nation” (admittedly rarely termed as such) is a much stronger point of allegiance and collective identity. In the case of this “nation,” quite contrary to the reservation-based polity, the nation itself is a transnational (or at least trans-state) political entity, spanning the space between the US and Canada, as well as various internal states and provinces. In the analysis offered in this study, the former type of nationhood is representative of postcolonial politics while the latter represents decolonial politics, the separation of which is connected to the ways in which these competing models of Anishinaabe nationhood are linked to the scholarly literature.

The omission of indigenous peoples from transnational literature (Bauerkemper 2008) manifests particularly strongly with reference to indigenous nations as such, while the recognition of indigenous peoples as cultural and political subjects of colonial states is somewhat more common in this discourse (see, for example, Lionnet & Shih 2005). The kinds of reservation-based nations that are advocated by tribal governance structures in Minnesota, and conform to the more postcolonial sense of indigenous politics in which colonial social and political structures are integrated with indigenous ones in order to form a functional (and not explicitly anti-colonial) nation, are actually more studiously ignored by transnational studies literature than the more geographically nebulous and diffuse nationhood attached to, for example, the Anishinaabe diaspora through Canada and the US. In either case, transnational scholarship pays insufficient credit to the political cohesiveness and agency of these national communities, but seems – somewhat paradoxically – more willing to recognize the legitimacy of the decolonial indigenous nationhood than the postcolonial. This seems counter-intuitive, as the decolonial discourse in indigenous politics is generally more critical of the imperial economic and political forces that have given rise to the transnational turn than the

postcolonial discourse. However, one of the appeals of postcolonial politics, witnessed in this study particularly in the cases of the Shaynowishkung biography and the Honor the Earth narrative, is its comparative pragmatism. It is possible that the kinds of powerful economic and political entities that are generally at the heart of transnational discourse actually stand to benefit more from the dismissal of postcolonial indigenous politics than of explicitly decolonial politics, particularly if the recognition of the latter comes through framing indigenous peoples as “peoples” (rather than “nations”) and as dominated subjects of the settler state (rather than independent agents acting as viable political units on behalf of their own interests). This analysis follows some of the logic of the indigenous critiques of postcolonial scholarship and politics, given the general assertion in this critical scholarship that one of the most pervasive and subversive strategies of contemporary colonial politics is the selective recognition of certain parts of indigenous history and identity in order to distract from the reality of present indigenous circumstance (Byrd 2011; Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2013).

In order to account for the possibility of narrative nationhood, as well as the concepts of nationhood as embodied and enacted rather than politically reified (“nationing”), plural nationhood within a given political community, and other relevant concepts pertaining to indigenous political life as exemplified by the Anishinaabe polities in northern Minnesota in the midst of an increasingly transnationalized and globalized world, it is going to be necessary to revisit the way we approach transnational studies. To take the legitimacy of indigenous nationhood seriously is going to involve reconsidering the root of transnationalism as grounded in the nation-state, the importance of geopolitical borders in determine whether a given phenomena can properly be considered “transnational,” and, considering the innate fluidity and multiplicity of the borders, membership, and defining characteristics of narrative nationhood, whether it is indeed possible at all to distinguish between the local, the national, the transnational, and the global.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

As with most social research, particularly extensive qualitative investigations like this one, the research questions that drove the study design yielded results which were a great deal more complicated than could have been anticipated during the preparatory phase of the project back in the summer of 2014. The second and third research questions, concerning the modes of communication and distribution of the three narrative cases and the ways in which these narratives interacted with (crossing, moving, or re-creating) social and political boundaries in the course of their communication, were addressed in greater detail, but the broader strokes of the analysis were

expanded upon in this chapter, and the first research question with which the chapter began – pertaining to the relative power and type of impact that different narratives and narrative forms have in shaping perceptions of Ojibwe/Anishinaabe/indigenous identity – was discussed at length. There were, however, additional important theoretical discussions that came up in the course of data collection and analysis, emergent themes from which it became possible to make a deeper critique of the existing connections between cultural and political analysis, and to demonstrate the power of narrative to shape larger political processes and relationships in the setting of the colonial state.

