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WHOLE INDIAN: RACISM, RESISTANCE, AND (RE)MEMBERING  
TURTLE ISLAND

By

MARSHALL JEFFRIES

Under the Direction of Rosalind Chou, PhD

ABSTRACT

American Indians occupy numerous social and cultural intersections. These intersections shape the ways in which each are subjected to systemic racism. In the case of Indigenous people, each of its manifestations is inextricably linked to the settler motivation to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands. However, the resulting dispossession goes far beyond the relationship between tribes and their lands or political sovereignty. Native people are ultimately dispossessed of personhood and the sovereignty of self, body, mind, and spirit. They are dismembered through physical, spiritual, psychological, and cultural strategies by a pervasive settler culture, the consequences of which affect the self- and community-appraisals internalized by Native people themselves. This is a story of Indigenous people and their communities seeking to heal from the traumas of systemic racism and colonialist dispossession and dismemberment in the ways that they (re)member how to do, drawing on the brilliance of Indigenous wisdom and tradition. This is a study about Indigenous Americans seeking to thrive, to be whole.

INDEX WORDS: Indigenous, American Indian, Native American, Turtle Island, Identity, Belonging, Racism, Colonialism, Systemic Racism, Oppression, Dispossession, Land, Sovereignty, Decolonization, (Re)Membering, Racism, Invisibility, Resiliency, Trauma, Healing

WHOLE INDIAN: RACISM, RESISTANCE, AND (RE)MEMBERING  
TURTLE ISLAND

by

MARSHALL JEFFRIES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2018

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2018

WHOLE INDIAN: RACISM, RESISTANCE, AND (RE)MEMBERING  
TURTLE ISLAND

by

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December 2018

**DEDICATION**

For the love of Native People.

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to the names we will never know, and the thousands of Indigenous people missing today, especially the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I pray the dreams and aspirations of all my people be manifested, and for this document to be used in a good way.



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## 1 CHAPTER ONE- FORGOTTEN STORIES FROM TURTLE'S BACK

Few things seem to capture the mainstream American imagination like Indians.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of film media in the United States, for example, was made largely possible by this fascination as Westerns became the first popular hits to draw people into the medium, beginning with silent films (Bird, 1999; Leuthold, 1995). The images depicted in the media, however, have long stood in stark contrast with historical and contemporary lived realities of our nation's Indigenous Peoples (Berkhofer, 1978). This history is too often recalled as either a battle between primitive savagery and benevolent Western civilization, or as a tragic conquering of a universally naive, powerless, and peaceful population of "wise keeper[s] of the land" by a greedy colonial empire (Bird, 1999, p. 62). These narratives fail to capture the complexities of the colonization of the Americas, and neither positions American Indian people as active participants in a living history; therefore, both effectively dehumanize Native people. As a constant cultural feature, when Indians are imagined as part of modern society, they are portrayed as foreign in comparison to whites as well as other People of Color<sup>2</sup> (Berkhofer, 1978; Bird, 1999; Smith, 2009; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). Simultaneously, American Indians are forced into a racialized social order that cannot account for political sovereignty or the diverse

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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation, I use a variety of terms to refer to Indigenous Americans, none of which are sufficient or adequate. I use Indian, Native American, American Indian, Indigenous American, Indigenous, and First Nations interchangeably. Most American Indians have preferences as to how they would like to be referred to, and many prefer to be referred to according to their own tribal affiliation. For this reason, I ask the storyteller how to describe their identities.

<sup>2</sup> Little change has been made in this regard; recent portrayals in Stephanie Mayer's popular film series *Twilight* can be easily compared to that of the 1990 film *Dances with Wolves*. Additionally, Kopacz & Lawton (2010) find that portrayals of Native Americans on YouTube, the popular video sharing site, rely on the same worn out stereotypes and misconceptions without involvement from producers or Hollywood.



complexities present in Native communities, post-colonization (Brayboy, 2005; Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008).

The outright omission of Indigenous peoples and perspectives is felt across all US institutions. Erasure of Indigenous peoples and ways of being is pervasive and is the intended result of centuries of carefully designed imperialist policy. Upon entering graduate school at Georgia State University to earn a doctorate in Sociology with a concentration in race studies, I recall feeling this void in the literature on race and racism (and among those studying it, as well). In the seminal pieces of race scholarship produced by academia's most read race scholars, Native realities and experiences are eerily absent. Where Native people are discussed within the canon of race scholarship, problematic and limiting assumptions are made that do not match with my own experiences and observations in Indian Country.<sup>3</sup> Race is an irrefutably erroneous and biologically indefensible construct for any group of people but is especially ill-fitting for the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island<sup>4</sup> for reasons I discuss in this dissertation.

Being absent from this literature means that there is an overwhelming lack of scholarship on the contemporary effects of racism on Indigenous Americans within and beyond the field of race studies. Much of the useful work that does exist comes from the writings by Native scholars across a variety of disciplines but is rarely situated within race scholarship. Relative to other groups of Americans, little tends to be known about how race impacts the less visible daily lives of members of these diverse Nations and communities. "American Indian/Alaska Native" continues to be an official racial designation on the US census, with just under two percent of

---

<sup>3</sup> "Indian Country" is a popular phrase in the Native community that refers to Indigenous America. This language was used to name one of the only consistent Native news outlets, Indian Country Today (<https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/>)

<sup>4</sup> Turtle Island is a way to refer to the North American continent. According to John Mohawk (Seneca) (1994), this image originates from the Iroquois creation story.

Americans self-identifying as American Indian alone or in combination with another race, making it difficult to include Native people in national datasets without rigorous oversampling (US Census Bureau, 2010). A robust Native sample of that sort is rare given American Indian communities can be difficult to access (Schumacher, et al., 2008; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Misleading images in the media, harsh invisibility, and absence from much of existing research means that most US citizens whose ancestors arrived on the continent as immigrants also know very little about racism experienced by this underrepresented group (Loewen, 1995; Mihesuah, 1996; Garrouette, 2001; Smith, 2009).

Modern race researchers rarely mention American Indians but often fall into the trap of historicization when they do. That means that concerns and issues of race and racism relative to Indigenous populations in the United States are largely presented through a historical lens, failing to capture the everyday experiences of Indigenous people in America. The work of several prominent race scholars limits the discussion of American Indians mostly to the colonial era with occasional credit given to the acts of public resistance in the Civil Rights era by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), or otherwise discussing Indians as footnotes in America's racialized history. This can be observed across the seminal works of W.E.B. DuBois, David Roediger, Stephen Steinberg, Michael Omi, Howard Winant, Joe Feagin, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Mary Waters, Robert Blauner, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Philomena Essed, and Kristen Lavelle, to name a few. Joe Feagin explains that systemic racism began, in part, through the "killing off of Native Americans and the theft of their lands," which leaves little information about how today's survivors of Native genocide experience it (Feagin, 2006, p. 2).

Some lesser-known works explore the complicated experiences of black Indians and the role of anti-black prejudices among tribal peoples (Forbes, 1993; Bordewich, 1997; Pratt, 2004),

while others discuss the realities of intermarriage and mixed ancestry among today's American Indian populations, leaving the reader without insight into actual firsthand experiences of Native people and with over-simplified or essentialist understandings of Nativeness (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006; Gans, 1999). Additionally, most American Indians themselves would not likely relate to much of this work because storytelling is central in Native cultures, and these researchers rarely include first-hand voices from Indian Country (Wilson, 2008). Despite this glaring omission, my initial idea for this project came about when I read Eileen O'Brien's book *The Racial Middle*. She notes the fluidity with which Asians and Latinx people navigate US racial terrain due to their perceived racial ambiguity in a society defined by the Black-white divide (O'Brien, 2008). It left me wondering how American Indians would compare with her findings. I am also intrigued by Wendy Leo Moore's (2008) legal analysis for the use of race in Native America, but it needs to be expanded upon.

In contrast with the hyper-visibility that defines the Black experience (Tatum, 1997; Davis & et al., 2004), American Indians are believed by many Americans to be endangered, declining, or extinct (Miheuah, 1996; Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016). The impacts of the crude historicization of Natives by non-Indians influences both micro- and macro-political processes that contribute to the treatment of American Indians, including misclassification, invisibility, and political representation. Misclassification is a symptom of both the illogical nature of crudely classifying diverse people from thousands of distinct Nations as one race, as well as the real multiracial and multiethnic realities and identities of American Indians today. Denial of Indigeneity on the grounds of racial misclassification contrasts with the political uniqueness of tribal citizenship, treaty rights, etc. supposedly guaranteed to tribal members (Funke, 1976; Brayboy, 2005; Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008). Additionally, the so-called

racial diversity of today's Indigenous Americans is in large part a consequence of genocidal colonialist strategies, but, as Barbara Alice Mann points out in her 2006 book, *Daughters of Mother Earth*, there was also an incredible and easily overlooked range of diversity in skin color and phenotype before European settlers first arrived on the continent. Racialization creates the false notion that the "red man" described in colonialist racial typologies, such as that by Linnaeus in 1758, had one distinct appearance and one identifiable set of beliefs and practices. American Indian stereotypes are resilient over time, and the media has changed little in their portrayals from the historic to the recent despite the rich diversity of Tribal Nations.

The goal here is to decipher what can be made of race in Indian Country based on the stories of thirty-one Indigenous people from all over Turtle Island. All persons living in the US are affected by phenotype, but understanding how this is experienced through the complex mix of Indigeneity, sovereignty, ancestral and phenotypic diversity, tribal recognition status, urbanity, socioeconomic status, etc. for contemporary American Indians is a mystery to most people living in the US, and race researchers alike. The findings of this project do not form an explanatory model. In fact, the assumption that such a thing can exist runs counter to political sovereignty itself because tribes have the right to determine who their citizens are, which complicates any attempts at creating a model for racial ascription (Cook Lynn, 2007; Berger, 2013; Miller, 2014). Because there can be no one model for understanding tribal enrollment/citizenship, there can certainly be no one model for capturing the nuanced experiences that Indigenous Americans have with this thing called race. Instead of building a model, I present a woven tapestry of stories from a diverse sample of voices in Indian Country to have the reader think more deeply about a group of people much of the country overlooks.

Finally, I seek to add decolonization and healing to the discussions on racism. Race has been one of many strategies employed to disrupt Indigenous Nations and force them into a white supremacist imperialist power structure. This makes it all the more fascinating and hopeful that American Indians today demonstrate self-sovereignty<sup>5</sup> and political resistance at one of the sites of colonialism: the identity.<sup>6</sup> Participants in this study, who I usually refer to as storytellers, are savvy in navigating the complex social and political dynamics of Indian Country and often define themselves in ways that go beyond the limitations of their parents' and grandparents' self-concepts. It is for this reason that the final chapter of this dissertation, chapter five, is centered around the liberating work of decolonizing identities, communities, and Nations.

### **1.1 A Data-Driven Deviation**

When I first began this project, I intended to account for the omissions, and/or limited, problematic and destructive inclusion of Natives in race scholarship. I interviewed a total of thirty-one respondents with membership and ties to thirty-seven distinct Tribal Nations across the continental United States (twenty nine federally recognized Nations, seven state-recognized Nations, and one unrecognized tribe) to explore contemporary experiences with race and racism among the diverse population. This sample is diverse in terms of Nation, region, urbanity, tribal recognition status, membership/enrollment status, skin color and phenotype, age, and socioeconomic status. The primary methodology I employ is grounded theory (GTM), which is designed to allow the data to drive the theoretical underpinnings and direction of analysis. As a result, I intentionally bypass the use of a comprehensive literature review so to allow these oral

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<sup>5</sup> Self-determination at the level of person, identity, and dignity. This usage of the term is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>6</sup> Feminist literature has long noted identity as a site for contestation against hegemonic reproduction referring to it as the 'personal as political' (Hanish, 1969; Braithwaite, 2002; Jeffries, 2015)

histories to form the storyline of this project. Given the expansive gaps in existing race literature pertaining to American Indians, GTM is the best choice.

## 1.2 Scholarship with Purpose

As I began the process of piecing together the oral histories gifted to me through this research, I found the idea of simply weaving the data into existing theories and inserting the stories into the literature on race limiting and dissatisfying. Though undoubtedly helpful for understanding social problems, this type of scholarship fails to lead the reader to imagine the necessary translation to praxis. So much of the scholarship on race frames debates had in academic circles alone. This need struck me as I heard the incredible stories offered these participants, not because I *discovered* answers to healing traumas inflicted by the race construct but because participants themselves construct and engage personal identities in ways that challenge systemic racism and colonialism at the site of the self. I was inspired by their resiliency and subversiveness and chose to focus on that in chapter five. Of interest to me are the ways in which storytellers draw on traditional Indian epistemologies to interpret their own identities and tribal histories in ways that challenge and unseat imperialism.

For me, creating accessible and translatable educational scholarship answers a higher call to serve Indigenous and other colonized communities by facilitating the decolonization process. Angela Cavender Wilson (Dakota) explains that centering Indigenous knowledge is about reclaiming a stolen humanity (Wilson, 2004). She points out that the “intellectual imperialism” that has been faced by Indigenous communities at the hands of scholars and academics is connected to the “500 years of terrorism” faced by Indigenous Nations in the occupied US (Wilson, 2004, p. 69). Native academics and intellectuals, says Cavender, “can best be of service to our Nations by recovering the traditions that have been assaulted to near extinction” (Wilson,

2004, p. 69). It is here that the powerful examples of subversive and traditionally-informed identity construction practiced by these thirty-one storytellers seem to have the most utility. The work of empowering oral and living histories to teach about US sociohistorical processes is about the recovery of tradition and moves Indigenous voices from margin to center.

In his book, *Research Is Ceremony* (2008), Opaskwayak Cree methodologist Shawn Wilson specifically addresses the role of the Indigenous researcher in maintaining culturally appropriate responsibility and accountability. He writes:

Accountability is built into the relationships that are formed in storytelling within an oral tradition. As a storyteller, I am responsible for who I share information with, as well as for ensuring that it is shared in an appropriate way, at the right time and place. In receiving the story, you as an active listener are responsible for putting the story into a relational context ... In your joint ownership, you are accountable for how you use it (Wilson 2008, pp. 126-127).

The need for this project to go beyond mere description of an academic problem came from the uncertainties around whether the use of the stories could be relatable to Indigenous communities and whether the work could give back to these storytellers and their communities. For this reason, I focused on writing for wide-audience readability in the substantive chapters (3-6).

Wilson (2008) argues at length that appropriate Indigenous research involves reciprocity and giving back. Allowing for these stories to speak for themselves without first situating or interpreting them within or through an existing imperialist/mainstream theory is a way to honor the stories generously shared with me in this project. The goal is that tribal and Urban Indian organizations can use this to work to name and defend against the pervasive lack of understanding for contemporary Native identities that cannot be understood applying dominant Euro-American notions of race. In my own community, for example, such materials could be useful for the ongoing “Wisdom Circle” initiative led by prominent Occaneechi women who

seek to empower a traditional Yèsah identity and create the promise of a dynamic future through strong cultural and historical education.

The academy, according to Indigenous scholars, is a key site at which Indigenous people are erased (Deloria, 1969; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2012). This is recognized beyond the halls of the academy and felt in Native communities. Ulali, a Native American music group led by internationally-acclaimed singer and songwriter Pura Fé (Tuscarora & Taino), sings about this academic imperialism in their song “Museum Cases,” which mourns and laments the devastation caused by anthropology and archaeology. The lyrics suggest a powerful consequence, “I’m a nonexistent race ... I cannot claim from where I came, you hid the truth, no guilt, no shame” (Ulali, 1997). This is felt strongly by the participants in this study as they engage with various social institutions throughout their own lives. They recall feelings that range from neglect to outright assault and co-optation. Wilson (2008) reiterates throughout his book the following sentiment: “if research doesn’t change you as a person, you haven’t done it right” (p. 135). I do feel transformed by the stories shared with me, and I am honored and humbled by the responsibility of using them in a good way.

### **1.3 Overview of Dissertation**

In this dissertation, I have set forth to draw from rich qualitative data in the forms of individual and group oral histories to explain the need for attention to be paid to racism against American Indians in modern America. I spend all of chapter one, “Forgotten Stories from Turtle’s Back,” introducing the intent and purpose of this research. In chapter two, “Let Turtle Speak,” I define the unique methodological design and framework for this research journey. In chapter three, “The Bomb,” I discuss the impacts of the racialization of American Indians as understood through careful analysis of the stories of these storytellers. In chapter four, “So Are



You an Alcoholic?” I provide a detailed account of the understudied experiences American Indians have with racism and anti-Indian hostilities. In chapter five, “Repairing Turtle’s Ati,” I conclude by engaging with the liberatory potential of the resistance that these storytellers demonstrate in their lives and identities and discuss its implications for future change in the academy, Indian Country, and US society.

## 2 CHAPTER TWO- LET TURTLE SPEAK

In this project, I make visible the experiences that Native people have with race and racism in today's America. Indigenous voices from Turtle Island are rarely heard when it comes to race and racism. Because many of the factors complicating these experiences for Native people are unique to the sociopolitical contexts specific to Indian Country, I intentionally draw from a diverse sample of participants from all over Turtle Island. My goal is not to create an explanatory model nor account for all Native experiences. In fact, the diversity of American Indians in all social spheres is too great for such an endeavor to be possible. Instead, I highlight those complexities with the hopes of broadening our understanding of the consequences of the colonialist race construct and to highlight the need for decolonization at the site of individual and group identities. Lastly, I explore ways in which these storytellers already engage with decolonization by working to heal from injuries inflicted by racism and imposition of race more broadly, often constructing and (re)membering<sup>7</sup> identities of power, resistance, and resiliency.

### 2.1 Project Design & Methods

The goal of the project as successfully defended in 2012 involves gaining an insight into American Indian's experiences with racism. I seek to portray a diverse sample of Native people who embody various prominent intersections of difference so to investigate trends in Indian Country that can inform existing literature on race. The design I employ to accomplish this goal draws heavily upon grounded theory methodology (GTM). GTM dictates that after a preliminary

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<sup>7</sup> Decolonizing by taking back traditional ways of being, knowing, and doing. It is an assertion of sovereignty and is done through reconnection to oppressed epistemologies. It is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5.

round of selective sampling and open coding analysis, a purposive theoretical sampling strategy is employed (Strauss, 1987; Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). The use of a selective sample in the opening round of data collection is essential to undertaking GTM because no theoretical concepts have yet been generated to guide other sampling strategies (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007; Morse, 2007). I began gathering this purposive selective sample by seeking out storytellers who ranged in terms of region, tribal recognition status, and phenotype.

I scheduled nine initial interviews in late 2012, casting a wide net through my own social network across Indian Country. These nine participants were each residing in different states and have citizenship and ties to fourteen distinct tribal nations. Almost hilariously, the first interview I conducted was not scheduled nor anticipated despite my rigorous planning. I had traveled to North Carolina's Indian UNITY conference, an annual Native American gathering, to meet John Scott Richardson (Haliwa-Saponi & Tuscarora). After arriving early, I engaged in a great conversation with Denise Brown McAuly, the sister of the sitting chief of the Meherrin Indian Nation. This conversation led to an impromptu focus group interview with Denise and two other Meherrin women, Belinda Rudicil, and O'Tika Jones. I later realized that, while unplanned, this interview added to the richness of the data because it helped me to make more visible the experiences of people from both southeastern and state-recognized tribal Nations. Both are heavily overlooked in the literature on Native Americans. These three storytellers also ranged widely in phenotype which would later become instrumental in the analysis. This focus group plus the nine previously scheduled interviews were successfully completed by mid-2013.

As I had hoped, various themes had already begun to emerge by this point. Loss and insecurity, inter-family and inter-tribal diversity, pervasive microaggressions, and education as a

site of identity contestation and racism all appeared significant. These themes have traditionally been referred to as “codes,” “concepts,” and “categories”; however, LaRossa (2005) urges researchers to think of these as variables. Visualizing concepts as variables is especially useful to this research since modeling of the relationships between the many potential variables is useful to creating theoretical clarity in the near absence of more relevant literature (LaRossa, 2005; Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). In fact, given the diversity of this sample, along with the emphasized importance of key intersections of identity (urban/rural, phenotype, region, tribal recognition status, tribal membership status, etc.), treating the various qualitative codes as variables in the ATLAS.ti software platform proved useful to asking important questions of the data presented in the following chapters.

With some emergent variables identified, I sought to recruit a theoretical sample after the first round of interviews, meaning that the sample was adjusted based on the ever-changing theoretical needs of the analysis—therefore, I intentionally sought participants for the sample to maximize my ability to capture and explore variables that became important to analytical needs (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). After the tenth interview with Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk, and Yurok), I sought out a participant who works in higher education (Virgil Oxendine, Lumbee), and recruited another Elder (Lucinda Tiger, Creek). Higher education had emerged as a site for racial contestation, and the sample had lacked someone over the age of sixty. Having a storyteller over sixty was important for cross-comparison. Neither of the recruits were acquaintances because I asked for help from my social connections and the previous participants to strategically locate individual storytellers who could strengthen the sample. This theoretical sampling strategy captured both typical cases and deviant cases, all of which I maintained because it is important to understand both the complexities of emergent themes.

Therefore, those who contradict a theme are equally important to those who support it. In the chapters that follow, I take great care to present the complex ways this diversity affects racialized experiences as they emerged in the analysis.

Though the preliminary selective sample began with my own extended network of acquaintances, I argue that the familiarity I have with some of the respondents and with the relatives and friends of others is an asset to doing work with Indigenous populations. It is also important that I began with people that I know because I required that participants in this study be both self- and community-identified as Indigenous persons. That is, they needed to identify as Indigenous and also be connected to one or more tribal community (Urban Indian organizations included) (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007; Morse, 2007). This is due to the degree in which Native cultures and identities have been misappropriated and misrepresented (Deloria, 1969; Garrouette, 2003; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004). If the participants had been recruited through open forums or cold calls (such as internet advertisements), there would be no reliable measure for identifying whether an individual was a part of any Indigenous community unless I had contacts in that community; I had neither the time nor resources to engage with such a vetting process. Matthew Snipp (1986) explains the perils of studying Native populations because self-identification is not always an accurate indicator of tribal affiliation. Therefore, the first set of informants were screened based on relationships the storytellers had with myself or my friends/family or my own knowledge of their integrated roles in their respective communities. In some cases, the individuals are well-known across Indian Country. Selecting quality informants is essential to gathering quality data, especially given the open-endedness of GTM (Morse, 2007).

Trust is also a barrier preventing many scholars from accessing indigenous communities. You do not have to look far to find examples of harm inflicted on Indigenous communities and systems of knowledge by academics. Indigenous people have experienced widespread misrepresentation, therefore, transference of trust is required (Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2012). Santos (2008) describes one egregious case of academic and scientific exploitation of a tribal community, writing,

In the early 1990s, the Havasupai—an isolated Native American community—agreed to be part of a research project conducted by researchers from Arizona State University, thinking it would help to explain the high incidence of type-2 diabetes among Havasupai. As part of the project, tribal members provided blood samples, handprints, and fingerprints. By the late 1990s, the Havasupai had received no information to indicate a genetic link or predisposition to diabetes. The tribe believed the study was over after a freezer failure at ASU that damaged the blood samples and the move of one of the principal researchers to another university. However, unbeknownst to the Havasupai, cell lines damaged from the freezer failure were salvaged, and vials of their blood had been sent to other labs and shared with other researchers. Thus, genetic research on the Havasupai continued beyond their understanding of the scope and duration of the study, robbing them of making an informed decision on whether or not to participate.

Hodge (2012) tells another story of abuse by academic researchers; she writes:

In the 1970s, controversial studies continued to abuse and stigmatize tribes. Inupiat natives of Barrows, Alaska, age 15 and older, participated in a study of alcohol use. Commissioned by the city's Department of Public Safety, the study's aim was to assess the role of alcohol use in traumatic deaths to facilitate the design of beneficial interventions for the community. Among the charges levied against the study by Inupiat critics were the study's lack of proper consenting of Native youth and adults and the use of "Western, lower-48" standards and measures on the Inupiat society. The sensational "findings" were leaked to a major news source prior to consultation with the studied community. As a result of the negative media portrayal of Barrow, the bond rating for the city dropped, undermining economic development (pp. 434-435).

While these specific examples may be little known to the Native public, the song by Ulali speaks to a well-known distrust Indigenous Americans have in the academy because of a general understanding of the tendencies for researchers to exploit, as these two examples demonstrate. In this research, having personal connections to the participants allowed for trust to precede the

interviews. Storytellers told me things like, “it was my pleasure,” and “good luck, I can’t wait to read what you come up with. Many of them knew me or knew of me. Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) speaks to how she was familiar with me:

Meeting you told me you can be a powerful person in a community that doesn’t really have space for Native people. Guilford [College] wasn’t exactly the easiest place to be Native and I think that it was very good for me to see that you can still stand on your own in a place like Greensboro, North Carolina and be Native. That always meant a lot to me.

I provide this to say that trust and reciprocity are integral to the design of this project.

There are other theoretically-relevant reasons why I selected the first several interviewees out of my network of contacts. In addition to being recognized members of tribal communities,<sup>8</sup> individuals were selectively sampled because of regional diversity and because of their multiple statuses and identifications important in Indian Country. Relevant here, theoretical (purposive) sampling “helps you to fill out your categories, to discover variation within them and to define gaps between them” (Charmaz, 1996, p. 45). Given the inductive nature of the GTM approach, such a sample is required in order to name, understand, and define the impacts of key intersections of identity in this understudied community. I intentionally recruited for diversity in phenotype, for example. The resulting sample captured a healthy variety of Indigenous people, some of whom are easily identifiable as American Indian and others who are not necessarily easy to identify based on appearance alone. All of these individuals, however, represent common aspects of today’s American Indian population. Whether accounting for regional variation, phenotype, or the infamous rural/urban divide, diversity is important. This importance is twofold. It allowed me to capture a comprehensive view of how racism is experienced in Indian country, and it also helped to minimize one of the shortcomings of purposive sampling: selection bias.

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<sup>8</sup> This recognition will be informal (no official tribal identification such as citizenship documents or CIBs were requested because of the complex history of American Indian peoples with administrative genocide).

When discussing the construction of sound GTM research, Stern (2007) argues that the sampling net must be cast far and wide to reduce the effects of selection bias on resulting analysis. Most of my respondents do not know one another. If they had all been part of the same network of friends, all from the same region, etc., this could heavily bias the results. Fortunately, the final sample represented nearly half of US states and thirty-nine tribal nations through blood ties, ancestral descent, and/or citizenship. Because I regularly asked previous interviewees for help identifying respondents who met key relevant criteria, the theoretical sample operated as a contingent and selective snowball sample, which can be a great way to break outside of one's own social network and access difficult-to-reach networks (Spring, et al., 2003; Hood, 2007; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). American Indian networks are notoriously difficult to access for research (Schumacher, et al., 2008; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010).

Occasionally, participants identified other potential storytellers through a word-of-mouth recommendation, and I chose not to include them in the sample because they did not meet the evolving theoretical needs of the research. This was often the case if the potential storytellers were close family members of those already interviewed. I had all recommended participants submit a preliminary survey so that I could better determine whether to interview them. Through this survey, I gathered basic demographic and select other information pertaining to tribal affiliations, statuses, and level of community connection/participation that could also be central to deciphering alignment with emergent analytical needs. Eligible volunteers went into a respondent pool for me to select from. This preliminary survey can be found in the Appendix B.1 (page 260). Because the participants were so great at identifying people who met the stated needs of the evolving sample, only six of those individuals who filled out this survey were excluded by the conclusion of the data collection.



My initial goal was to have a sample size of thirty respondents; however, I ultimately interviewed thirty-one. I included the last interview to reach theoretical saturation in the key conceptual variables that emerged from the iterative GTM process. In this case, I sought more clarity in my understanding of both connections to land/place and the role that state laws play in limiting Indigenous identity expression. Scholars have demonstrated that theoretical saturation is important to concluding qualitative sampling (Hood, 2007; Morse, 2007; Stern, 2007). Morse (1995) suggests that theoretical sampling is one of the most expedient ways to achieve saturation. Of course, one can never reach full theoretical saturation in every possible variable. In fact, proponents of GTM warn against the collection of excessive data and urge researchers to be sensitive to the point at which saturation is reached for key theoretical concepts integral to the research question(s) (Morse, 2007). I began to note redundancies in key variables around the 20<sup>th</sup> interview, so I am confident that my strategy was successful, especially given the fact that I do not intend to construct an explanatory or predictive model to represent the entire population.

The interview guide was open-ended and intentionally general and broad for the first round of interviews. As important variables emerged from open (“line-by-line”) coding of the participant narratives, GTM allows the flexibility to alter and adjust the interview guides as the theoretical ideas become more refined (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). This allowed me to ask follow-up questions of theoretical relevance to the research as I sought to strengthen my understanding of key themes over the lifespan of the project. Open coding was replaced by axial/thematic coding to closely examine key variables identified in the open coding stage (LaRossa, 2005; Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). I began noting this transition and the development of themes after the fifth interview, after which a few key themes emerged (three of which would become central themes—the perception of loss and imbalance, education as a key

site for struggle and contestation, and identity as a site of both colonialist injury and decolonization).

The final stage of analysis, selective coding, involves defining the relationship between the central variables identified during axial coding (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). GTM calls for fluid movement between these analytical stages as negative cases and/or new variables are identified; this can be realized through constant comparison between the data and emerging theory (LaRossa, 2005; Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007; Star, 2007). There were few examples of negative cases, and emergent themes demonstrated strong theoretical strength, but there were conflicting ideas that arose involving phenotype and tribal membership as well as the urban/rural divide that required constant comparison and caused codes to be split into subcategories for purposes of sharpening the analysis. It is typically in the final round of selective coding that a story is synthesized from the data (LaRossa, 2005). Though I noticed strong themes had emerged much earlier, I refrained from developing the overall storyline until the end of data collection given the small amount of existing relevant literature I had to compare it to. I went to great lengths to allow the data to drive the resulting storyline.

Ideally, all these interviews would have been conducted in person, and I was fortunate enough to be able to conduct four of the interviews face-to-face. However, because the sample is so regionally diverse, I decided that video conferencing was the most feasible option. Indigenous people are spread far and wide, and reservation populations tend to be rural and regionally isolated. Importantly, Freeman and Moore (2007) found video conferencing to be a major improvement to working with Indigenous research participants over less personal or less intimate communications such as phone calls or email because they can serve as a proxy for face-to-face interaction with room to exercise cultural protocol. Sullivan (2012) also finds the

medium useful for its ability to mimic face-to-face interactions in qualitative research. One example that they give is the passing of a “talking stick” can be done as a visual gesture via video conferencing, to allow for traditionally informed respectful conversation that mirrors traditional Indigenous talking circles (Freeman & Moore, 2007). Regardless of the strategy, Wilson (2008) argues that cultural protocol is important when responsibly conducting research with Native populations.

While I did not employ the use of a talking stick, I did introduce myself per my traditional cultural protocol. My introduction, spoken in the Tutelo dialect and then translated to English, tells listeners who I am, who my people are, and names my specific families (clans). Humility is also an important part of that introduction, and my academic titles were not used as they were already printed on the consent form. Additionally, seeing the respondent rather than simply hearing them is important for two other reasons. First, an Indigenous person’s phenotype vitally shapes their racialized experiences (Garrouette, 2003; Weaver, 2015). Second, paying careful attention to nonverbal indicators could lead to more thorough data collection, especially when it comes to gauging how and when to ask follow-up questions (Star, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

To minimize barriers to access, video conferences were conducted using the freely-available Skype software. I was prepared to coordinate these videoconferences in partnership with local public libraries when and if a respondent did not have access to a computer with a webcam or internet connection. Instead, I had to offer four phone interviews (one for a participant who was traveling, one for an Elder without computer skills, and two for participants lacking stable housing and ready access to affordable transportation). I recorded video sessions using a free Skype recorder in the same way that calls to landlines and mobile devices were

recorded. I recorded in-person interviews with video and audio recording devices. I personally transcribed all interviews shortly after they took place, noting my own observations during transcription as analytical notes, recommended for jump-starting the development of codes/variables (Weiss, 1994, Wiener, 2007). Upon transcription, I uploaded interviews to the ATLAS.ti Qualitative Data Software Platform where I coded and analyzed them according to GTM protocol.

## **2.2 Completing the Circle and the Need for Focused Revision**

I left the interview guide intentionally broad so to leave room for unexpected concepts to emerge from the storytellers' histories. As the number of variables grew, I began to take notice of the cautions urged by Morse (2007) against the very real danger of getting lost in an unmanageably large dataset. The dataset that I collected is so rich that I could explore untapped relationships between additional variables well after the project outlined in this dissertation is completed. Instead of broadly accounting for a large number of variables and correlations, I decided to hone my focus to the ways that racism is experienced and the strategies for resiliency that the storytellers demonstrate (I identified nearly sixty codes in ATLAS.ti prior to this revision).

## **2.3 Data, Stories, Nations, People**

Each story shared in this project reflects a life, a community, a nation, a history, a legacy, and often both pain and healing. In the research sciences, we often refer to these stories as data. While I use this word intermittently throughout the text, it is important to note that behind each strand of data are millennia of accumulated context and history. I am humbled and honored to hold these stories and to have been trusted with their life and power to heal. While I attempt to construct an overarching narrative, the Nation, culture, and geographic history of the storytellers

is essential to understanding the meaning of each component to the larger narrative. Also, American Indians are a proud people. It is common for stories told in Indigenous communities to highlight, not conceal, struggles and trials. Such resilience and survival may be the reasons Indigenous cultures continue to exist despite what Wilson (2004) refers to as five hundred years of ongoing terrorism.

The diversity of the sample is one of the most valuable features of this research. It also creates an interesting challenge because personal information relevant to the storytellers and their identities is an important and necessary part of the analysis and presentation of the findings. For example, knowing whether a person is from a federally-recognized or state-recognized tribe, a reservation or urban center, is a man, Woman, Queer or Two Spirit Person, etc. plays an integral role in allowing the researcher and the reader to interpret and situate a person's story. It is for these reasons and more that I decided it necessary to use participants' real names, which they agreed to on the informed consent forms.<sup>9</sup> These are individuals who have overcome great odds and made their own mark on their communities and kin, making it even more important that they are visible.

Critical race theorists argue that "who" is speaking is just as important as "what" is being said, so these may also be meaningless if separated from the positionalities of the storytellers (Delgado, 1984; Lawrence, 1995). Additionally, Wiles, et al., (2009) point out that gaining true confidentiality is difficult in most qualitative research. In the case of Indian Country, it is likely that several of these respondents will know one another since I will be using social network recruitment, and Native communities tend to be both small and well-connected such that community members could likely figure out who I was referring to in my writing. In the

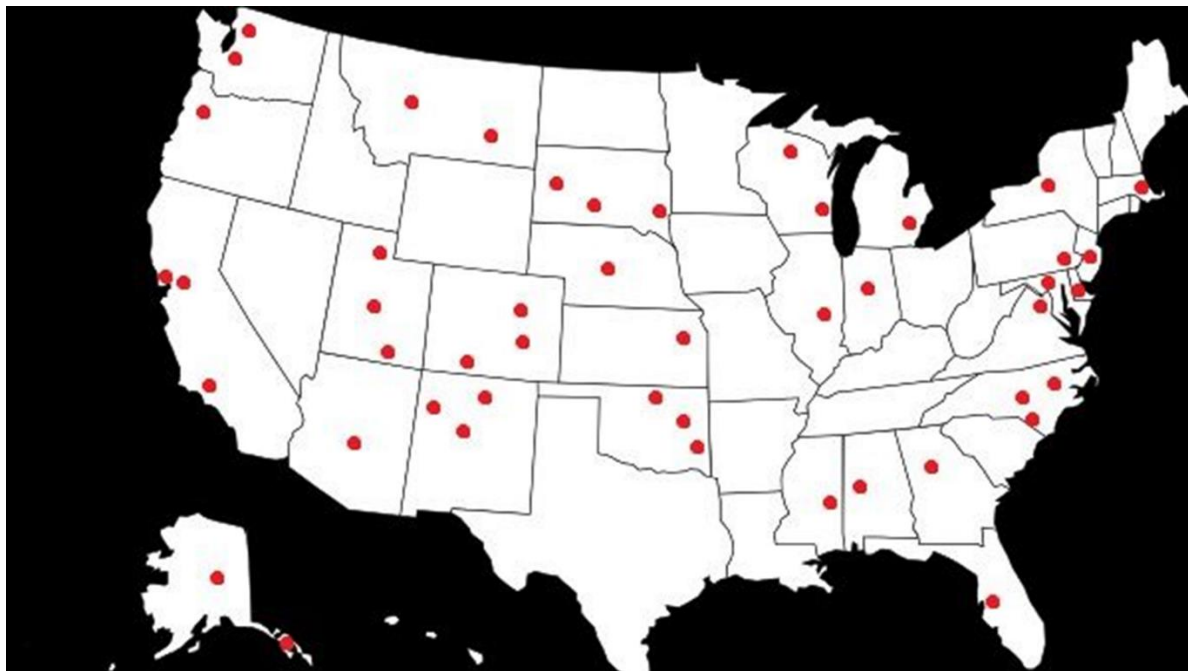
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<sup>9</sup> There were three to four times when a storyteller shared something that they wished to keep out of the resulting presentation of data or that they wished to remain de-identified which I respected entirely.

following paragraphs, I describe some of the above-mentioned diversity and provide tables with relevant and useful information about participants in this sample. Scholars in the academic tradition have far too often appropriated the narratives of underrepresented participants as their own intellectual property, especially when dealing with Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012). For American Indians, the voice of the storyteller gives a story its meaning, so I try here to honor those voices and stories as they were shared with me (Wilson, 2008). I also frequently refer to the participants as storytellers precisely because Native people have had thriving traditions spanning millennia of sharing oral histories (Cruikshank, 2002).

#### 2.4 Sample & Limitations

I interviewed a total of thirty-one storytellers, all of whom appear by their real names in this project for reasons I explain in the project design. Their residences span eighteen US states (as seen in Figure 1 below), and they have meaningful and substantive life experiences from having lived in twenty-four states and two countries (US and Brazil).



*Figure 1- Map of Current Location of the storytellers*

These storytellers are affiliated (in diverse ways) with thirty-nine tribal nations, most through tribal citizenship, lineal descent, and family connections to communities, Native Corporations, and lands. Thirty of the thirty-one participants were enrolled in a tribal nation as a citizen or enrolled descendant.<sup>10</sup> Of the tribally-enrolled participants, twenty-two belong to federally-recognized Tribal Nations. Seven of the storytellers are enrolled in state-recognized Tribal Nations, and one is enrolled in an unrecognized tribe. One storyteller is unenrolled due to multigenerational urban displacement. The youngest is twenty-four years old and the eldest is ninety-two years old. The average age of the respondents is forty, and the median age is thirty-six. The age- and educational-attainment distributions of the sample represent both strengths and key limitations. The study lacks youth participants below the age of twenty-four and has no one between the ages of sixty and ninety-two.

When it comes to educational attainment, this sample is far from being generalizable to the American Indian community overall, which struggles with high rates of dropout in secondary and post-secondary levels (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). This is a particularly well-educated sample, with twenty-five college graduates, nine of whom have completed graduate-level professional degrees. Therefore, while these participants describe experiencing racism within high school, only one had dropped out. I do have participants with varying degrees of college experience but no degree. Some are currently enrolled in higher education while others are not, indicating that some have dropped out. This suggests a social class discrepancy between the general American Indian population overall and the sample for this project, likely as a feature of

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<sup>10</sup> An enrolled descendant is usually a Native person who does not qualify for full tribal citizenship per the criteria stated in the Tribal Constitution but may benefit from enrolling as a descendant by becoming eligible for certain social programming or welfare (Oneida Nation, 2018; Miller, 2014; Gover, 2008). Not all tribes have such a descendancy enrollment and there is high variation in those that do. According to the Indian Land Consolidation Act of 1983, enrolled descendants can inherit Indian Title Land without trust status conferred (US Congress, 1983).

my own social network. In some situations, participants do note some differences between themselves and other members of their tribal families or communities. Simultaneously, at least one participant was struggling with homelessness at the time of the interview, a few noted ongoing financial struggles, and others recall having experienced such hardships at some other point in their lives. Because this research is qualitative, I chose to state this as a limitation rather than to recruit participants with less time and resources available to take part in a two-hour interview with no financial incentive.

There is a long-standing divide between reservation and non-reservation populations whether real or imagined. This divide has been thought of as meaningful to experiences with race and racism, multiraciality, access to resources, and connection to tribal languages and culture (Rouse & Hanson, 1991; Fixico, 2000; Lobo, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006; Ramirez, 2007; Orange, 2018). While there are active debates about the specific significance of these statuses, there has also been increasing attention paid to differences between those who live in rural and urban settings (not the same as reservation v. urban). In fact, public health researchers have begun to divide American Indian epidemiology data by urban and rural populations (Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002). There are a host of legal definitions to define urbanity, like that employed by the US Census Bureau (2016). Others have sought more meaningful ways to define rural and urban in relation to health care access (Hall, Kaufman, & Ricketts, 2006). Despite those existing definitions and the variety therein, for purposes of this research, I define urban as living in a major metropolitan area (with a population of 1 million or higher) (US Census Bureau, 2012). I also consider whether participants believe themselves to be urban or rural because they knew their environments better than anyone. My community is a great example of this complexity. While we do not live in a rural area by



definition, our community is certainly rural by most standards and by the self-definition of people in my community.