I will discuss further the applications and limitations of these theoretical developments in the Conclusion, but it is important to note that while the implications for national and transnational political and cultural discourse discussed here are potentially significant, they remain at this point only theoretical. The most explicitly political and activist of the three narrative cases is undoubtedly that of Honor the Earth versus Enbridge Energy, but even in this case, the organization itself does not position its own goal as an epistemological critique of the nation-state, of transnationalism or globalization per se, or of the marginalization of indigenous nationhood in the global political order. Their goals are far more practical and immediate, rooted in the protection of the local environment and the day-to-day battles against the exploitation and degradation of indigenous land for profit. The same can be said of the Shaynowishkung counter-narrative, which is explicitly decolonial in many respects, but which is still not meant to challenge anything so large or conceptual as transnationalism or the meaning of indigenous (or even Anishinaabe) nationhood. Even the Flood narrative, the most directly and unambiguously decolonial of the three narrative cases, is rarely if ever communicated with a macro-level political goal in mind. All of this is not to diminish the importance of these narratives or the implications of their distribution for considerations of Anishinaabe or indigenous nationhood and transnationalism, but rather to say that there is yet a wide rift between the theoretical developments suggested in this dissertation and real political change.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the course of this dissertation, I have examined the influence of storytelling, of different types of narrative information, and of identity and position of storytellers and audiences in shaping the perceptions of residents in northern Minnesota regarding the history, culture, social position, and political status of the Anishinaabeg, the largest indigenous population in the region. The research and writing has taken over two years, and involved extensive travel throughout Minnesota, focusing primarily on the region between the Leech Lake and White Earth reservations, but including as well the northeastern portion of the state, the area around the Mille Lacs reservation, and the Twin Cities, as well as supplementary archival and spatial analyses in order to better understand the content, context, and distribution of narratives. At the heart of the project have been the three narrative cases, representing three very different narrative types, with very different relations to the Anishinaabe (and non-Native) community in the region, each communicating a complex and sometimes contradictory vision of what Anishinaabe identity means in northern Minnesota, though all operating as means of indigenous survivance (Vizenor 1999; 2008) in the face of continuing colonial dominance and control. The Flood, Shaynowishkung, and Honor the Earth narratives each operate in ways that inform perceptions of Anishinaabe identity, although the versions of identity, and the political projects that they inform, demonstrate significant internal rifts in the forms of influence fostered by the narrative communication taking place in northern Minnesota.

As noted at the end of the previous chapter (see page 253), there are certain limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from this study, although these do not diminish its importance as a source of theoretical development, and there are a number of avenues of supplemental research that can be pursued based on the findings examined here. The sampling strategies employed in order to recruit interview participants proved highly fruitful, but nevertheless, the combination of purposive and snowball sampling yielded a group of participants who, despite their variety of perspectives and depth of knowledge, did not cover all of the major perspectives present in the region. In particular, the reliance on snowball sampling produced a predictable lack of interview participants with little knowledge of the particular narratives under consideration in the study, as well as non-Native participants generally ignorant of Anishinaabe history, culture, and current events. Despite their absence from the study, these groups constitute an extremely large proportion of the resident population in northern Minnesota, a fact about which other participants often spoke at length. As a consequence of their absence from the sample, the perspectives of those non-Native local residents

unfamiliar with the particular narratives in question or with Anishinaabe life in general were unable to be factored into the analysis in any great detail – an unfortunate omission that calls for further research to be conducted in order to determine how the theories posited herein are complicated by the beliefs, knowledges, and actions of the omitted population. To the extent possible, I attempted to interview both Native and non-Native residents from a variety of different backgrounds and perspectives, but the level of ignorance of indigenous matters among the non-Native population is widely acknowledged by the local population, and this ignorance – along with the high degree of anti-Native racial animosity spoken of among the Anishinaabe community – is not adequately represented here.