With these distinctions drawn, fourteen of the participants either lived on a reservation at the time they were interviewed or had grown up on a reservation. This is just under half—nearly double the proportion of Native Americans living on tribal lands according to the 2010 Census (US Census Bureau, 2011). Reservation populations can be difficult to access for research, so this is a strength of this study and a likely testament to the adapted version of a snowball sampling technique proposed by qualitative researchers (Schumacher, et al., 2008; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). Seventeen of the storytellers grew up in urban metropolitan areas, and twenty-three grew up in rural areas (broadly defined). Three respondents grew up in both settings, moving back and forth frequently. Though fourteen were reservation Indians during at least one part of their life, several of those who never lived on a reservation recalled visiting family and friends on a reservation occasionally or frequently. All these facts are important in situating the shared stories and experiences for purposes of analysis and reporting.

Some of the storytellers see themselves as active in their tribally-specific community, even if they did not currently live in or near their tribal headquarters. A few did not necessarily feel an active part of that community but were instead strongly involved with or embedded in an Urban Indian community or organization. Quite a few see themselves as integrated into both, an understudied intersectional reality. At least five storytellers who belong to multiple Tribal Nations maintain strong connections to more than one tribal community, and some have worked for multiple tribes through their careers or volunteer activities. Though this is a complicated and nuanced proxy for culture, twenty-seven of the thirty-one participants either know at least some of their tribal language and either use it regularly or have close family members who do. I find

this remarkable and surprising given the critical state nearly all North American tribal languages are currently in (Krauss, 1992; Cornell & Kalt, 2010). It is a testament to the level of involvement that these storytellers have with their tribal families and the importance they understand their Native identities to have in their lives.

A wide range of phenotypes and racial identities and experiences are represented in this sample. At least five storytellers identify specifically as “full-blooded” Natives, twenty-one identify as monoracial (one race alone), and twelve identify as multiracial. While some do not identify as multiracial, they recognized having multiple racial ancestries. Because of this diversity, some of the storytellers are easily-identifiable as Native by phenotype (although this is highly subjective and multi-faceted), while others discuss being misclassified as white, Black, Asian, or Latinx depending on location and context, time of year, and/or presence of visual props. This spectrum of diversity is not unique to my sample. The realities of colonialism including violence (rape and sexual assault, forced relocation, etc.) and intertribal and interracial marriages have culminated in high diversity in phenotype in the American Indian community (Snipp, 1997; Garrouette, 2001; Weaver, 2014; Lawrence, 2004).

Though they use different definitions and labels to self-identify, ten of these storytellers identify as gender non-conforming or not heterosexual (using words/phrases like Two Spirit, gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or Queer). This is a little less than one-third, which is likely an unintentional oversampling resulting from the uniqueness of my own social network. Despite this reality, I was unable to find unwanted ways in which it skews the data, likely because most were hesitant to identify with the mainstream gay community and many were not likely known to be Queer for much of their lives. Nearly all are still involved and integrated into their tribal communities.

Table 2.1 Storyteller Demographics (interview number, real name, age, nation(s), and residence at the time (state))

Interview Number	Name(s), Age(s)	Nation(s)	Residence at time of Interview (state)
1	Denise Brown McAuly, 56 Belinda Rudicil, 35 O'Tika Jones, 39	Meherrin Nation	NC
2	John Scott Richardson, 45	Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe & Tuscarora, <i>w/ Nansemond ancestry</i>	NC
3	Ashley Falzetti, 33	Miami Nation of Indiana	NJ
4	Michael King, 25	San Juan Southern Paiute & Navajo Nation	KS & AZ
5	Christian Weaver, 36	Shinnecock Indian Nation	CO
6	Crystal Rizzo, 28	Southern Ute Indian Tribe	MA
7	Wahienhawi Hall, 29	St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, <i>Living at Onondaga Nation</i>	NY
8	Lee Blacksmith, 24	Crow Nation	MN
9	Annabelle Allison, 45	Navajo Nation	GA
10	Claire Norwood, 25	Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation <i>w/ Karuk and Yurok ancestry</i>	PA
11	Virgil Oxendine, 49	Lumbee Tribe of NC	NC
12	Lucinda Tiger, 92	Muscogee Creek Nation	OK
13	Jennifer Irving, 36	Oglala Lakota	SD
14	Esther Lucero, 41	Navajo & Latina	CA
15	Ras K'Dee, 35	Pomo of Dry Creek Rancheria <i>w/ family at Point Arena Manchester Rancheria</i>	CA
16	Sabine Talaugon, 24	Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians	CA
17	Tabatha Harris, 26	Choctaw Nation	OK
18	D'Shane Barnett, 38	Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (Three Affiliated Tribes)	MT
19	Elizabeth Jacobs Hunt, 33	Lumbee Tribe of NC	NC
20	Milissa Hamley, 26	Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians	WI
21	Christy Bieber, 25	Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians	MI
22	Sharon McIndoo, 50	Tlingit Nation & Tsimshian	AK
23	Isaiah Brokenleg, 36	Sicangu Lakota (Rosebud Sioux Tribe)	WI
24	Autumn Washington, 32	Lummi Nation	WA

25	Lakota Harden, 57	Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & Ho-Chunk <i>w/ also raised Tlingit in Sitka, AK</i>	CA
26	Jude Killsplenty Cruz, 38	Ohkay Owingeh Tribe, Sicangu Lakota, & Turtle Mountain Ojibwe <i>and grew up in Isleta Pueblo, and has connections to the Hopi</i>	AZ
27	Alvin Chee, 26	Navajo Nation	AZ
28	Donna Chrisjohn, 42	Sicangu Lakota & Navajo	NM
29	Vivette Jeffries-Logan, 51	Yèsah (Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation)	NC

In the tradition of feminist scholarship, I must also identify and disclose my own positionality as a highly-educated (Western/academic), biracial (white and Native), Two Spirit person who benefits from white-seeming privilege.<sup>11</sup> I come from the Yèsah community, a state-recognized people in the southeast. During the analysis, I intentionally reflected on the role of my own privileges, especially when interviewing those whose experiences with phenotype differ from my own. I did note that many of the participants in this research may have more social class privilege than the general American Indian and Alaska Native population, likely an influence of my own social network. My social positionality does affect my motivation for conducting this research, though, and I look to the work of Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) (2008) and Angela Cavender Wilson (Dakota) (2004) who express the importance of reciprocity and giving back to the community. My various privileges have afforded me the ability to gain a high level of

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<sup>11</sup> In an earlier article, Jeffries (2015), I describe myself as white-passing. Adrian Downey (2018) pointed out some issues with this language. Her argument made sense to me because I do not seek to “pass” by deceit, meaning I do not present myself in this way intentionally. She also argues that the term “passing” may have other meanings in some tribal communities. Because I value Adrian’s analysis, I will use white-seeming; however, it should be noted that some in my sample instead wish to unproblematically identify as both white and Indigenous. I would also argue that as long as privilege is being discussed in the context of Indian Country, individuals should be able to choose exactly how they refer to it (just as with tribal identity).

education, and my greatest goal is that the results of this project may be useful to the participants, their families, and all Native people.

## **2.5 The Case for Abandoning the Literature Review**

In the typical dissertation, the methodology and procedures are discussed as a part of the introduction, followed closely by a comprehensive review of the literature. The design of this project necessitates a different format. First, the project is constructed around the application of grounded theory methodology (GTM), pioneered by Glaser & Strauss (1967). This methodology involves the creation and/or elaboration of theory through systematic analysis of qualitative social science data and a dialectical relationship between the data and emerging theoretical concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). GTM also requires that data collection and analysis be simultaneous, with constant comparison between emergent themes and collected data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007; Hood, 2007). It is described as an “iterative process” that pushes the researcher to consider “all possible theoretical explanations” for social phenomena (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1). The goal is to allow emergent patterns from the data to form in preliminary analysis before comparing that data to preexisting theories. Therefore, data collection precedes theoretical inquiry. Given the scant and disparate nature of existing literature on Native people’s experiences with racism, this inductive strategy promises high methodological potential. Simonds and Christopher (2013) go so far as to suggest that deductive methods often contribute to the clash between Western and Indigenous methodologies because so much has been written from the perspective of the white gaze.

When I first began this project in 2012, I set out to apply GTM to explore the ways that racism is experienced across intersecting types of diversity common in Indian Country. Unlike

the common goal of most quantitative research, GTM is used to explore the complexity of social events and to uncover underlying social processes rather than to simply describe population variance (Hood, 2007). Undertaking this task, researchers are to avoid using existing literature to shape expectations and allow emergent patterns in the data to drive the analytical process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1994) explain that when existing literature is found to be relevant, the data generated can then be used to clarify, modify and/or elaborate the concepts found in existing literature. Therefore, rather than employ a traditional literature review, I weave relevant existing literature/theory, albeit minimally, throughout the analysis and presentation of themes, outcomes, and outlined implications within this dissertation. That is, where existing literature becomes important for interpreting the qualitative data collected in subsequent chapters or where noteworthy comparisons arise, I incorporate existing scholarship where necessary. This strategy allows for the oral histories shared by these storytellers to speak for themselves before existing research is applied. The remainder of this dissertation, chapters three through six, feature interwoven oral histories of Indigenous storytellers who have shared their life histories with me. May this project represent them and their communities in a good way, and may these words be used to promote healing. To use the featured tagline of the Seattle Indian Health Board, my goal is to complete this project “for the love of Native people.”

### 3 CHAPTER THREE- BOMBING OF TURTLE ISLAND

I met Lakota Harden (Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & Ho-Chunk), a 57-year-old warrior-activist-educator nearly a decade ago when she visited Chapel Hill, North Carolina to facilitate a showing of Peter Bratt's film *Follow Me Home* (Bratt, Bratt, & Renshaw, 1996). My aunty, Vivette Jeffries-Logan, gave her a traditional welcome to Yèsah land. We stayed in touch, and I brought her back to our territory once or twice to speak at Guilford College where I was a leader in the Native American Student Circle. Our relationship grew when I took her to meet some family members who hosted her on our tribal grounds in Pleasant Grove, NC. It has been an incredible honor to get to know her because she is both a wise Elder and humble teacher. Lakota's life story is one of the most interesting I have ever heard, and it offers a lot of lessons about trauma and resiliency.

Lakota was raised in a household with traditional Lakota teachings and is also a multi-generational survivor of Indian Boarding Schools and systematic abuse within those institutions. As a young woman in the 1960s and 70s, she was heavily involved in Native Civil Rights activism through the grassroots Women of All Red Nations (WARN) organization and the American Indian Movement (AIM). She has experienced rural reservation life, rural Alaskan Native village life, Indian Boarding Schools, Urban Indian centers and organizations, American Indian political resistance, the university, and the anti-racism/anti-oppression movement. Her path has led her through so many of the diverse experiences that Indian people tend to have across different spheres and parts of the country. Lakota first grew up in rural South Dakota, but, when she was young, her mother married the father who raised her, a Tlingit from near Sitka,

Alaska. As a result, she is an Alaska Native corporate shareholder and a member of the Sitka Tlingit community despite being Lakota and Ho-Chunk by ancestry. When it comes to her Lakota ancestry, she was raised mostly by Oglalas even though she is Minnecoujou and Yankton, different bands. She also spent a good portion of her life living in the Urban Indian community in the San Francisco Bay after having gone there for college and work. Much of her adult social network and immediate family are based in Oakland.

The complexity of Lakota's identities and experiences are remarkable but not as rare as one might imagine. Native people from across Turtle Island have a long and complicated history of displacement, internal migration, and political struggle. Lakota's lifetime of education and activism has given her a lot of time to reflect on these complexities, too. As we talk about her seemingly disparate experiences, she begins to reflect on the consequences of colonialism; she says, "It's like a bomb dropped and we (Indians) were shrapnel that flew everywhere in different directions and pieces." She elaborates. "Some have the (skin) coloring" and "some have less coloring." "Some have the home base (reservation) and some have no home base." "It's like all of our experiences are so different from each other," she concludes. This is so much the case that it is actually this exact difference that seems to create *not* the greatest differences across Indian Country but the single most common similarity stringing together the lives of all thirty-one participants in this project. That is, Native people are complex and multi-dimensional and defy all models created to categorize Indians as a supposed racial group.

### **3.1 Turtle Had No Race**

Indigenous Americans are far older than the imperialist construct of race. The story of Native people did not begin with the bomb described by Lakota Harden. It feels intuitively unnecessary to state this, but, as several participants point out, most people living in the US do



not think about or know this fact, likely because of the fact that most historical timelines used in schools begin at colonial conquest and arrival of Europeans to this continent. “We’ve always been here,” says Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèsah). Tribal nations survived on this rugged and unforgiving continent for thousands of years, and many did so in Turtle Island’s harshest terrains. While I can make no claims that this existence was utopian, it was certainly far more sustainable than any modern Western capitalist society. In a Forbes article published in 2016, staff contributor Drew Hansen analyzed multiple recent studies and statistics and determined that modern capitalism would starve out humanity by 2050 (Hansen, 2016). In a very short amount of time, the Euro-American culture put into place by the arbiters of the world’s largest genocide has led to grave questions for the sustainability of human life on Mother Earth.

Several participants comment on the sheer irony in the fact that modern cultures will now be required to return to more sustainable and tested Indigenous practices. John Scott Richardson (Haliwa Saponi & Tuscarora) comments on today’s culture: “Things are not as modern as they technically may appear,” he says. “You know, we’ve had these things for a long time. Maybe the car and the cell phone, things like that [are new], but our people had irrigation, ways of preserving [foods], and things that might now seem obsolete, but they are not.” This is important to mention because aspects of this dissertation project admittedly center the colonialist intrusion that has taken place in only the most recent chapters of American Indian history. In this case, centering this era is unavoidable because I seek to explain the ways in which race and racism play out in Indian Country. Race is an imported colonialist weapon employed as an attempt to destroy Indigenous American, African, Asian, and even European cultures in favor of a mainstreamed white supremacist capitalism. Capitalism and Indigenous cultures seem ill-fitted,

and Indigeneity has been both targeted and exploited by its arbiters since the initial conquest began.

The social system called race is an important and intentional part of the bomb described by Lakota Harden, but it is but one of the mechanisms required in the production of hegemony, domination, and empire (Byrd, 2011). According to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014), long before settlers arrived on Turtle Island, racism was used as an Anglo-European strategy for maintaining oppression. This goes back to long-standing disputes between Christians and Muslims in biblical times, and the Calvinists who were instrumental in shaping colonial American culture equated dark skin with eternal damnation (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Knowledge about original tribal communities is not lost, though. I asked the storytellers about how membership and belonging worked in their Nations before the institution of race. Most answer similarly, which I discuss later in the chapter. The colonialist American government was content to paint American Indians as a singular and homogenized “race” of people—“red people”—so long as bloodshed was still the most acceptable means for handling the inherent contradiction between notions of US freedom/expansion and Indigenous sovereign/inherent rights (Berkhofer, 1978).

As brutality began to take its toll and Indigenous communities fought back against massacre, scalping, rape, relocation, isolation, etc. to survive, racial mixing and forced assimilation allowed the government to disaggregate groups of Indians by allowing those consequences to be used to strip inherent rights from the continent’s Indigenous citizenry (Churchill, 1999; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Deer, 2015). White Americans strategically pivoted from propagating savage portrayals to more noble but tragic ones (Berkhofer, 1978; Bird, 1999; Deloria, 1999; Byrd, 2011). As a result, race in Indian Country is a confusing and nonsensical construct that relies, in part, on strongly disproved essentialist ideas like that denoted by the

system of blood quantum still used by many tribal governments to determine citizenship eligibility. That is, the first goal was to wipe out all “red people” through violent means, and then it slowly transitioned toward a strategy of biopolitics, restricting what it means to be “red enough,” eventually eradicating those with legitimate claims in the eyes of governing bodies (Bordewich, 1997; Garrouette, 2001; Pearson, 2017). Jennifer Irving (Oglala Lakota) sums it up well. “This whole mixed blood [vs.] full blood stuff all came about with the forced adoption of the IRA government (Indian Reorganization Act of 1934) and enrollment process.” With these came systems for regulating Indigeneity that tribes were forced into adopting (Spruhan, 2006; Pearson, 2017).

As Jennifer explains, “degree of Indian Blood was never a way typical Lakotas would pull people into our communities.” She adds: “We made alliances. All that was imposed on us and so at that time when these folks would come in and say, ‘so and so’s husband is...’ you know, he would be labeled white or whatever else, we didn’t necessarily count their children different because we were all human beings, you know?” In this oral history, being born to a Lakota person made someone Lakota. Jude Killsplenty Cruz (Ohkay Owingeh, Sicangu Lakota & Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) adds:

To me, enrollment is basically for government purposes. It’s like a having a driver’s license or a social security number—it’s a method of government relations. That’s what enrollment is. Being from multiple tribes and having families in the Native way, families in the old school way, we would adopt people along the way as you come on your journey and you meet people, you know? You meet new family members along the way that may not be blood and it’s sometimes those family members that carry you. For me, enrollment doesn’t really mean anything, but it is the way of the government, acknowledging and keeping track of us. That’s what I think of it.

D’Shane Barnett (Three Affiliated Tribes) describes something similar:

My grandma speaks Mandan, follows all the Mandan customs, you know things like that because that’s what her mom was. In Mandan culture, if you go back two to three hundred years, there was no such thing as enrollment or an identification card. You are

part of the village if you're part of the village. Anyone who is part of the village is identified as part of the village. It didn't matter what your blood was. It didn't matter back then, and we had plenty of people who were Crow, who were Hidatsa, who were Pawnee, who were Arikara, that were part of our village and our Nation.

A quantifiable measure like blood quantum allows for some children of enrolled Indian people to be considered less "Indian" than others because Indianness begins to be something that can be "measured." The origins of this strategy were not found in the Native communities themselves, as Jennifer explains—it was born of US policy. Being "less Indian" continues to mean that descendants of those who signed treaties can lose their protections insured by those treaties and protected by the US Constitution.

This is a resource-deprivation model and it provides clear incentive for the settler state to lower the number of people with legal claims to Indigeneity and sovereignty. This is confusing for non-Indian people (even other People of Color), precisely because the rule of hypodescent (one-drop rule) has worked in an opposite fashion. Eva Marie Garrouette (Cherokee) (2001) explains that this difference was intentional, because for most of US history, being Black has meant having less legal rights and formal protections, unlike the treaties and unique components of Indian Law. Anyone with a drop of "Black blood" would be Black and subsequently excluded from full rights and belonging in the US.

'Degree of Indian Blood' is such a commonplace mechanism for conceptualizing race and belonging in Indian Country that Natives have internalized its supposed meanings. Alvin Chee, a twenty-six-year-old college graduate recalls a lively debate once had with his best friend from the university, Crystal Rizzo (both are storytellers in this study). Crystal is half Southern Ute on her Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) and Alvin is 4/4 Navajo on his. Crystal once told Alvin that this didn't really mean that he was truly and biologically "full-blooded" Navajo. He

rejected the notion, and the debate came to an apex when Crystal visited Alvin's family in Arizona. The topic came up, and Alvin recalls his father's words here:

The Navajos have adopted so many tribes. We have adopted Utes, we have adopted Apaches, adopted Zunis, adopted Hopis, and it's a clan system so once villages raided other villages, and we gained clans. We even have a Mexican clan. It's not uncommon that we invite other people into the tribe or we marry our daughters out. It's always been that way, so we can't really say we're "full" anything. No one's ever going to be "full" anything [because] we're all mixed in a way.

His father's words sparked a revelation for Alvin because at that moment he came to understand that blood quantum never existed in traditional Navajo ways. Vivette Jeffries-Logan explains that membership was once about who one is in relationship to the world(s) they occupy. She says, "when someone married into the tribe, historically, if they were part of the village, spoke the language, and part of the families and roles that allowed the village to function, they belonged to that people. Race was not part of the equation. Our ways of being pre-date the specious institution of race." Kim TallBear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) (2003) echoes this, writing:

Tribes ... had nonracial requirements before European and Euro-American colonization. Some of these persisted officially into the twentieth century, and many persist unofficially. They include being born within the tribal community, marrying or being adopted into the community, long-term residence within the tribal community, and the assumption of cultural norms such as language, religion, and other practices (p. 93).

Yet, overall, blood quantum continues to be the way Nativeness is constructed both from outside and inside Indian communities.

As these storytellers suggest, race is incongruent with Indigenous ways of understanding personhood, belonging, and kinship. Elizabeth Cook Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) explains (2007) that common phrases and identifiers used to describe racially marginalized people cannot be adequately or appropriately applied to Indigenous populations. She writes:

Native populations in America are not “ethnic” populations; they are not “minority” populations, neither immigrant nor tourist, nor “People of Color;” They are the Indigenous Peoples of this continent. They are landlords, with very special political and cultural status in the realm of American identity and citizenship. Since 1924, they have possessed dual citizenship, tribal and U.S., and are the only population that has not been required to deny their previous National Citizenship in order to possess U.S. citizenship. They are known and documented as citizens by their tribal nations (p. 86).

Similarly, Rose Cuison Villazor (2008) argues that the crudely-racialized mechanism of measuring Indianness through blood quantum also contrasts with the notion of political sovereignty. On the use of minimum blood quantum requirements to ensure land rights, she writes, “Under the contemporary ‘race versus political meaning’ of blood quantum, these laws arguably violate equal protection principles because they do not fit the current framing of what constitutes political indigeneity” (Villazor, 2008, p. 802). Brian McKinley Jones Brayboy (Lumbee) (2005) discusses this, as well. He writes, “Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). Political Indigeneity, as all three of these scholars point out, comes with unique language regarding “Indians” in US law, which specifies that the US-Tribal relationship is government-to-government. This is precisely why current US President Donald Trump has gone on record saying he would like to abolish tribal sovereignty and treat Indians like any other Group of Color in the United States (Rickert, 2018).<sup>12</sup>

Sovereignty, then, does not allow Indigenous people to be grouped according to the same racialized mechanisms, based on delineation from whites by phenotype for purposes of subjugation. Despite the legal and ethical reasons for this disaggregating Indigenous Peoples from other People of Color,<sup>13</sup> many of the same race-based tactics of oppression used on other

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that this is unsurprising given Trump’s hero is Andrew Jackson who was responsible for Indian Removal (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Johnson & Tumulty, 2017)

<sup>13</sup> Persons/People of Color is a term which Loretta Ross explains was appropriated by a group of Black Feminists in the 1970s to unify all those group as racial “others” by a white supremacist system (Wade, 2011)

“racial” groups have also been inflicted on American Indians, and in some cases, they were piloted in Indian Country (Lawrence, 2000; Gonzalez, Kertesz, & Tayac, 2007; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Therefore, political definitions of race impact experiences in the context of Indigenous people and others alike. However, the specific effects of racism can and do play out in both similar and different ways for Native people in comparison to other People of Color, though these nuances are understudied.

Lakota Harden chuckles as she describes herself saying, “I look like the Edward Curtis pictures of the pre-contact Native people.” Looking as she does, being raised traditionally, and having the name Lakota, she recalls causing other Natives to feel insecure about their own Nateness. Colorism in Indian Country is complicated. There is a near-majestic value placed on darker or pre-colonial phenotypes (or at least stereotypical notions of what that phenotype is); it is often read as cultural authenticity or connection to spirit, which is founded on pure essentialism (Garrouette, 2003; Gone, 2006; Weaver, 2015). Simultaneously, there is also a clear and problematic privileging of and preference for white and light-skinned Natives, especially in politicized spaces (Nagel, 1994; Weaver, 2013). Annabelle Allison (Navajo) and Beth Jacobs Hunt (Lumbee) recall seeing this preference play out in elections and appointments to tribal governments and Indian organizations. I elaborate on these nuances in chapter four.

Some may assume by some that blood quantum, or Degree of Indian Blood (as defined by the BIA) would be a good proxy for skin tone or even more essentialist concepts like tradition, culture, etc., but none of the above can be assumed. This is not only because blood quantum is not truthfully the same thing as “full-bloodedness,” but that full-bloodedness itself is also a colonialist social construct and not inherently connected to culture or knowledge, which are social and learned. It is plausible, and in some contexts likely that a dark-skinned Native

could have been put up for adoption and raised by non-Indians (or by Natives who have been raised in the church, survived Boarding Schools, etc.). This is not to say that changes in phenotype have not been noticeably occurring. Lakota has seen ceremonies in South Dakota go from being filled with dark-skinned people with long hair to lighter-skinned, short-haired Indians. The change can be felt all over Indian Country alongside blending and intermarriage with dark-skinned people from all over the globe. As Ashley Falzetti (Miami) points out, sometimes a Native person's darkness or melanin originates not from their Native family members but from their immigrant bloodlines and can still be taken for authenticity, which also points out the absurdity of equating looks with authenticity.

Since Lakota looks quintessentially Indian and has had a traditional upbringing, some may assume that system of blood quantum would not negatively impact her. Her story reveals a different truth. Indian people are only allowed to claim citizenship in one sovereign Indian Nation though many belong to more than one. Lakota is enrolled with her dad's people, the Ho-Chunk of Nebraska. Of all the places she's lived, she has spent the least time on that reservation, and she feels more connected to her Lakota and Tlingit relatives than those in Nebraska. She travels to visit Ho-Chunk relatives every few years to utilize the IHS hospital there. Blood quantum presents an even greater dilemma for her family as the generations disperse. "My grandchildren are like five different tribes," she tells me. "They're all they're still brown, they look like full-bloods, but they're five different tribes ... Lakota, Ho-Chuck, Dine, Mayan...."

Donna Chrisjohn (Sicangu Lakota & Navajo) shares a lot in common with Lakota Harden. "By blood quantum, I am 7/8s native," she says, "but I can only be enrolled in one tribe according to federal law, so I am 1/2 Dine, 3/8s Lakota, and 1/8s French." It is clear how she feels about this. "We're the only race of people that have to know [our blood quantum]," she says, "and I find it



[to be] injustice.” In fact, since she is enrolled Sicangu Lakota (Rosebud Sioux), she is 3/8s Indian on paper, a curious way to be identified and not an accurate depiction of her Nativeness.

Donna is certainly not the only participant to feel this way, she sums up this injustice well when she shares the following story:

My mom always said there were three exterminations. One, they tried to kill us. Two, they took our children. Three, the enrollment process. If they couldn't get rid of us physically, they were going to get rid of us on paper.

The intention of the bomb is as clear as Donna's feelings about blood quantum. Adapted by force during the allotment period, the goal of the insidious but clever strategy is to minimize the number of Indians on paper to create an eventual total eradication of Indian land rights over time (Schmidt, 2011). Esther Lucero (Navajo & Latina) (2011) argues that, more than just reducing the population, blood quantum is also an assault on traditional culture and Indigenous practices, the consequences of which are equally devastating. It is no accident that Alvin Chee had not spent much time thinking about the differences between blood quantum and Navajo clan adoption. This is used to create the smokescreen that looks like a mass of Indigenous people because living Indigenous people can become severed from their cultures. We have to learn to peer beyond the screen to understand American Indian struggles with race because as Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy (Lumbee) (2005) argues, “tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups” (p. 429).

This importantly extends the discussion beyond the assault on the size and strength of federally-recognized tribal nations to an attempt to exterminate traditional Indigenous epistemologies—ways of being and knowing—from the world. The latter was the goal of Indian

Boarding Schools as defined by Capt. Richard Pratt who, in 1887, infamously boasted that the schools were created to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” (Adams, 1995).

Most of the storytellers in this project who come from federally-recognized tribes were either personally affected by the boarding schools or had relatives who were (these are not mutually exclusive). All participants carry the traumas of this system in one way or another. The schools forced Indigenous children to soak in the messages that Indigenous cultures are backward and that they themselves are non-persons—whiter or more assimilated shadows of expired Peoples. Boarding school survivors are affected by internalized oppression and many recall beginning to “think” in English but are reminded that their skin was a marker of their inferiority regardless of the education they attain (Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005). This paired with the abuse, violence, and death has meant that many survivors are silent and do not discuss the boarding schools (Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005). Many of the participants talk about the shame that they, their parents, or their grandparents felt or feel for being Indian. Christy Bieber (Sault Ste Marie Chippewa) says most of her family still avoids associating with anything identifiably Native. Her mom and aunts and uncles survived the boarding schools and are still haunted by the memories today.

Damages caused by blood quantum and Indian Boarding Schools have been discussed widely by numerous Native and non-Native scholars (Thornton, 1997; Churchill, 1999; Garrouette, 2001; Villazor, 2008; Spruhan, 2006;; TallBear, 2003; Lawrence, 2004; Pearson, 2007; Lucero, 2011; Bakken & Branden, 2012). Bakken & Branden (2012) add that blood quantum is an ongoing source of historical trauma, a concept Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (Lakota) first applied to American Indian survivors of the American genocide following similar research on Jewish survivors of the Nazi holocaust who only experienced the death camps

through intergenerational memory and secondhand PTSD (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). In exchange for treaty rights and protections, Native governments and leaders signed Treaties with the Spanish, French, British, and US governments over time. However limited, the US treaties have been essential to the survival of Tribal Nations, and the Native leaders who deliberated and negotiated over these deals had incredible foresight, creating theoretical legal safeguards for land protection and political sovereignty (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001).

Despite these protections, the US government has applied highly variable and often destructive caveats to these treaties, and no Indian treaty has ever been honored to its fullest (Fairbanks, 1995; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001; Kalt & Singer, 2005; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). This truth does not pair well with the declaration in the US Constitution's own "Supremacy Clause" that treaties made by the United States are the "supreme law of the land" (US Constitution Article VI, Paragraph 2). Kalt and Singer (2004) explain the ways that the United States has tried to create legalistic frameworks to undermine the treaties, most recently by arguing that modern tribes are not true representatives of those who signed the treaties. Robert Fairbanks (Leech Lake) (1995) adds that tribes have often avoided asserting their supposed sovereignty by exercising treaties largely because of a strategically-designed and multi-generational dependency on the US settler State. On the popular notion that the treaties are archaic and irrelevant, Kalt & Singer (2004) point out that the US has never come close to paying off the debt incurred through land theft if one were to calculate the monetary gain associated with that land. This is what it means to reside on stolen land. The construct of blood quantum and adherence to it is a creative way to strip federal protections like those offered by the numerous Treaties, the Indian Child

Welfare Act and other legal protections forged as bargains to quell Indian resistance over time (Garrouette, 2001; Goldstein, 2014).

There are many Native people who remain connected to their tribes, homelands, and families who have been dispossessed of tribal citizenship status because of the mandate to only enroll in one tribe, or because blood quantum requirements put them below their tribe's limits for enrollment or for federal requirements to qualify for specific protections and assistance, treaty or otherwise (Thornton, 1997; Beckenhauer, 2003; Villazor, 2008; Berger, 2013). Nine of the storytellers in this study, in fact, are disposed of at least one rightful citizenship because of belonging to multiple tribes. Some are fortunate enough to belong to Tribal Nations that have formal ways of recognizing descendants who do not meet the often-stringent requirements for full citizenship, while others do not. Even in nations that register descendants, such persons may be ineligible for certain types of assistance, voting rights, land protections, etc. (US Congress, 1983; Murray, 2012; Miller, 2014; Oneida Nation, 2018). In other situations, those falling below certain essentialist blood quanta criteria may not have any legal ties to a tribe(s), whatsoever (Thornton, 1997).

Sabine Talaugon (Santa Ynez Chumash) and Milissa Hamley (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) are both enrolled descendants of their nations, which allows them to be eligible for tribally-specific educational assistance. This is critically needed in a country where Natives are last to succeed educationally (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). As Bethany Berger (2013) points out, "neither federal constitutional law nor international norms prevent descent-based citizenship criteria or recognition of territorial sovereignty in tribes that employ them" (p. 34). Such criteria could allow these two to be full tribal members. However, tribes do face real and perceived dangers associated with abandoning blood quantum because the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

continues to produce charts for how blood quantum should be determined,<sup>14</sup> implicitly suggesting that the federal government encourages such regulation (TallBear, 2003; Miller, 2014). Since the US terminated many tribes in the mid-1900s, fear of going against the recommendations of the BIA warrants legitimate concern (Fixico, 1986; Fletcher, 2011; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Miller, 2014). The Blackfeet Confederacy first adopted blood quantum in 1935 and set their minimum criteria at 1/16<sup>th</sup> at that time. The BIA pressured the Blackfeet to adopt a more-stringent 1/4 requirement in 1962 as the tribe grew in population (Murray, 2012). Despite these threats, several tribes (like the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) have already done away with blood quantum as a determinant of membership altogether in favor of a lineal descent-based system (Gover, 2008; Miller, 2014).<sup>15</sup>

The debate between Alvin Chee and Crystal Rizzo discussed earlier in this chapter, was settled by Alvin's father explaining that the Navajo were decidedly not "pure Navajo" in any biological or essentialist reality. Their history of adoption and clan formation rules that out. Traditionally, belonging had more to do with culture than any Western construct of racial purity. When it comes to the concept of "full-bloodedness," Jennifer Irving (Oglala Lakota) explains that full-blooded Indians are increasingly rare, and she often has doubts when people proclaim such a status, much like Crystal had called Alvin's CIB into question. As Eva Marie Garrouette (Cherokee) (2001) points out, being full-blooded on paper means each parent and grandparent was also full-blooded on paper, going back to the tribe's "base roll," meaning that, at the time a tribe's original tribal roll/registry was created, persons did not report or did not appear to have obviously mixed ancestry or that those facilitating the roll documentation did not disclose

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<sup>14</sup> An example is provided in appendix page 259

<sup>15</sup> Lineal descent is based more on genealogy and demonstrating a documented ancestral connection to a previous tribal member. This can be used in combination with blood quantum but does not have to (Gover, 2008).

evidence to the contrary (p. 225). This is not a precise measure (Garrouette, 2001). These base rolls were also compiled at different times in US history and under different political circumstances for each tribe who has engaged in the process (Garrouette, 2001). Lucinda Tiger, a 92-year old Creek woman, remembers, when she was a small child, her whole family being enrolled with Certificates of Indian Blood (CIBs) when her tribe first underwent this process; she was a small child. For the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, that base roll was first calculated in the early 2000s,<sup>16</sup> over 400 years after the tribe was first encountered by Europeans (Lowery, 2010).

Unlike Alvin, Michael King was aware that his 4/4<sup>th</sup> Navajo enrollment did not mean what it appeared to on paper. He was enrolled as full-blooded Navajo at birth, complete with a CIB. He is half San Juan Southern Paiute (his dad's tribe), a people who hid in plain sight among the Navajo and who have struggled to reclaim their distinctiveness because of being subsumed. When his tribe reorganized, he had a difficult time convincing the Navajo census office to allow him to disenroll, which was necessary to enroll with the San Juan Southern Paiute. Michael believes this is partly because the Navajo claim them despite the San Juan Southern Paiute's federal recognition and because they also did not want to lose a young full-blooded enrolled tribal member to enrollment with another tribe. He tells me that the San Juan Southern Paiute have struggled for years to lay claims to land and sovereignty amid the powerful Navajo Nation's reservation, which is the largest on the continent.

Fractionality is a non-sensical way of understanding belonging. Natives understand and use it often without pause, but one cannot be a partial person. Robert Hall (Blackfeet) explains that there are no fractions in the Blackfeet language, proof that such a concept didn't exist prior

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<sup>16</sup> Not through Federal CIBs but through the tribe's own process, a common practice (Gover, 2008; Lowery, 2010)

to colonization (Murray, 2012). Hall is a member of a group seeking to reform Blackfeet Enrollment (BEAR). Another unnamed member of BEAR told the Great Falls Tribune the following (Murray, 2012, para. 3):

The trouble with an enrollment requirement based on fractions is this—once fractionated, you can never again become whole. This means that as time passes, the Blackfeet people will continue to have decreasing numbers of members with higher blood quantum and increasing numbers of people with lower blood quantum. Eventually, although not today or tomorrow, there will likely be one enrolled member left, with countless descendants remaining.

This is a contentious issue among the Blackfeet along with the rest of Indian Country. Sonya New Breast (Blackfeet) opposes BEARs push to amend the membership criteria to be less stringent because she says current enrollment will ensure there are members for 115 more years and that remaining enrolled Blackfeet could decide to change that at the end of those 115 years if they saw it necessary (Murray, 2012). New Breast may not see the loss of eligible members as urgent, but others see the current Westernized and racialized requirements as the problem itself. Either way, the discussion of blood loss is an extinctionist narrative. There is little room to argue that.

In that Great Falls Tribune article, one of the concerns New Breast has is that (lower blood quanta) descendants prefer marrying non-Natives, implying they “naturally” prefer lighter-skinned people (Murray, 2012). This is an issue in all Communities of Color in the US resulting from internalized oppression. The idea that people with a lower blood quantum naturally have a certain set of preferences is not a fair or rational argument. Also, if “full-blooded” members truly preferred only other “full-blooded” persons, the decline in blood quantum would not be projected to decline as quickly as it currently is. This, and the idea of blood quantum itself, makes notions of racial essentialism (such as the idea that larger fractions somehow indicate proximity to traditional knowledge) seem legitimate. These ideas contribute to the near-mysticism with which

Lakota Harden recalls being treated by other Natives (especially when she is in California). I do not intend to be overly critical, though, because it is undoubtedly the case that these anxieties result from racialized traumas and very real histories of encroachment and exploitation by light-skinned peoples.

In describing the shrapnel created by the bomb of colonization, Lakota Harden made an incredible observation: each piece, symbolic of different Nations of Native people, seems different from the other. This concept lines up well with Patricia Hill Collins' (1990) concept of the matrix of domination. Collins provides clarity for the concept of intersectionality which rose out of third wave feminism and Critical Race scholarship (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The clarifying point is that positionalities created by diverse intersections of privilege and disadvantage all originate from the same source—the insulation of the privileges possessed by wealthy, white, Christian men (Collins, 1990). The ways in which diverse populations and subpopulations are oppressed feel unique and unconnected at first glance. While this is certainly true when observing various racial, ethnic, and religious groups, it is also relevant when observing diverse subgroups of singular “racial groups” like American Indians and African Americans. Inter-ethnic struggles divide Indian Country along many lines, several of which seem largely unknown outside the Native community.<sup>17</sup>

It seems non-Indians have little knowledge about their Indigenous neighbors and hosts. Over my five years teaching in college classrooms, I have shown students maps of the racial landscape of the United States from 1491 to today. This is a series of chronological images beginning with a map of the US shaded to represent Native peoples populating the territory. Obviously, the entire landmass is shaded on the first slide. By the 1990s, you can easily observe

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<sup>17</sup> Like those who eat frybread, those who don't eat it for political reasons, those who come from tribes that don't make it or know how to make it, and those who don't eat it because they don't eat gluten.



nothing but very tiny patches of Indian land and areas where Native people are highly-concentrated (mostly reservations). Not only are these incredibly small compared to the vast area of Turtle Island, but they are also highly isolated from one another, contributing to increased perceived and real differences over time. Students tend to be astonished. Rarely (if ever) had they thought about their home being Indian land prior to taking my course. Those pieces of shrapnel landed so far apart from one another that, as Lakota tells us, they can often seem quite different from one another internally and to the outside observer. At minimum these nuances lead to the formation of complicated identities; at their worse, they cause inter- and intra-ethnic strife. So desperate to hold on to whatever things each community was able to hold on to, tribal communities may engage in defensive identity politics at the interpersonal and institutional levels. Effectively, as the matrix of oppression does so well, this distracts similarly oppressed tribes from turning their gaze on the origin or source. Paolo Freire (1968) described this battle among the oppressed in his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It is an intended result of colonial domination.

Like any other colonized group of people, Indian communities replicate some of the insidious mechanisms of oppression used against them. The very real colorism that New Breast mentioned to the Great Falls Tribune is no exception. Make no mistake, these may even seem necessary for survival by some given the degree to which Indians are regulated by the law—such as a Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) for certain federal Indian programs, including access to healthcare (Lawrence, 2004; Haozous, Strickland, Palacios, & Solomon, 2014). Failing to interrupt this cycle, though, will almost certainly lead to the continued eradication of Native people and cultures. The result of these practices can be colorism, in-fighting, homohatred and cissexism, nativism, classism, and other identity politics within and between Indigenous people

and communities (Nagel, 1994; Balsam, Huang, Fieland, Simoni, & Walters, 2004; Gone, 2006; Haozous, Strickland, Palacios, & Solomon, 2014; Weaver, 2015). The dismantling of blood quantum, though, should be considered along other efforts and strategies to protect tribal traditions and knowledge from disappearance. Most of the participants in this research take issue with essentialism but also assign great value to the preservation of tradition and culture. Therefore, tribes can prepare to protect these without equating constructionist notions of blood or phenotype with adherence to cultural tradition. If an Indian with a certain phenotype or blood quantum is required to maintain any particular tradition, the tradition itself may be in serious jeopardy.