It is also worth noting that there is a substantial difference between the way that indigenous politics are represented in much of the critical indigenous theory literature (e.g., Barker 2011; Byrd 2011, Coulthard 2014, Melamed 2011, Moreton-Robinson 2009; Povinelli 2011, Simpson 2013), and the kinds of interpretations of social and political circumstances that Anishinaabeg participants living in northern Minnesota expressed in the course of interviews. This is, in part, attributable to the inherent difference in interpretation that will occur in any discussion when the level of analysis shifts from the practical, quotidian, and personal perspective of the local resident to the “big picture” perspective of the scholar. This separation also speaks, however, to the structural distance between the Western academic research and the research participant, imposed by the nature of the research process and the relationship between the academy and the public. This kind of distance is exemplified, in one case, by the circumstances surrounding the attempted constitutional reform at the White Earth reservation. The revised constitution itself was written primarily by White Earth Anishinaabe scholars Gerald Vizenor and Jill Doerfler, and was steeped in the kind of decolonial, anti-racialist logic that is common in the indigenous critical literature (Doerfler 2015; Vizenor & Doerfler 2012). Despite the decolonial roots of the reform, however, the measure was opposed by the majority of White Earth reservation residents, as well as other representatives of Minnesota Chippewa Tribe government, to the extent that White Earth Chairwoman Erma Vizenor and the measure’s other proponents were ousted from office following the new constitution’s failure at implementation (Quam Dec. 29, 2015). The benefits of the proposed reform in terms of getting rid of blood quantum enrollment rules in favor of ancestry-based enrollment were outweighed by the political reality that it would also have cut into the per capita tribal payments of currently enrolled White Earth families, cemented the power of the tribal chair’s position, and immeasurably complicated the relationship between White Earth and the rest of the MCT. Put simply, decolonial ideology found itself deeply at odds with the reality of postcolonial political and economic circumstance, and this separation often takes place (among other



places) along the line between the academy and the reservation, at least as far as Minnesota Anishinaabe communities are concerned.

In order to bring the theories developed in this study closer in line with the lived reality for residents in northern Minnesota, it will be necessary to conduct further research, including examinations of a number of aspects of the relationship between local residents and narrative communication that were not possible within the parameters of this study. It will be especially critical to (A) account for the perspective of the large (possibly the majority) proportion of the northern Minnesota non-Native population who know little about the Anishinaabe, despite the proximity of their lived environments and constant contact, and (B) for the other Anishinaabe polities in the region, given that this study only properly facilitated the examination of the circumstances of White Earth and Leech Lake, with only cursory considerations of the situations of the other reservation-based polities, which have their own distinct (and, in some cases, very different) histories and contemporary political lives.

We have not yet reached the stage of theoretical development where it would be fruitful to test the application of theories of narrative nationhood, “nationing,” or the transnational applications of this research on a large-scale quantitative basis, but pending further investigation into the local complexities of these theories, such research could be valuable in the long-term. There is concern, however, as mentioned previously, that the kinds of reconceptualizations of the nation, of nationhood, of imagined political community in general, and of transnationalism based on the definitional developments proposed here would not be conducive to quantitative analysis. This would certainly present certain methodological difficulties as it would become necessary to find other ways to test the applicability of the theories presented herein across circumstances with different indigenous polities operating within and across other colonial nation-states, but this too could present an opportunity to revisit not only the epistemological grounding of transnational discourse, but the methodological foundations as well.

In the meantime, the research conducted for this study will be presented in a variety of media, including the standard and expected journal article and book formats, but in the more immediate future will be provided directly to educational, political, and community organizations in the region to which the research pertains, in the hope that its contents will be valuable in the development of social and educational programs on the importance of stories and storytelling in shaping the local social and political environment, the perceptions of residents concerning their neighbors, and the relationships between Anishinaabeg and settlers in the region. It is my hope that the cultivation of greater

understanding concerning the narrative roots of residents' conceptualizations of one another and of each other's histories, lifeways, and present-day sociological circumstances will enable greater levels of communication, help to subvert of marginalization of indigenous individuals and polities, empower Anishinaabe communities in the pursuit of reclaiming and asserting their own narrative identities, and foster the growing autonomy and agency of a flexible and plural Anishinaabe narrative nationhood.

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## Appendix A. Interview Guide

### Questions for storytellers/story creators

Q: When you were writing/telling \_\_\_\_\_, how did you decide what kind of story you wanted to tell? How did you decide what information/characters/events to include?

Q: Who do you think is the main audience for your stories? Who do you think gets the most out of your stories?