### **3.2 Shrapnel**

When Robert Hall (Blackfeet) tells the Great Falls Tribune that the Blackfeet language does not have words to convey fractions, he reflects on the fact that his ancestors would have no way to think of someone as “half” Nimiipuu (Blackfeet) (Murray, 2012, para. 2). Despite this, such a notion is precisely what is implied by things like blood quantum and other elements of the colonial bombing. The toll of the bomb is palpable in this research. It seems to me that many, if not all, of the storytellers feel at a loss for something when it comes to their Indigenous personhood. It is not always “Indian blood,” though that may be the most researched. Their bodies, personhoods, spirits, or families are missing something, and that void weighs on their sense of self and belonging in their Indigenous community. They all, admittedly or not, measure themselves against an unfair and unrealistic standard. Whatever the losses they feel may be, they appear to directly challenge the self-perception of wholeness—a much less explicit but similar mechanism to the Three-Fifths Compromise codified in a 1783 amendment to the Articles of Confederation, which legally defined Black Americans as less than a whole person (Feagin,

2010). Manifestations of loss of this nature, such as a negative self-assessment resulting from language loss, is deeply tied to manifestations of systemic racism specific to the case of Indigenous North Americans.

As a result, most respondents feel alienated in some ways from their own communities. I ask each storyteller to imagine their communities as circles and to tell me where they are located in relation to that circle.<sup>18</sup> I have woven these visual representations of each storyteller's perceived social and cultural locations throughout the remainder of this dissertation. Each graphic represents how proximal or distal a participant understands themselves to be from the ideal of full integration in their Native communities as they define them. Examining the rationale for that location allows me to further explore the bomb described by Lakota Harden by considering the most consequential aspects of identity that shape the idea of belonging in the matrix of loss and shrapnel.

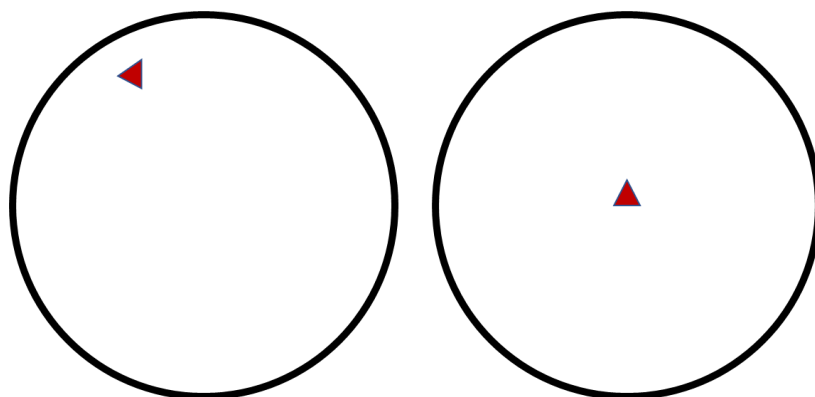
### *3.2.1 Language*

One area where this fractional identity is felt is with traditional language. At 92 years of age, Lucinda Tiger has seen the Creek people go from having entire church services in the Creek language to having nearly no one to talk to in her first and favorite language. In the last two years, she has found a friend who is herself in her late 70s with whom she can speak Creek, but this friend only understands Creek and responds in English. There are a few elderly Creek speakers who go to her church in Eufaula, OK, but since her stroke, she has had a hard time making it out of the house to go to the services. She feels at a loss for community and struggles

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<sup>18</sup> This visualization of cultural belonging was used by the Occaneechi Health Circle when the tribe conducted their own comprehensive health census in 2008. The tool was collaboratively developed by the members at the time—Vivette Jeffries-Logan, Rose Clay Watlington, Rachel Clay Richmond, Johnette Jeffries-Lopez, Keshia Enoch, and Marshall Jeffries. Little did I know that it would become instrumental in the realization of this dissertation a decade later. Thank you to these Occaneechi women for their work and for bringing me into the circle.

to be understood in the way she intends. It is for this reason that Lucinda used to see herself at the heart of the social fabric of the Creek community and now struggles for connection (see Figure 2 below).



*Figure 2 Lucinda Tiger's social location as described—first is her current location and second was when she was younger*

Jennifer Irving, who is thirty-six years old, feels the struggle with language in a different way. Here, she discusses how language shapes the way her family is perceived on their reservation:

In our spiritual circle, we're looked at as mixed bloods. We don't speak the language, we don't participate in the ceremonies. Because we're not fluent speakers then there's some discrimination, like how we pray or what we're doing isn't as legitimate as other people. That's kind of tough sometimes.

By far, most of today's Native people are not fluent in their tribal languages. In fact, in 1992, Michael Krauss explained that of the 187 North American languages, 149 were not being taught to children and several had less than fifty total speakers (p. 5). According to data from the 2000 Census, language use on reservations with a population of one thousand or greater is less than one percent (Bureau, 2000; Cornell & Kalt, 2010, p. 7). Though they don't report the language use rate for Jennifer's reservation, Pine Ridge, they report nine percent language use for Creek Nation (Lucinda's tribe) (Cornell & Kalt, 2010, p. 7). They do not discuss practical fluency at all

which means that we don't know how many of that nine percent can use the language conversationally.

The trauma of language loss should not be underestimated. Jude Killsplenty Cruz (Ohkay Owingeh, Sicangu Lakota, & Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) beautifully explains the impacts of this loss on culture and identity:

A lot of people say, "without language, you lose your culture and you lose your identity," which I agree with in many ways. But, I think, more specifically, the things that are lost are the things that can't be described in the English language. For instance, in Lakota, there are multiple ways to say, "thank you." Whereas "thank you" can be kind of a vague term in English, in Lakota ways, your "thank you" is specific to what you're giving thanks for. You have a wopila when you're giving thanks for the honor of having been offered a thankful experience. If you're saying pilámayaye, that means that I'm acknowledging something that you did for me. It's those things that really stand out about language.

Jude continues:

I think that as Native people we've been able to maintain a certain perspective on the world around us in which we can express things that can't really be expressed in English without telling you a complete story. We have a word for it, maybe. Like wakan in Lakota. That means something like "holy." It's also like 'being a part of the whole'. It has a bigger meaning than just the word. When you say "that's wakan," that means that it's coming from a special place that's connecting everything together to that moment. I might not even be explaining that word right but it's just an example of things like that, that in the English language, you might have to have to tell a complete story to describe a feeling, whereas in our traditional ways and our languages our ancestors were able to capture some of those things for us because they led such a ceremonial lifestyle that those words were able to express the complete feeling and everything that comes along with that particular emotion. That's why I think Native languages are so important—they keep us attached to the natural world. I hope that we don't lose those because the more detached we become from the world around us the more emotionless we become, the more numb we become. Being able to express those emotions is key.<sup>19</sup>

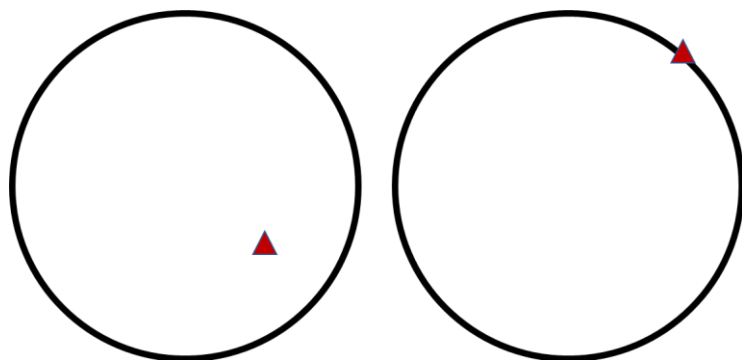
This explanation of the impacts of language loss helps us to understand why Lucinda Tiger longs to be spoken to in Creek. Being forced to speak in English when she was raised in a Creek-speaking household is like living the world in black and white. It feels numb. Most Natives

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<sup>19</sup> This is, by the way, a superb demonstration of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1921)

today, and most in this research struggle with ancestral language proficiency. Not all have the nuanced understanding of the differences between English and tribal tongues that Jude shares here, but all do understand the feelings of loss and inauthenticity produced by not being able to communicate in these languages during ceremony and prayer or otherwise.

The many traumas inflicted throughout the colonialist bombing (genocide, Indian boarding schools, blood quantum, etc.) can count against one's internal and external perceptions of authenticity and belonging (Meseyton, 2005; Gone, 2006; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Frybery, 2015; Weaver, 2015). Because race is socially constructed and inherently non-deterministic, language is also a struggle among full-bloods. In certain places, like the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, full-bloods may be somewhat more likely to speak the language if they live in one of the remote districts outside the agency, but this is no given. Annabelle Allison (Navajo) never learned to speak her language despite growing up 4/4<sup>ths</sup> in a Navajo-speaking household. This contributes to some of the disconnection she experiences when home on the rez.<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, visiting frequently and remaining connected to the daily lives of her immediate family allow her to remain in the circle. She is also learning how to take back some of her Navajo tongue at forty-five years of age (see figure 3 below).



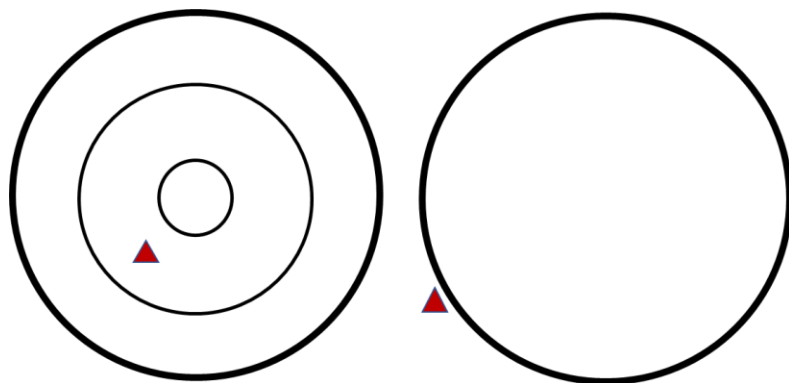
*Figure 3 Annabelle Allison's social location in the Navajo reservation community. The first circle represents her current location and the second is where she saw herself as a young adult.*

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<sup>20</sup> "Rez" is short for reservation and is common language in Indian Country

Lakota Harden does speak the Lakota language with a degree of fluency but tells me about being at a gathering in the Dakotas and experiencing a moment where she could not understand one of the Elder Women who was speaking to her. Language loss is a devastating consequence of the colonial bomb. Despite this, Lakota does not discuss language when describing her relationship to the circle of Lakota people, though she does speak to the importance of ceremony and tradition, so that connection may be assumed.

Language is integral to identity and belonging. In fact, Jennifer Irving says that when it comes to the issue of belonging on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, language may be more important to how one is perceived than even racial phenotype. If anything, these two combine and help to create a distinction drawn by people on her reservation—one between the “district Indians,” Oglalas who live in more remote parts of the reservation (some of which are full-bloods), and the “Agency Indians” whose families were closer to the historical locations of the forts. According to Jennifer, those in the districts tend to speak the language and often have darker skin tones and higher blood quanta, and those in and around Pine Ridge tend to have lighter complexions and fewer speak their language fluently or at all. Pine Ridge, she tells me, is the former location of the US agency site where Oglalas interacted most with whites. In fact, her great-great-grandfather was a French fur trapper who met her great-great-grandmother at Pine Ridge, which is how her family inherited her last name. Jennifer did not grow up in a household where the language was spoken fluently, but, beginning in her childhood (particularly around the time that her family moved to the Bay area), her mother began doing some healing from her own boarding school experience by engaging with traditional Lakota culture. She and her family are now interwoven in the social and cultural fabric of the Oglala community, including the ceremonial circles (see Figure 4 below).



*Figure 4 Jennifer Irving's social location in the Oglala community. The first is her current location and the second is when she first moved back to the rez from California*

While language is part of the reason Jennifer is not completely in the center, I learned that since the interview took place, she and other members of her family have been learning the language through an immersion program at the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation where Jennifer is a Deputy Director.

The southeast is not a place many expect Indigenous languages to be spoken, but several tribes up and down the Atlantic coast have been engaging in promising language revitalization efforts, some going back to the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> The Meherrin are one such People. Denise McAuly sums it up succinctly but powerfully when I ask her what it feels like to use Meherrin words. She beams with light and tells me that it “feels home.” While visiting the reservation as a child, Christy Bieber learned her first word. A grasshopper bounced through the kitchen of her uncle’s house and he told her how to say the word for grasshopper. She then bounced around the house gleefully repeating the word. Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) speaks to the awkwardness, foreignness, and joy of the words in comparison to familiar English. She laughs as she fondly recalls how the learning process has unfolded for her—

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<sup>21</sup> Tribes like the Monacan of Virginia, the Wampanoag of New England, the Meherrin, Occaneechi, Haliwa Saponi, and Waccamaw Siouan of North Carolina. In fact, I touch on Occaneechi efforts in an earlier article (Jeffries, 2015).



I put it on my iPod and I remember sitting on like trains and planes and listening to it and saying it out loud, not realizing that I was in front of a lot of other people saying really bizarre sounding words to them. You know, with like my headphones in being like "hum-chee, hum-chee, hum-chee." I think it's very important.

Since college, language has been one aspect of Milissa Hamley's (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) identity that gives her the confidence to pronounce her Ojibwe identity and defend herself against challenges and dismissal. Once, while at a tribal symposium, speaking the language well earned her some respect from a few darker-skinned Ojibwe women who had previously been rudely dismissing her.

Annabelle laments failing to capture the language as a young person. She tells me that she was often captivated by the things she saw on television, and she always aspired to get an education and move beyond the reservation. "I was always looking out," she says. She explains that it is for that reason that the language never really stuck in her mind. She has had a certain longing for it later in her life, though. With her mother's help, she has learned to introduce herself in the traditional way, naming herself as a Diné person and stating her clans. "It's important to me, especially here where I am and doing the work that I do," she says (she works for a federal agency doing public health work). "Here in Atlanta, it becomes even more important to not forget who I am and where I come from." She did not always introduce herself in Navajo. She remembers being afraid and anxious at first because she does not speak the language. She shares:

I've really come to own it a little bit more. It's this thing that you learn over time. It's funny because when I first started introducing myself in the traditional sense—giving my clan and where I'm from, I used to be really nervous about it. Part of me was like, well, you don't live on a reservation, so you don't get to say that. I really had to come to terms with that and be able to have a comfort level of being able to say that even though I'm not on the reservation anymore. I had a little bit of nervousness about that and I even bungled my clan a couple of times just because I was so nervous about it.

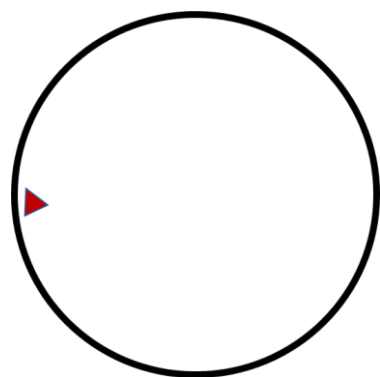
Having left the reservation and not learned Navajo, Annabelle admits here that at times, she doubted whether she had the right to speak it. Because language is central to cultural identity, most of these participants either struggle with this in some way or have struggled with it in the past.

Lee Blacksmith's story is interesting here but not unheard of in the Native community. Lee knows the Crow language and can understand it. She will not speak it, though. The idea of speaking Crow gives her anxiety, which is one reason why she sees herself being near the borders of the Crow community. There are expectations of those who speak Crow, especially women, she explains,

Crow women are always taught to be strong...really strong. As a Crow woman, we're supposed to take care of our families and everything, and we're supposed to be the backbone of our communities...and then there's me. I'm just like "ummmmm." If there's one reason why I refuse to go back home, it's literally because I have no backbone.

At only twenty-four years old, Lee has experienced a lot of hardship, and the weight of this cultural expectation runs heavy amid that of trauma back home on the rez. It can also be hard to be expected to pick up the mantle from dutifully and historically strong Crow women.

Fortunately, as a young person, Lee has time to figure this out (see Figure 5 below).



*Figure 5 Lee Blacksmith's social location in the Crow community*

Simultaneously, Lee shares with me that since moving to urban Minneapolis, far from the Crow rez where she grew up, she often longs to hear Crow being spoken. She says that now that she lives away from the rez, distance contributes to her disconnection from place, family, and culture. She spends time looking at YouTube videos of Crow speakers from time to time when she feels most homesick.

Lee attended a public high school in Hardin, Montana, but I have heard many stories of people suffering extreme abuse in the Indian Boarding Schools (some shared with me by Lakota Harden in this interview). This trauma can cause individuals to avoid speaking the language even if they know it (Adams, 1995; Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005). Consider this memory Donna Chrisjohn shares of her grandmother:

My grandmother knew the language and spoke the language and was an educator, and she did not want her children to grow up with It. She didn't want them to be Indian. She told them to marry white people and refused to teach them the language. She wanted them to go off to school, get an education and leave, leave the reservation. She didn't want them there. So, she refused to speak the language while they were growing up and then refused to speak it with us as grandkids. Both my grandparents were horrible alcoholics pretty much their whole lives and my grandma...well, the only way we could get her to speak the language with us is if we spoke it wrong. We usually had to do it when she was drunk. I laugh, and it's not funny. When she was drunk, and we would speak it incorrectly, she would correct us, and then usually she'd tell us a story about where it came from and then she would teach us other words and other things.

Christy Bieber has been learning the language for a few years now. She had a great uncle who was a speaker but, as he aged, he lost language altogether. Because of the traumas in her family history, her learning the language and getting involved in preserving their heritage causes some tensions in the family that she credits to internalized self-hatred as well as the effects of Christian bias and assimilation. Just as Donna's grandmother did not want her kids to be Indian, members of Christy's family don't want her to be, either.

Not everyone has access to a traditional tribal language. Both Beth Jacobs Hunt and Vigil Oxendine are Lumbee. The Lumbee are thought to be an amalgamation of several pre-colonial tribal groups who banded together in the relative protection of North Carolina's swamplands throughout the colonial era (Sider, 1993; Lowery, 2010). They have been called Tuscarora, Croatan, Cherokee, Siouan, Lumbee, and the Indians of Robeson County (Lowery, 2010). Even today, they maintain up to three distinct ethnic tribal groups within their Nation just like modern confederacies (Sider, 1993). Due to this history, the Lumbee would have had no single language historically or today (Dial & Eliades, 1975). Virgil indicates that documents recording pieces of a dialect traceable to the ancestors of some modern Lumbees may have been located by a researcher named Arvis Bowman, but the truth is that today's Lumbee Nation has no clearly defined language. "The language thing is a big barrier for us," Beth says, "and that's one thing that gets brought up by people who oppose our federal recognition petition." But even most federally recognized tribes have lost or struggle to maintain language and/or fluency (Cornell & Kalt, 2010). Here, Virgil explains what it is like to hear other Natives speak their languages:

I wish I could do the same. I don't want to say [I'm] embarrassed, but at the same time, it's a moment where it's like, wow, I wish we had that. It's an eye-opener. But at the same time, I'm glad. I have mixed emotions—guilt, that I wish we had it, but also [I'm] glad that they do, and they're carrying on their tradition.

I would argue that these feelings are like those felt by people whose tribes do have a language but that the person themselves does not speak fluently or at all.

Despite the feelings of loss, anxiety, or even guilt that Beth or Virgil may have, language also matters in a less expected way for the Lumbee. Having grown up in North Carolina, I know this well. The Lumbee who live in their community speak a specific dialect of English that easily separates them from other North Carolinians. Researchers have posited that the dialect is a culmination of southern English, African dialects, and mostly extinct tribal tongues (Wolfram &

Dannenberg, 1999). In fact, some “Lumbee words” do not even exist in the English language and a Lumbee dialect dictionary has been produced to document these (Dannenburg, Locklear, Schilling-Estes, & Wolfram, 1996).<sup>22</sup> A Lumbee accent is very pronounced, and both Virgil and Beth are fluent in that way of speaking. For Beth, this accent comes with both pride and, when she was younger, occasional shame. She recalls going off to Chapel Hill for college (a metropolis compared to Robeson County) and being questioned by white classmates. “Why do y’all speak that way?” they’d ask. As she furthered her education and began to learn about the incredible strength of her Lumbee people, she started to own that marker of distinction. At thirty-three-years-old, sounding Lumbee now tells her that she belongs to a powerful and resilient people, and she speaks it proudly.

It is not just language and accent but the way any language (traditional, English, or otherwise) is used to communicate. For Christy Bieber and John Scott Richardson, another loss is felt from the bombing. They feel the loss of intergenerational communication that has taken place in their communities. Both describe having parents who belong to the “silent generation.” The silent generation is the generation leading up to the explosion of American Indian cultural regeneration and resistance of the 1970s and 80s (Cornell, 1988; Nagel, 1997; Poupart, 2003). For Christy’s family, the toll and legacy of both Indian Boarding Schools and leaving the reservation have inflicted deep wounds. In John’s family, centuries of assimilation, hiding in plain sight, and southern racism created a generation terrified of speaking of being Indian or of sharing their cultural ways out loud or in public. Christy’s mom left the reservation at 18 years old and would not talk about it for much of Christy’s life. She feels like she is just now starting to be able to discuss these things with her mom, but much of her family is resistant to the mere

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<sup>22</sup> This parallels with research on the Gullah language and African-descended people who live on the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina (Smitherman, 2006)

mention of Indianness. According to Christy, her family's resistance results largely from perceived beliefs about conflicts between Christianity and traditional culture. In his book, *God is Red*, Vine Deloria, Jr. (Lakota) (1973) eloquently describes differences between Christian and traditional Native philosophies and explains why such tensions exist. The tensions and traumas are difficult to bear sometimes, but Christy and John have spent much of their adult lives recovering language and culture from their tribal kin. Both have built bonds and relationships with people who live in their tribal communities. John is committed to learning his Tutelo language and to restoring avenues for open intergenerational communication necessary for healing, and Christy has recently been working to engage traditional arts in addition to her ongoing language-learning efforts.

### **3.2.2 Tradition**

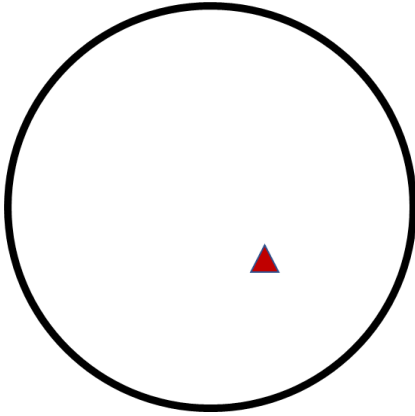
Just as Christy and John seek to recover their original cultural ways, most participants in the study feel the loss of aspects of traditional culture, but in diverse ways. Language is one of the primary focuses for Christy Bieber, and philosophies, roles, and sustainable practices for John. Beth Hunt is frustrated with the Lumbee shift away from communal governance to the adaptation of a three-branch system mimicking that of the US government. As they were not subject to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (though the tribe did attempt to organize through that act), the Lumbee Tribe adopted a three-branch government in 2000 (within Beth's lifetime), their most recent restructure (Lowery, 2010). She explains:

[When I was growing up] we didn't have a formal government, so it was really just kind of like, 'this is who we are in the world'. We had a very strong community. We were interrelated, and we depended on one another. Everyone knew one another and there were just ties that went back for generations. It was almost like an unspoken affinity that we have for one another, and there's this community-based support that existed. ... [This is] how it was in Pembroke. The Lumbee were the majority and we had our churches, our community groups, our families. It really was a tribe without the need for any kind of formal government. We governed ourselves in that way. We lived in the American

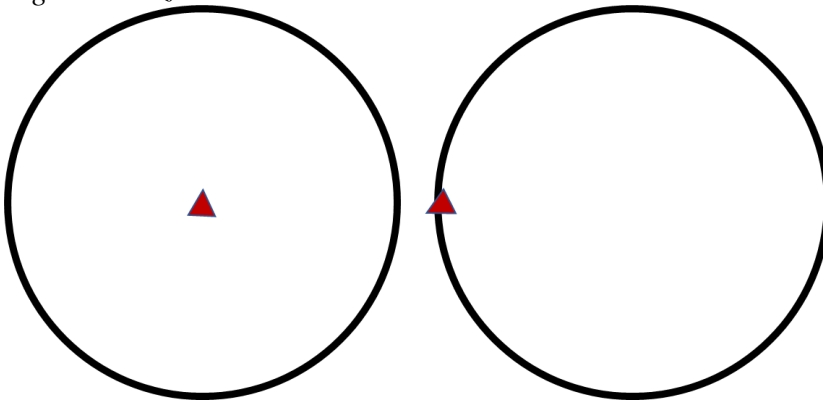
society, but we really did things on our own and did things together. We always stressed the importance of maintaining your relationship with family and your family was your tribe. I mean it really felt like an extended family, not like a tribe or a government or anything else. ... One thing that's unfortunate is the way we've structured our political system. This is partly because of the state's involvement, but our system mirrors the federal government system. We have a three-system government, you know, the whole checks and balances, the executive, legislative, and judicial. We have that, and we mirror that process, and [so] our problems mirror the problems that the federal government has. So personally, I don't agree with that. The political structure that we have now is doing a disservice to us as Lumbee people because rather than making decisions the way we have historically made them, we are now making decisions in a way that abides by the federal government's structure for decision making which we all know creates problems for the federal government so what is it going to do for us but create problems? It creates in-fighting. That's one of my biggest problems with my tribe's political structure. We can't get along or make decisions. We can't work together. We're all political. In reality, we are put in a box. This is the only way we can make decisions. In-fighting is inherent in that system because you create parties. You make a divide and its one side or the other versus the consensus-based system which is more in-tune with how we've historically done things.

Two things stand out here. First, the bombing has been unimaginably strategic. The Lumbee had been recognized as an Indian tribe under President Eisenhower through the Lumbee Act (HR 4656, 1956), and simultaneously denied access to Indian protections and benefits and from applying for full federal tribal recognition through the standing BIA process (Lowery, 2010). Second, according to Beth, moving from a consensus and community-based governance to a competitive model constructed to replicate US Congress has been culturally devastating.

The divisiveness of Lumbee politics that mirrors the National government and creates a growing disconnection between the community and the tribal government is responsible for Beth's current location and the similar disconnection Virgil feels when he is at odds with the tribe (see Figures 6 & 7 below).

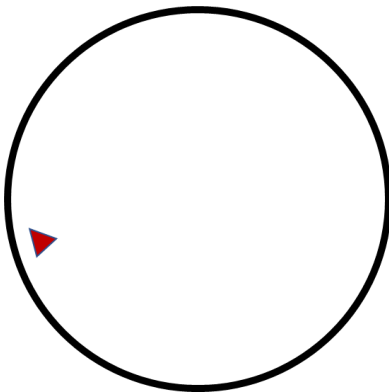


*Figure 6 Elizabeth Jacobs Hunt's social location in the Lumbee community*



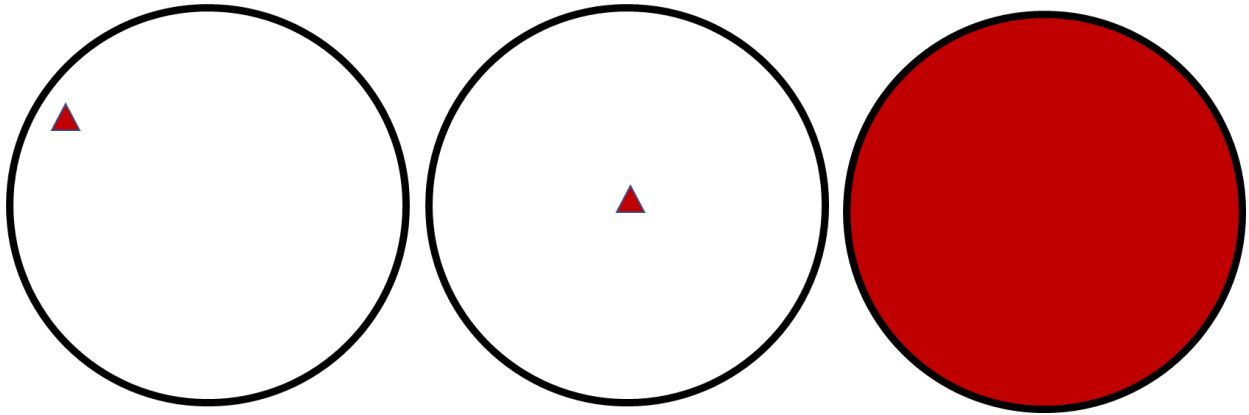
*Figure 7 The first circle represents Virgil Oxendine's social location in the Lumbee community now and most of the time, while the second represents moments when he feels at odds with the tribe*

Though not Lumbee, the disconnects felt by Sharon McIndoo (Tlingit & Tsimshian) and Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Occaneechi) are similar in origin (see Figures 8 & 9 below).



*Figure 8 Sharon McIndoo's social location in the Sitka Native community*





*Figure 9 These represent Vivette Jeffries-Logan's social location. The first represents her current location in the Occaneechi community, and the second is where she was prior to her current location. The third represents her location in the NC Native community*

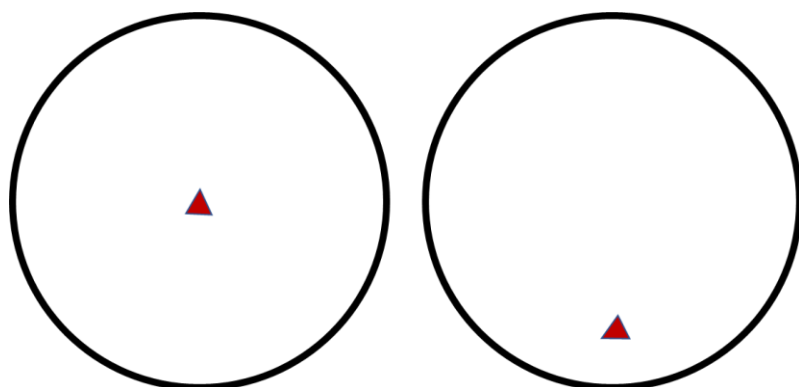
Whether through the IRA (in the case of federally-recognized tribes) or through strong-arming by states like North Carolina (in the case of the Lumbee and other state-recognized tribes), Tribal Nations have been more or less forced to assimilate their governing structures (Taylor, 1980; Fixico, 1986; Cornell, 1988; Lowery, 2010; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Another remarkable thing about this example of detrimental change is that it is still very recent history. Vivette says that she felt she was once located in the center of her community, serving for seven years on her tribal council. That was, at least, until she became disillusioned by the internal politics and lateral oppression resulting from the type of changes Beth describes, along with the consequences of centuries of unmitigated trauma accumulated in her tribal community. But like Beth, Vivette continues to serve her community in ways that go beyond the formal tribal infrastructure. The emphasis on assimilation in governance and community politics tells us that the bombing is not an event, but a series of events beginning at contact with Europeans and extending to the present day.

Governance is connected to tradition, but challenges to traditional teachings are felt far beyond the governing structures of today's tribal communities. Tabby Harris discusses the

effects of Christianization, assimilation, and intermarriage. As she tells it, the Choctaw have a small contingent of people with a clearly-identifiable Native phenotype (of which she is a part). According to her, this group also seems to be those with the highest participation in the way of the stomp dance which is traditionally Choctaw.<sup>23</sup> She feels a sense of loss when it comes to the peculiar ways that some Choctaw and the tribal government itself reclaim pan-Indian culture as their own. It can be hard for her to watch her tribe market itself to their citizens and to non-Indians alike. She feels that some other tribes in Oklahoma have been able to retain more original culture in dignified ways. She says:

Living up here and being around all these other tribes [is interesting]. I work for the Kaw Nation, but I also work with the Tonkawa tribe and the Ponca tribe. A lot of the tribes are more traditional in their ceremonies. They've kept them for so long and they've passed them on. Whereas [with] my tribe, they're trying to rejuvenate the traditions and cultures in Oklahoma, make them their own, and some of the dances that they do... I don't know, [they're] kind of weird and embarrassing.

This shame that she feels at times affects her sense of connection and belonging in the community (see Figure 10 below).



*Figure 10 The first circle represents Tabitha Harris' current social location in the Choctaw community and the second represents her location when she is unhappy or ashamed on the way the tribe represents itself*

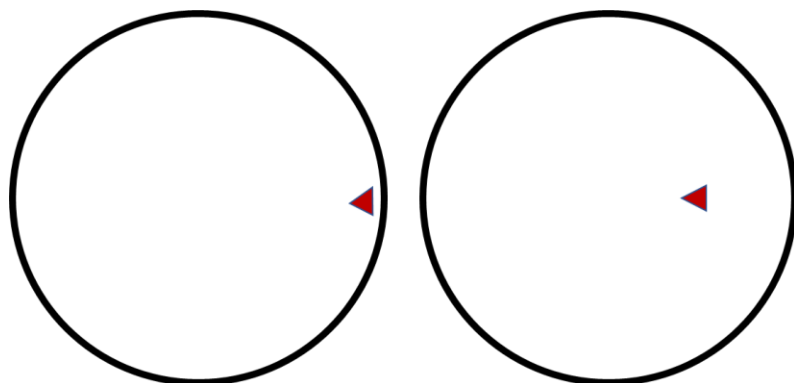
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<sup>23</sup> Note: these are her observations, not a finding of this research

The truth is, this is how some in today's tribal communities (beyond the Plains) feel about powwows. The modern powwow originates mostly from aspects of Plains Native cultures, but tribes all over have adopted mainstreamed versions of these dances that Anita Herle (1994) calls "dynamic expressions of Indian identity" (57). For example, my community has held a tribal powwow for nearly forty years, but we are not a powwow people and powwow dances did not exist in our culture prior to the 1980s. The feelings shared by Tabby and others may be felt because powwows are often conducted with little access to the teachings behind the dances routinely displayed. Sometimes, because the dances are simply replicated, I find them to be less dynamic than Herle (1994) suggests. They can be dynamic when specials are held or when regional adaptations demonstrate cultural specificity. Regardless of where one stands on powwows or pan-Indian displays of Indigeneity, loss of traditional ceremonies negatively impacts many Natives.

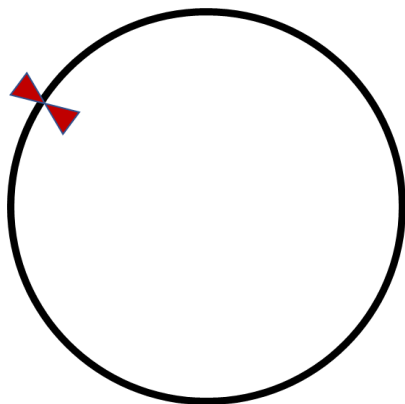
I also had a noticeable over-sampling of Queer and/or Two Spirit individuals in this study, likely an unintended feature of my own social network. As Two Spirit and Queer Indigenous people tend to be both marginalized in Native and mainstream gay and Queer circles today, such an oversampling adds a certain richness. One thing that it brings up is a struggle over disconnection between traditions that allow for and maintain roles for gender nonbinary and nonconforming individuals. One participant even feared disenrollment after a tense call she made to her tribal enrollment office to inform them that she had gotten married. When she disclosed that she had married a woman, the conversation turned sideways. Sexual orientation also presents a barrier to feeling accepted for Sabine Talaugon when she heads to the Santa Ynez Chumash reservation for annual powwows or other gatherings. She often feels it easier to avoid disclosing her Queerness to people in the community because of anxieties that other Chumash

will perceive her as “too urban” or less authentic and that she will face discrimination. She is also young (24 years old) so she may not have as much leeway as someone closer to elderhood would in these settings. She recalls getting strange looks and admits to being less likely to disclose her identity and family status in certain tribal situations (see Figure 11 below).



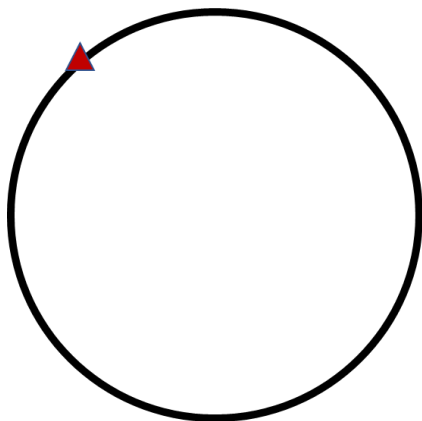
*Figure 11 Sabine Talaugon's social location in the Santa Ynez and larger Chumash community, then in the Central and Coastal California urban Intertribal community*

Even those participants who've lived in land-based tribal communities that hold some degree of reverence for Two Spirit and Queer people discuss the impacts of cultural disconnection, colonialism, and Christianity on the ways that people perceive them. Alvin Chee (Navajo) describes his gay identity as part of the reason he is closer to the edge of the Navajo community, and, while it brings him closer to some female cousins, it causes social distance for many, including family (see Figure 12 below).

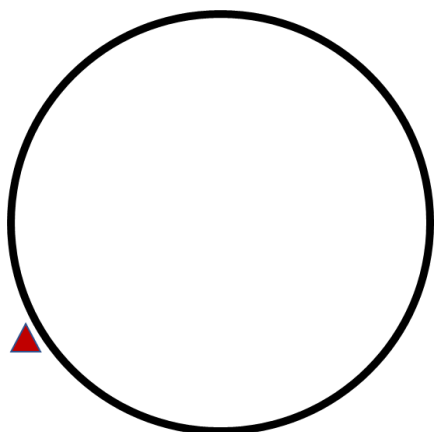


*Figure 12 Alvin Chee's social location in the Navajo reservation community*

“I can hear my brothers snicker when I address the family or pray,” he says. At twenty-six years old, Alvin feels that he resides in the borderlands of the Navajo reservation community for this and other reasons. Even though there is a decade’s difference in their ages, Crystal Rizzo (Southern Ute) and D’Shane Barnett feel similarly about belonging on their reservations because of their Queer identities (see Figures 13 & 14 below).



*Figure 13 Crystal Rizzo's social location in both the Southern Ute community as well as urban Indian circles that she is part of*



*Figure 14 D'Shane Barnett's social location in the Three Affiliated tribal community*

In fact, D'Shane said when he was a teenager visiting the reservation in the 1990s he was frequently told that “there is no such thing as a gay Indian.” Each of these participants lament the discrimination or tensions they feel given the fact that binary gender and homophobia originate with Christian imperialism. Each of the participants mentioned in this paragraph find it easier to live in urban areas, in part because of their Queerness.

This was only half of the story, though. Some were called upon by their communities to fulfill aspects of those traditional roles associated with Two Spirit people or felt that part of their sense of belonging was proudly derived from those traditional roles. This was the case for both Michael King (San Juan Southern Paiute & Navajo) and Isaiah Brokenleg (Rosebud Lakota) (each of them feel some level of disconnect or fractionality for other reasons, though). Both Michael and Isaiah explain that having third gender roles<sup>24</sup> allows them to be integral to the cultural and spiritual life of their communities. Both are called upon by members of their communities to fulfill spiritually-significant obligations. Isaiah notes several reasons why he is not near the center of his Rosebud community for practical reasons (mainly geographic distance),

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<sup>24</sup> Both identify with traditional conceptions of these roles, spoken in their tribal languages, rather than the term Two Spirit, but both recognize and appreciate the utility of an umbrella term

but argues he is near to its cultural center for which he credits the fact that he is winkte (a Lakota original word for a Third Gender role).

Storytellers also feel disconnected from inter-tribal dependency, trade, and collaboration. This certainly must have been required, to a large extent, for survival prior to colonization in order to sustain communities for the thousands of years that passed before “modern” technology arrived on Turtle Island. Just as Beth Hunt notes a division between her tribal government and the larger community, participants name consequences from a loss of intercultural and intertribal collaboration. When Lakota Harden remarked that the pieces of shrapnel got scattered across the landscape, she also noted that the reservation system broke down the migration patterns and caused tribal families to be divided. In the case of the Lakota, the different tiospayes—extended families—became different Nations. “We were never completely distinct peoples,” she says. This diaspora and loss of interdependency contributed to intermarriage between Indians and settlers but also caused tribes to become socially isolated from one another and more dependent on the federal government. Settler encroachment caused the tribes to be surrounded and cut off mechanisms and resources for maintaining subsistence, as well (Loewen, 1995; Churchill, 1999; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

While some tribes got written into the mainstream narratives used to describe US history, others are little-known and little-discussed (Loewen, 1995). For those little-known communities, a lack of intertribal communication today means that they struggle to be identified as part of Indian Country or that stories that are told from the outside (even within the Indian community) are rarely positive or favorable. Virgil Oxendine (Lumbee) says that it has been years since he interacted with an Indian from the western United States. Belinda Rudicil travels to reservations in the southwest and says she gets questioned about why more Native people from the east do

not travel to visit reservations more often. She says that she always returns the question, asking why they don't come to visit the east. She guesses that southeast Indians visit western tribes more often than the reverse. Virgil added that he wants tribes in other regions to know that, despite all that his people have been through, the Lumbee are a proud and welcoming people.