Q: When you're writing/telling your stories, what do you want them to do or accomplish? Are they mainly for entertainment/education/preservation?

Q: Do you think your stories accomplish what you want them to? Why or why not? Have you had experiences where you were able to specifically witness the impact of your stories?

### Questions for story distributors

Q: When you're working with a storyteller or writer, how much leeway do you give them to tell the kind of story they want to tell? In other words, how much content editing do you do?

Q: How do you decide whether a particular piece of content should be kept in the story or not?

Q: Where do most of the stories you distribute come from? Where do they come from geographically, and on the other hand, where do they come from socially – in other words, who produces or brings you the stories?

Q: Who is the main audience for your stories?

Q: How do the stories you deal with get from the storyteller to the audience? What's the process like?

Q: Let's say you want to distribute a story or collection of stories on \_\_\_\_\_; what would you want to make sure the storyteller included?

Q: When you're deciding whether to distribute a particular story or set of stories, are there specific criteria you use in deciding whether it would be worth it?

Q: In the balance between the kinds of stories you want the audience to access, and the kinds of stories the audience demands, how do you decide what to distribute? Is demand more important, or are there things you think the audience ought to read/hear, so you make sure to place priority on stories that address those things?

### Questions for laypersons

Q: I was talking to \_\_\_\_\_, and they told me a story about \_\_\_\_\_. Have you heard this story before?

*If yes:*



Q: How did the story go when you heard it? Who did you hear it from?

Q: What do you think about this story? Is it an important one for you, and/or for other people? How do you understand the message of this story?

Q: How do you understand Ojibwe identity? *If Respondent identifies as Ojibwe:* What does being Ojibwe mean for you personally?

Q: How much do you know about local history? Can you tell me a story you know about local history?

Q: How do you understand the role of Ojibwe people in local history? Can you tell me a story specifically about Native history and the role of Ojibwe people in local history?

Q: What is life like for Native people around here? What kinds of things do you hear about Native people in the area?

Q: Where do you get most of your knowledge about Native life, politics, and people?

Q: Do you think that life for Native people and non-Native people around here is very different? *If yes, how so?*

Q: What do you think are the most important kinds of stories?

Q: What kinds of stories do you think are the most trustworthy? Are there some kinds of stories you specifically trust or don't trust?

Q: What kinds of stories do you think have the strongest impact on how you perceive and interact with other people, Native or not Native, in your day-to-day life?

Q: Some people find their important stories in newspapers, books, on TV or the radio, or in talking to other people they know. They might also get their stories from ceremonies, spiritual gatherings, or other community events. What kinds of outlets do you go to for different kinds of stories?

## Appendix B. Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects  
528 East Green Street  
Suite 203  
Champaign, IL 61820



October 28, 2014

Futing Liao  
Sociology  
57 CAB  
605 E Springfield Ave  
M/C 454

RE: *Mobile Narratives Across Borders Between Ojibwe and non-Ojibwe Space (Dissertation Research)*  
IRB Protocol Number: 15176

Dear Dr. Liao:

Your response to stipulations for the project entitled *Mobile Narratives Across Borders Between Ojibwe and non-Ojibwe Space (Dissertation Research)* has satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the UIUC Institutional Review Board (IRB) and you are now free to proceed with the human subjects protocol. The UIUC IRB approved, by expedited review, the protocol as described in your IRB-1 application with stipulated changes. The expiration date for this protocol, IRB number 15176, is 10/27/2015. The risk designation applied to your project is *no more than minimal risk*. Certification of approval is available upon request.

Copies of the attached date-stamped consent form(s) must be used in obtaining informed consent. If there is a need to revise or alter the consent form(s), please submit the revised form(s) for IRB review, approval, and date-stamping prior to use.

Under applicable regulations, no changes to procedures involving human subjects may be made without prior IRB review and approval. The regulations also require that you promptly notify the IRB of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated side effects, adverse reactions, and any injuries or complications that arise during the project.

If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at the OPRS office, or visit our Web site at <http://www.irb.illinois.edu>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anita Balgopal'.

Anita Balgopal, PhD  
Director, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Attachment(s)

c: Nicholas Cragoe