Annabelle Allison helps to shed some light on this pronounced regional misunderstanding. She says when she first met Native people from the east coast, she was really surprised because she had no previous ideas about them. Michael King says he knew about the ancient mound builders, but, until meeting some Natives from the east coast, he did not know much about their contemporary existence. Annabelle had never been taught about today's eastern Tribal Nations, and she comments, "I had my own ideas of what an American Indian looked like." East Coast Indians do not always fit that definition, she explains. Jennifer Irving comes from arguably the best-known Indians, the Oglala Lakota people (referred to by colonizers as the Sioux). In her research, Ramirez (2007) finds that the image of the Plains Indian is what Urban Indians recall having to measure themselves against to decipher their authenticity. Jennifer offers remarks that echo the commonalities that are disguised by the myths reinforced by geographic separation and sociopolitical isolation. She says:

We [Lakotas] run the spectrum just like anybody else. I think there's this idea of like, Pine Ridge and the Oglala Sioux tribe that we're all traditional, we all speak our language... and we don't. I'd like for people to understand we're on a spectrum, too. There's a lot of us that are learning, and we don't all speak our language and we don't all practice everything on a daily basis and I would say we're also in the struggle for cultural preservation, language preservation, and reclamation.

The purpose of the bomb is to disguise these connections, isolate, and strip culture and belonging from Tribal Nations and their people one by one so that strength is not found in unity and lateral oppression can make assimilation and annihilation an inside job. Part of the reason so many



Natives struggle to enroll in only *one* of their tribes, though, is because Natives have also been incredibly good at finding one another.

Lakota Harden does not always seem terribly optimistic about the status of tradition among Native people today. She names a few reasons she feels somewhat outside the circle in Indian Country. The first reason is that families always stuck together, traditionally. She tries but struggles greatly to maintain this.

As the oldest of that generation [in my family], I feel a responsibility to all of my cousins and to all my extended family to try to hold that all together but it's too broad, and as they cross over, our family is splintering into other tiospayes, you know because now there's so many grandkids and so many great-grandkids in some cases. Now some are even further—some of us live in Minnesota, some live in Iowa and Nebraska, and you know we have family over on the east coast and then we're out here on the west coast...so we're spread out everywhere in between, including South Dakota and Idaho. We're all spread everywhere. We're all trying to keep that closeness and it's hard to do because we all are raising families at the same time.

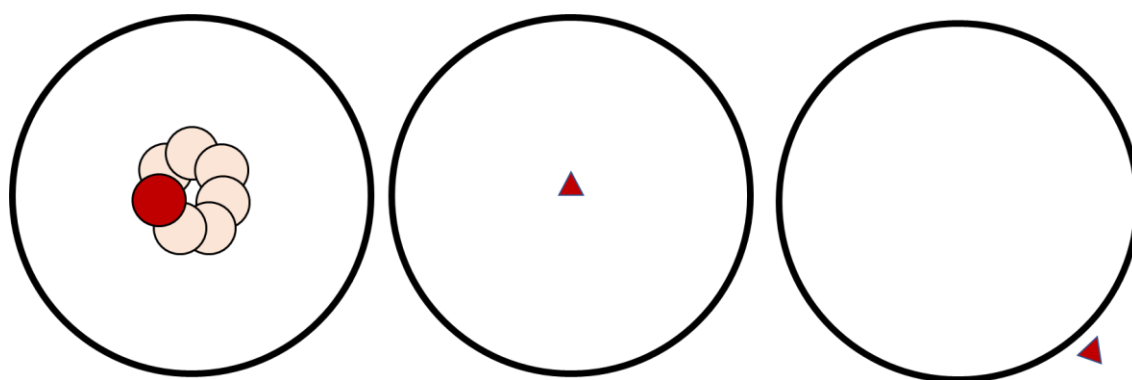
She says that the Lakota have always split into tiospayes but never with so much mobility and distance, and never so far from the rest of the tribe. There are many in this study who are separated from some or most of their tribal family, and multiple strategies are employed to maintain cultural connectedness. It makes sense that this way of being can create some level of disconnection despite one's best attempts to prevent it.

A second reason that Lakota feels disconnected is that too many Natives have become disconnected from their tribal traditions and the contexts in which those even came about. This puts a lot of stress on her and other traditional people to perform and educate a growing body of dispossessed Natives. She shares:

I feel like I'm on the outside of the Indian community. For us as Indian people in my lifetime, things have changed so drastically from where I was as a child and sitting on the floor and looking at the knees and the legs and the shins of all the grandmas, talking in Dakota, and then being out here [on the west coast] now with people who don't know who we are, who have learned through books and movies...so they emulate the stereotypes. It's kind of a "we are the world" or a "peace, love, and harmony" kind of

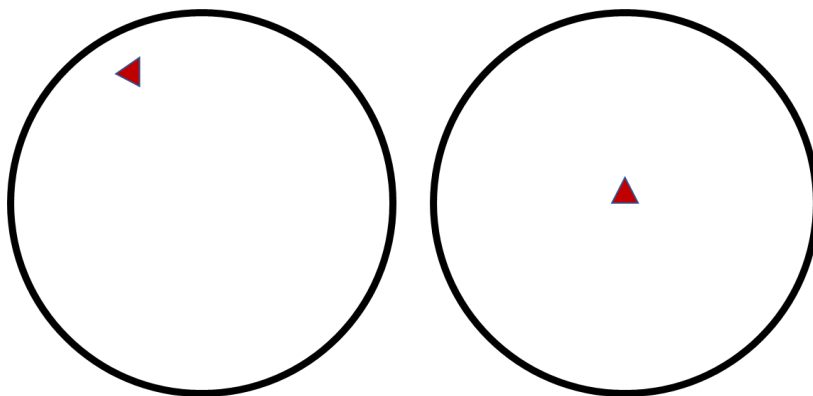
identity which separates them from those of us who grew up Indian, with all the shame and all the blame, and all the genocidal policies that we lived through, that all of our families lived through. It makes it hard for us when people have become Indian or they discovered their Indian roots and now they're the Indians, and they have more space and more room for the "we are the world" part of it, you know what I mean? They don't have the distress that we have, and they blame us for our distress. I've heard that over and over and I'm sure I get blamed a lot too because people say I'm judgmental, but I also come from an old world.

For someone to seek a teaching without knowing the trauma that it took for that teaching or its keepers to survive rightfully frustrates Lakota (see Figure 15 below).



*Figure 15 Lakota Harden's social location--first in the Lakota community, second in both the Bay social network as well as Sitka, and third in the cultural Native community broadly*

Lakota likely shares this sense of disconnection from today's Natives with many her age and older. Lucinda Tiger feels a similar sense of disconnection from a Creek culture that has changed vastly in her ninety-two years. For her, the disconnection comes into play because her community went from being deeply embedded in the Christian church, so much so that the preachers spoke Creek, to the churches having to close their doors decades later. Those that remain now are rapidly losing their Creek speakers, she says (see Figure 16 below).



*Figure 16 Lucinda Tiger's social location as described—first is her current location and second was when she was younger*

Lakota's worry that Natives will lose touch with their history in favor of an over-romanticized version with little awareness of the suffering that Natives have endured, and Lucinda's concern that the places where Creeks gathered to support one another are failing to capture the youth are both concerns about tradition, and each is connected to anxieties over survival of the future generations.

Fears and anxieties about assimilation and survival cannot be understated. Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen (2004) find that Native people think a lot about historical traumas and loss, with some types of trauma crossing their minds several times a day and others remembered less frequently.<sup>25</sup> Because most Natives belong to ethnic groups with fairly small populations, the anxieties and fears triggered by such thoughts and memories are significant. That fear can be one that extends to the survival of their entire people. Given what Elders like Lakota and Lucinda have witnessed in their lifetimes, it is important that their anxieties are heard by the youth and that Elders and youth get chances to work with one another in meaningful ways.

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<sup>25</sup> A copy of a table of their findings demonstrating frequencies of memories of loss is provided in Appendix, p. 259.

### ***3.2.3 The Right To Identify and Be Identified***

From Beth's standpoint, the way that Lumbee families related to one another began to shift when the tribe adopted a colonialist system of governance. Denise McAuly, Belinda Rudicil, O'Tika Jones, and Vivette Jeffries-Logan discuss how Meherrin and Occaneechi families were cut off from one another because of a whole era of laws established to protect the supposed "racial purity" of whites in the southeast. In 1924, Walter Plecker helped to pilot a Virginia law known as the Racial Integrity Act, which had the foremost goal of protecting the so-called purity and integrity of the white race and framed miscegenation (a.k.a. racial mixing) as a public health concern (Plecker, 1925; Reilly & Shaw, 1983). This led to insidious eugenics-based practices targeted at the disabled, Native, and Black people, like forced sterilization, all over the Jim Crow south (Reilly & Shaw, 1983; Patterson, 2009; Larsen, 1995; Haney-Lopez, 1997). This movement was based on the assumption that European traits were inherently superior to those of People of Color and Indigenous people and its proponents literally sought to "breed" an "ideal" white America (Larsen, 1995; Haney-Lopez, 1997; Patterson, 2009).

Eugenic policies and practices reinforced distinctions between whites and People of Color (POC) in a moment when many wondered how US culture would shift to respond to the noticeable changes created by centuries of racial mixing between whites and POC (Reilly & Shaw, 1983; Haney-Lopez, 1997; Lavelle, 2015). This shift in regional racial politics reinforced the idea that that fair-skinned people with African ancestry could not be white and forced many into arbitrary categories like Mulatto (named for mules, the sterile offspring of a horse and donkey) (Kiamran, 1977; Forbes, 1981; Gonzalez, Kertesz, & Tayac, 2007; Klopotek, 2009; Lowery, 2010). This racial mixing was thought of as a biological and even moral threat to the

ideals of Euro-American freedom and international prominence of the white settler and colonially-founded State.

The racist institutional practices from this policy era would prove devastating to American Indians in the southeast because one of the lesser-known goals of this legislation was to remedy the fact that, despite centuries of annihilationist policies, American Indians remained in places like Virginia and North Carolina (Hazel, 1985; Gonzalez, Kertesz, & Tayac, 2007; Lowery, 2010; Jeffries, 2015). American Indians persisted in the southeast, even celebrating victories against white supremacy in the 1958 Lumbee takedown of KKK leadership at the Battle of Hayes Pond in Maxton, North Carolina (Sider, 1993; Dial & Eliades, 1975). As a result of Plecker's law and others like it, most Indians (with the exception of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) had their racial identities reassigned to Mulatto and other similar designations on legal documents (Hazel, 1985; Forbes, 1993; Gonzalez, Kertesz, & Tayac, 2007; Klopotek, 2009; Lowery, 2010; Coleman, 2013; Jeffries, 2015). This demonstrates that Indians in southeastern states (most who belonged to unrecognized tribes at that point) were being assaulted by essentialist laws just as blood quantum was starting to deeply impact those who had federal Indian status. Make no mistake, these are administrative continuations of earlier genocidal practices carried out first by the colonial militias and churches; That is, this was genocide by another name.

The Meherrin and Occaneechi women who I interviewed in this project discuss the devastating impacts of this era on their own families and Nations. First, it created an incredible loss—loss of the ability to legally-identify as Indigenous, and therefore, to lay claim to rights to land and place. Second, it further reinforced a long-standing anti-Blackness that had resulted from intentional strategies by the colonialist regime to prevent Black-Native coalitions and

prevent Black institutional and corporate success (Marable, 1983; Pratt, 2004; Minchew, 2017). The father of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act, Walter Plecker, adamantly denied the existence of Virginia Indians, like the Monacan, arguing that they were of "Free Negro" stock (Plecker, 1943). This basically meant that he and his peers dismissed the Monacan's claims to Indigenous identity by saying they were light-skinned Africans, not Indians. Resultingly, in the South, having or admitting recognizable Black ancestry in the connections to the Black community meant not being Indian (Forbes, 1993; Klopotek, 2009; Pratt, 2004; Minchew, 2017). Therefore, if a family or tribe, like the Cherokee, wanted to bolster its legitimate claims to indigeneity from that point forward, it could mean separating themselves from relatives with known African ancestry.

O'Tika Jones, who is both Black and Meherrin, is sometimes insecure about how she's perceived by other Natives because of her phenotype. Occasionally, this causes her to question whether she has the right to be in the powwow circle dancing in her regalia. She notices that some stare at her when she is in her regalia or when she goes to certain events in Native settings. She says she imagines other Natives thinking, "what is that Black girl doing wearing regalia?" There is little doubt that the attempts to commit administrative genocide can lead to a fracturing of self and internalized oppression for people like O'Tika. This allows for the rich history of Indian-Black relations<sup>26</sup> to be ignored and negated in favor of "pure" and manageable racial groups that could be manipulated and turned against one another by the State.

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<sup>26</sup> These Indian-Black relations were beautifully portrayed in a Smithsonian display featured at the National Museum of the American Indian and later turned into a book called *Indivisible* edited by Gabrielle Tayac (2009). These were also studied in great detail by the lifetime work of the late Jack D. Forbes (Powhatan & Lenape). One such foundational work is "Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples" (1981).

The reality is that Black and Native communities in that region share more than proximity, they share family (Forbes, 1981; Tayac, 2009; Lowery, 2010; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Jeffries, 2015). For example, Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) writes, “the Seminole Nation was born of resistance and included the vestiges of dozens of Indigenous communities as well as escaped Africans” (p. 101). She also writes about the rarely-discussed alliances that formed between Indians and Blacks during the Civil War (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Denise and Vivette describe having heard about tribes in their state who have been accused of clearing their roles of Black tribal citizens. Vivette also talks about historic tensions between tribes with less Black members and those with more which played out in the courtrooms and in social settings. Whether by disenrollment or just the realities of racial segregation in the south, families like O’Tika Jones’ ended up displaced from Native tribal communities. Archer Town, the area where O’Tika’s family moved to in the 1940s, is an area where several Black-Meherrin families ended up. Entire families ended up being split along the lines of phenotype and African ancestry, many “becoming Black,” for all intents and purposes, with a reinforced disconnection from their Native Kin.

Denise knows this is a source of pain in her Meherrin community. Because of shame and rejection in the southern state of North Carolina, families like O’Tika’s learned not to talk about their Native ancestry. Denise says,

We are reaching out and trying to find our people. Whether they claim now that "yes, I link to Meherrin people," we don't know, but we are finding the families that left years ago and were never told that they were Native. They went off in other races because, just like O’Tika said, it was something that you just didn’t talk about.

The populations of tribal communities in North Carolina were so small in population by the 1900s,<sup>27</sup> and the Indians so silenced, that as Vivette tells it, violence against Native Americans was commonplace and usually dismissed by law enforcement. Blacks Americans (who certainly faced plenty of ritualized vigilante and State violence) at least had significant population numbers, communities, and schools (albeit segregated and inadequate). It was in this way and others that many Indian families in the state of North Carolina were forced to “hide in plain sight,” Vivette says. She elaborates that this mainly meant being racially ambiguous, avoiding standing out culturally, and using community churches to appear non-threatening and avoid attracting attention from racist whites. The last Indian schools attended by the Occaneechi were McCray and Martin schools in Pleasant Grove, NC, and both closed in 1924. Among the last Occaneechis to attend was John “Jug” Marshall Jeffries, Vivette’s grandfather, who died in 2010. The Occaneechi, Meherrin, and members of many small tribes in the region are the smallest minority group in their own home counties and as many as 88% are racially misclassified (Knight, Yankaskas, Fleg, & Rao, 2008, p. 7).

Being able to identify with one’s own ancestors and family is central to maintaining human dignity. Laws and social practices preventing Native people from claiming these identities, publicly or otherwise, and from maintaining connections with all their kin, are part of the colonialist bomb. This connects the experiences of these Natives from the southeast to those experiences with blood quantum shared by members of federally-recognized tribes. Both challenge one’s ability to belong in the most basic sense. Belinda Rudicil recalls having older family members tell her stories about how the census used to be filled out on a family’s behalf

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<sup>27</sup> with the exception of the group now called the Lumbee tribe who had the isolated and swampy lands in the southern part of the state to protect them from some of the vicious encroachment (Dial & Eliades, 1975), along with racial passing, misclassification and assimilation that shapes their experience throughout much of US history (Lowery, 2010)



and that the hired census-taker would assign racial identities based on their own (often ignorant) perceptions. As late as 1940 the census was filled out on a family's behalf and we know that misclassification was common in this system (Hazel, 1985; US National Archives and Records Administration, 2018). Even within her lifetime, thirty-five-year-old Belinda remembers school officials refusing to allow her to indicate "Native American" as her race on official forms and documents. Blood quantum, too, can leave some without any legal ties to their tribes. Several participants in the study know someone lacking any enrollment because of blood quantum criteria, and two of the storytellers are themselves enrolled descendants for this reason.

Tribal recognition adds layers of complexity to the discussions of impact of identity on dignity. Tribes on the eastern seaboard were some of the first to interact with the colonizers. Treaties affecting these Nations were often signed with the British, like the Treaty of Middle Plantation of 1677 and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1768 (Lyons, 1986; Kinney, 2006). The US has not honored a single US treaty to its fullest extent, so it is not hard to imagine the state of British-era treaties (Fairbanks, 1995; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001; Kalt & Singer, 2004). Many of the tribes from this region were either removed to places like Oklahoma, terminated, never recognized, or are State-recognized today, conferring limited or no practical protections beyond that given to a standard non-profit corporation. This means the federal government may deny some of the protections promised tribal Nations through the BIA like those under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, that are not granted to state-recognized tribes (US DOI, 2018). Therefore, because of being nearly annihilated, southeastern tribal nations (and some in other regions, as well) are denied federal recognition status, sovereign rights to land, and the right to protect their human remains from exploitation and theft.

The Lumbee are an interesting case. Beth Jacobs Hunt explains, “we were recognized during the Termination Era—we were recognized and terminated at the same time.” Virgil Oxendine (Lumbee) hopes that the Lumbee’s efforts to get federal recognition, which already span a century, will ultimately prevail (Lowery, 2010). Though they are both relatively young, and he and Beth both remember the tribe before the current tribal government was put in place. Beth Jacobs Hunt worries about whether this could truly benefit the Lumbee as she looks upon federally recognized tribes who appear to her to be wards of the federal government. She believes the Lumbee may have more autonomy now, although she admits they’ve been strong-armed by the State of North Carolina multiple times. Regardless of whether or how federal recognition might benefit the Lumbee, the claims to legal sovereignty of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina will be decided by the US government, not by assumption of their inherent rights to their own ancestral lands. The Miami Nation of Indiana, the tribe that Ashley Falzetti belongs to, does not have any recognition (state or federal). Members do have the ability to enroll with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma (MTO), another Band of their nation that has federal recognition, but, for Ashley, doing so would mean sacrificing the unique history and identity of the Indiana Band that split from the MTO group years ago. While she herself could be enrolled in that federally-recognized tribe, she is loyal to her Indiana Miami community.

In 2018, Congress passed a Bill that granted federal recognition to six Indian tribes in Virginia (Portnoy, 2018). In truth, these Nations had not been fully recognized as such since the colonial era when they had government to government relationships with the colonies, but they have persisted against all odds (like the Meherrin, Occaneechi and Lumbee). This and other recently-successful petitions for federal recognition by tribes east of the Mississippi River may be the beginnings of lifting the veil under which east coast tribes have been hidden and erased.

Upon closing these interviews, I often asked participants what they wanted Indians from other regions to know about their people. With the exceptions of participants from the southwest and the Great Plains, they all seemed to use that opportunity to justify their existences, explain that they were still here, and to welcome others to learn about their people. These state recognized storytellers, as well as select others from small or little-known tribes, feel the need to let others know that they still exist. This is a magnified example of the anxieties surrounding assimilation and annihilation.

Several storytellers in this research, whether their tribes were federally-recognized or not, feel a tendency to be dismissed or questioned because the names of their tribes are not well known. Crystal Rizzo laments, “being Southern Ute was hard because nobody had ever heard of It wasn’t like being Navajo or something that people heard of so people would be like, ‘is that even real’?” Christian Weaver would tell people he was Shinnecock and it would be greeted similarly to Crystal’s tribe, but then when they would ask him, “well where is that tribe located?” He would reply to that question, “just outside New York City.” This is believed impossible by many. The invisibility and skepticism add to the fact that he has a long history with being dismissed, even by long-time friends who know that his family travels home for powwows and cultural events. The truth is that most people in this study, regardless of skin tone, experience some version of this at one point or another. In the case of people from lesser-known tribes, they are dismissed because the beholder has little knowledge. In the case of well-known tribes like Cherokee, they may be dismissed because of the high levels of appropriation by Euro-American society that has led the tribe to not be taken seriously, even in Indian Country.

Though little discussed, I know from my own experiences that tribal recognition creates tensions, animosities, and lateral oppression between Natives along these imaginary lines.

Though people may not think of Indians when they think of New York or New Jersey, Christian Weaver wants tribal people in other regions to know that his people “dealt with the Pilgrims first,” and that they likely have more in common with other tribes than they have differences. Claire Norwood’s Tolowa people are in rural Northern California but are little-known to most Natives and especially non-Natives. She wants other Natives to know the following: “we’re still here, and we still exist--we’re [all] the same people.” This is echoed by Denise McAuly who says, “we exist (southeastern or state-recognized tribes) just as much as they exist (western or federally-recognized tribes) and [there] might be different circumstances and different problems that we’re all going through, but we’re all one regardless of what region we’re in.”

While they may be enrolled tribal members, a few in the study also experience feeling that they have less right to fully identify with their people because of their phenotypes. While some may be viewed as too dark, others are too light. There is a range of skin color, hair color and texture, and eye color that seems to be within the zone of acceptability. Vivette Jeffries-Logan says that, just a generation ago, Occaneechi families would only approve of one’s romantic choices as long as one’s chosen mate was not darker or lighter than a paper bag. Of course, there was never one single Indigenous phenotype, and Alaska Native and some northeastern tribes may have been lighter prior to colonization with tribes closer to the global south ranging darker, but the “acceptable” image likely comes from popular media portrayals (Aleiss, 2005; Mann, 2006; Raheja, 2011). The “Crying Indian” which debuted on US television in 1971 for Earth Day is an image that shapes popular imagination in the US (Strand, 2008; Aleiss, 2005). The image itself featured “Iron Eyes Cody” who was himself a non-Indian (Strand, 2008; Orange, 2018). Additionally, tribal nations have complicated histories with African Americans, Asian immigrants, and white settlers. When it comes to African Americans,

tribes did everything from form alliances with Black people and take them in, to participating in the African slave trade (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). To reiterate, crude and biologized distinctions such as these were not part of pre-colonial Indigenous societies where belonging was more about which families you belonged to and which languages you spoke. In fact, no story challenges the biological essentialist conceptions of ethnicity more adequately than Alvin Chee's story about Navajo clan systems. As Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy (Lumbee) points out, "the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens" (p. 429).

The ideas Alvin had about Indians and fractionality before he met and was challenged by his good friend Crystal are ubiquitous. In fact, roughly two-thirds of the storytellers in this sample describe witnessing family members, friends, or people in the community being treated as less Indigenous because they have African ancestry. Donna Chrisjohn's story is a powerful one. Donna's mother could seem white to many, she has red hair and fair skin. Despite this, Donna, who is forty-two years old, experienced a break with her family after her children were born. Three of her kids have a Black father. She remembers:

I wasn't allowed to be around my family, or it wasn't that I wasn't allowed...I separated myself. They were very upset with me. The entire family was upset with me, and it hasn't been until the last few years that I've really come around. I still don't tolerate the comments or the conversations that they'll back themselves into by saying negative things about Black people.

She has grown accustomed to people saying, "Oh, Donna Jean has Black kids," which negates the fact that her kids are also Native. This shows up in other ways as well. When discussing the youngest of those three kids, Donna tells me:

My youngest of the three, he's 12, they (her family) make stereotypical comments about him being like this super athlete because he's supposedly got an extra edge on everybody because he's half Black. It's kind of crazy to hear those comments I hear and I'm like,

settle down, he's Native! He's not just Black. They don't even think that they think about it, they just say stuff.

Her family's behavior is not an exception. Jude Killspenty Cruz, who's thirty-eight years old, has seen this in the Native community, as well. He says, "I think they do tend to say, 'that's a black baby', not 'that's a Native baby'." Donna's mother's resentments raged, and she tried to take Donna's kids away from her, using her choice of a Black partner as evidence that she was promiscuous.<sup>28</sup> Donna shares:

My mom is nuts, but like I said, she's very strong. She's very powerful and she did a good job with raising us to the best of her ability. It's just that the way that she was raised and her concept of love from her upbringing is completely different than mine. Her boarding school mentality is tough to break—it's been tough to break. The abuse cycles she was subjected to, and with her parents who were alcoholics...that's tough to break. She just wants to be strong and she just wants to move on in life, but she didn't want to address it (the trauma) to fix herself. So, then she carried a lot of those traits on to us, or more she carried them as a parent, not necessarily on to us because we saw the difference and knew that there was a better way to be a parent than what she was doing. But, she's a tough lady—she saw things her way. She figured that since I had a Black child that I was wayward in the world and I was not fit to be a parent. She even took us to court, took me to court, and all of her sisters and the family stood behind her. I had to hear [her say] for years... instead of my mom accepting that my daughter was half Black she instead would say "we don't know who the father is." Therefore, "we don't know if she's half Black."

Isaiah Brokenleg, who's thirty-six years old, notices the same phenomenon. He says:

Two of my cousins are half Indian, half Black. One thing I notice is they're always identified as Black. Even though they're half Indian they're never identified as Indian and I don't know why...I mean we identify them that way because they're our relatives, we know them, but everybody else sees them as Black kids. One of my co-workers has a son who's half black...two of his sons are half Black and half Indian and they dance, and they do all those things, but I think they're still viewed as Black first and Indian second even though they were raised in the Indian culture. Culturally, how they think and how they behave is that they are Indian first and Black second, but there's still this weird thing and I've also seen it come out in who gets to win competitions, like dancing competitions. If they're half, its ok for a half Indian, half white kid to win, you know fancy shawl or whatever, but not a half Black and half Indian...it's really interesting.

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<sup>28</sup> relying on a long-standing stereotype about the sexual prowess of Black men that some argue goes back to a campaign by powerful whites and the white-owned media to slow Black progress in the Reconstruction Era (Hodes, 2014)

Hawi Hall heard so much of this growing up in Onondaga that when she had a daughter with a Black man, she chose to insulate her daughter from that place, raising her in a larger town and not sending her to the tribal school where she heard kids with Black ancestry get called names in the tribal language and worse, “niglet.” D’Shane Barnett witnessed a truly ugly side of this issue. His niece is half Black, and he would see her get bullied on the reservation. D’Shane was always getting into fights to protect her at powwows and elsewhere in the community.

Ras K’Dee (Dry Creek Pomo) knows all too well that this is an issue in Indian Country.

His mom is Pomo, and his dad is African. He shares the following:

I was called like a nigger by one of my cousins on the rez, so you definitely feel...you have that racism that carries over. Sometimes I hear elders talking bad about Black people or Mexicans, you know? Racism is there still. Maybe it’s not about skin color... more so it’s about how people perceive an individual or a group, but I hear that a lot.

Ras chalks some of this up to Indian humor and compulsory teasing. He says, “I mean, I think it’s more so people just teasing each other. Isaiah comes to a similar conclusion when discussing how his husband is communicated with. He shares this story:

My husband is Black, he’s actually from the Caribbean so he didn’t grow up here, but he went to college here. For the most part, I think he would tell you that he hasn’t had a lot of negative experiences, but he does have definitely *racial* experiences. People often ask him if he’s a football player for the Green Bay Packers because there’s just not very many Black people here, so they just assume. Indian people, well, they usually make jokes about him being dark...so they’ll say things like "wow, it’s so dark in here I barely even saw you." You know, stuff like that.

Others mention this teasing, as well, and it is not just reserved for Black-skinned individuals.

Jennifer Irving says,

My brother has a lighter skin tone and blue eyes. He’s treated a little bit different. He’s actually married to one of our medicine man’s sisters, and so they tease him all the time about being an agency Indian because he’s from Pine Ridge and they’re from a district. They care about him so it’s just teasing. It’s not done in a hard way. They don’t *not* share knowledge with him. His wife’s brother is a medicine man, so they still include him in stuff...they still tell him what they need, and he helps. He’s a part of their circle but it’s

still there. To some people, it's really important, like, "I don't want my kids to have kids with so and so," or "I hope my grandkids don't come out with blue eyes."

Lakota Harden knows there is some piece of this that does trigger traumas, though. Indian people look less and less like they used to and having kids with your people is important, too. She even recalls feeling shame when she had a child with an Omaha man (another tribe). Of course, the fears that bloodlines will disappear are certainly not unfounded. She shares this story:

When I moved out here [to the Bay] that was a big deal to me—were my kids going to procreate with other Native people, or not? I remember one of my daughter's first boyfriends was Cambodian or you something, and in my mind, I had a little bit of a twinge, like, "uh oh." I tried not to show it because I didn't want to limit her. For me, it was never said to me directly, but it was every day implied that you better have children that are Indian. I once got harassed a little bit because of my son. Not by my family. My family didn't do that, but just from other people that I lived around on the rez. My son's father was Omaha and not Lakota. It's a joke that I tell because we were at a powwow and I had my son in a cradleboard and some of my buddies that I used to sing with, they had a drum and I would go and sing at their drum. I saw them, and they were like "oh, you had a baby?" They were all holding his cradleboard and stuff, and they said, "oh, what's his name?" I told them. He has a strong Lakota name. Then they said, "so is he Oglala?" I said that his father is Omaha. I remember, it was at a powwow and everyone was sitting down, and they were all kind of looking at us because we were standing up. Everyone could hear, and he goes, "What?!?! You would do that to your child for one moment of pleasure?!" Everybody laughed, and it was funny, but at the same time, we joke around, but those jokes come from reality. That's like, "why would you do that?" Even among us as Native people on the rez, it's like, you married out of the tribe...that was what I was dealing with in my day.

Lakota experienced the weight of mass historical loss when she presented her Omaha and Lakota baby to her Lakota relatives. Again, it is hard not to think about centuries of population decline when thinking about decisions of who to have children with. It is also a reality that multiracial and multicultural kids can struggle to belong in monoracial circles (Khanna, 2010; Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012).

Alvin Chee sees some of these anxieties play out in his community as well. He has cousins who are multiracial, some with African ancestry. He says that discriminatory beliefs about this go further than skin color alone. He explains:



I think it comes to that point of hair. I won't say like skin tone but rather hair. If your hair is really light, they know you're something else...you're not Navajo, or they think you're not Navajo. If your hair is really black and curly, they might think you might have some, Mexican or Latino or African American in you somewhere. I think that's what they look at more because hair is important in Navajo culture. You have to make a bun for ceremonies, especially for the women, and for some of the guys, too. You would put your hair up...so it's that texture and the way the hair is that they look at a lot more than they look at skin tone. ... I've seen it sometimes, especially in school. I remember people would pull out other people's hair and kind of say "ahhh (scream)—get your hair off me," or like "whose blonde hair is this?" They'd make jokes out of it. But I really do think it came down to the hair. I think that was more important than the skin color or the skin tone.

Alvin went on to tell the story of Radmilla Cody who won the Miss Navajo competition in 1997 (Radmilla Entertainment, LLC, 2014). According to Alvin, Radmilla was the first and only Navajo woman to win this who was less than 4/4ths Navajo, and it was especially momentous because she is half Black. He says that the fact that she both spoke Navajo and was able to put her hair up into a Navajo bun contributed to the surprising win. He went on to say that a younger cousin of his who has a Black parent was elated and inspired by Cody's unprecedented victory over the Miss Navajo crown.

Beth Hunt (Lumbee) makes an observation similar about hair in the Lumbee community similar to Alvin's. Consider her words:

I know for a fact that there could be community members who are darker-skinned or have coarser hair and they're not "real Indians." It's almost better to be a light-skinned blonde-haired, blue-eyed Lumbee than it is to be a brown-skinned Lumbee. It's the colonized mind theory that I have of our people and it's similar to the African American community and it absolutely exists in the Lumbee community. I'm one of the few people who are willing to say that publicly. I've said it publicly before. We hurt ourselves in that way when we identify ourselves based on our skin tone, and often, it does seem that the folks with the lighter skin or more relaxed texture of hair are the face of different organizations and they get more opportunity.

Beth strongly acknowledges and criticizes the manifestations of colorism and internalized racism in her tribal community. Like Alvin, she also emphasizes the role that hair plays into the

perception of phenotype, and subsequently, Indianness and belonging. She goes on to share a story from her childhood:

Growing up as a young Lumbee woman, it was fine to date a white man, but don't bring a Black man home...not necessarily my family, fortunately, but that's common. When young Lumbee people are dating, those are the things that they are told... it's ok to date a white person but not a Black person. That's just that internalized racism and we do that even amongst ourselves, even amongst our own people. If you're darker-skinned versus lighter-skinned or if your hair is courser or curlier versus having a more relaxed texture of hair, all of that plays into your identity and you end up having to feel bad about that. My hair is really curly, and I have friends who have really long hair, the typical Pocahontas look. It was like, "am I really Indian?" or are people going to think that I'm not really Indian or that I'm "mixed," as they say around here? It's very difficult. I mean that is probably one of the most difficult things about growing up in Robeson County. I had to deal with that and did not always understand why it was that community members didn't have a problem if I was friends with white kids but didn't like if I was friends with Black kids. The race issue has been the hardest issue for me as a Lumbee person.

I will admit that this account was surprising to hear. To me, Beth has always looked identifiably Native, especially in comparison to myself. To learn of the anxiety that she was made to feel because of her hair texture felt shocking. It reiterated for me the pieces of self, the fractional identities forcibly internalized by nearly all Native people.

Of course, having Black ancestry also has significant implications outside of Indian Country. Crystal Rizzo also has one Black birth parent and she was raised off the reservation by white adoptive parents in the deep South. She describes herself as "visibly biracial" and explains that this drastically influenced many of her childhood experiences in Alabama. She does face challenges with not "looking Native" enough, but only when she interacts with white people, who she says tend to be more judging and skeptical. Her skin color nearly matches the dark Southern Ute complexion that her reservation family dons, and she does not stand out in the Boston urban community either, with tribes like the Mashpee Wampanoag and the Narraganset (who have an African influence). Her hair is curlier than her other Ute relatives, though, and she does not fit the Pocahontas image in pop culture portrayals, so she knows she does not fit popular

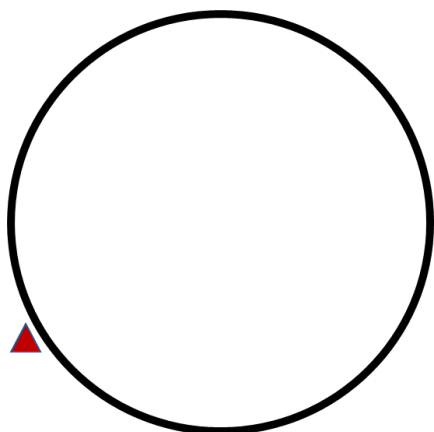
white notions of what Indians look like (though Pocahontas decorated the walls of her childhood bedroom).

Crystal has noticed something among the racially-mixed tribal peoples of the Northeast, though, which is that colorism is a significant problem. There are jokes made about dark-skinned Indians and light-skinned Indians as well, basically, all who are outside of the zone of acceptability. Her skin color, in the context of the urban Indian community of Boston, admittedly carries currency though because there is intra- and inter-tribal strife between those who seem white and those who don't. There are also toxic narratives about the heterogeneity of local tribes like the Mashpee. A joke that Crystal heard circulating through the Indian Center of Boston was that you could go to any Community of Color within the city and pick up a bus load of people and pass them off as Mashpee. While this is meant to be a disrespectful joke, Indian Country is, in fact, that heterogeneous.

Based on the stories presented here, it seems that, for the most part, having a fairer complexion seems to be less controversial than being darker than expected. In fact, when I ask Alvin some follow-up questions about the jokes about hair type in school, he says that blonde was admired by many even though it may have been made fun of. Alvin describes his own skin color as light by Navajo standards and, while this was a source of teasing in the local community, its true origin was never really discussed. Alvin's father Oliver, whose CIB reads 4/4ths Navajo, also has a lighter skin tone and green eyes. Alvin explains, "we don't know where he gets the green eyes but I'm pretty sure there was something scandalous back in the day." We both laugh at this idea. It does not seem that Oliver or Alvin's skin tone causes many problems for them. Alvin says this is because he introduces himself and his clans in Navajo and everyone knows his family. In comparison to the public debates had over Radmilla Cody, though, this is

also likely to be because lightness is less controversial than suspected Blackness. Annabelle Allison, also Navajo, points out that Navajo society is not monochromatic. She is 4/4ths as well but also considers herself light for a Navajo, and she explains there has always been diversity among her Navajo people. She has noticed, however, that lighter skin seems to be favored on tribal councils and in leadership all over Indian Country. Similarly, Beth Hunt (Lumbee) says, “light-skinned Lumbees are the ones that end up having, you know, the better jobs, those kinds of things—we definitely have internalized racism.”

While there are diverse responses to range in phenotype in Indian Country, there are irrefutable advantages to possessing skin tones with closer proximity to whiteness. However, there can also be negative consequences to having a light skin tone within tribal communities. Such an experience creates a duality in that one can be conditionally privileged in the wider society and unfairly assigned rewards for perceived whiteness (even in Indian Country), while also facing obstacles that limit their ability to fully identify with their tribal community, internally and externally. D’Shane Barnett’s father is white, and he would often be referred to as the “white boy” when he would visit the reservation as a young person. He would even be beaten for it and tells me that he once had a knife put to his throat while being called names. This may sound like something that would’ve happened a long time ago, but D’Shane is only 38 years old (see Figure 17 below).



*Figure 17 D'Shane Barnett's social location in the Three Affiliated tribal community*

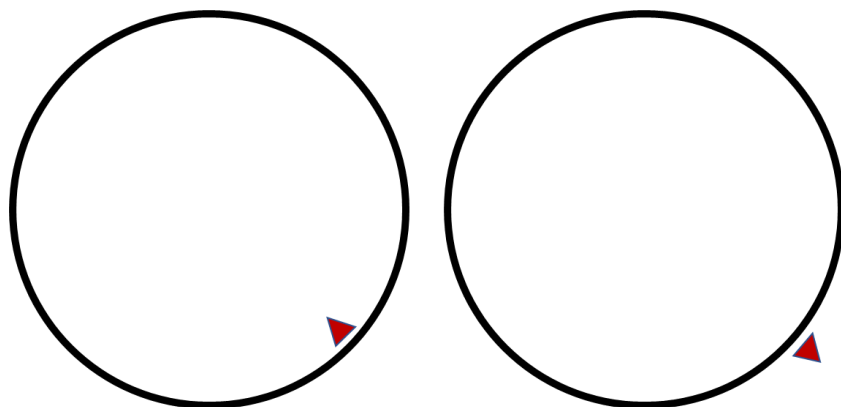
Not only did he struggle to fit in when he would visit his homeland as a young person, he also sees himself as somewhat outside the circle of his community because his father is white. Unlike many of his relatives on the rez, his family was able to afford him several privileges including paying for him to pursue higher education. These two examples highlight the duality and the experience of two key intersections across different social contexts. Milissa Hamley, twenty-six-years-old, went to an Intertribal high school and was similarly harassed because of her light skin and blonde hair; she recalls:

I remember kind of being ashamed of that part of me. As I got older, I got less ashamed. I was more like, well this is just who I am. I can't change it, I'm mixed. I'm Native and I'm white. Yeah, I identify with my native culture, and now it doesn't bother me so much.

It really bothered her as a fourteen year old. She'd gotten mad at a white teacher for spreading racist messages about Natives, and, when she approached him about it she was confronted by a peer who said, "why do you care, you're white?" Milissa's response to this microaggression escalated to the point of being suspended.

When Milissa attended a Native grade school in the Minneapolis area, she was teased by other Native kids for being the "white girl." Naturally, growing up away from the reservation she

always felt outside of that community, but she explains that it is not always much easier now. Because of what she looks like she is not always made to feel welcome in Native spaces. At the same time, she also admits that lately she struggles to find the time to connect with the Native community in Minneapolis as much as she'd like to (see Figure 18 below).



*Figure 18 Milissa Hamley's social location first in the Ojibwe community broadly, and second in both the Turtle Mountain Reservation and the Minneapolis Urban Indian community*

D'Shane notes that due to the racial politics in Indian Country, he has grown accustomed to being expected to defend his Indianness against racialized jokes or jabs. He says that he has been less affected in recent years, though, because he has learned to avoid the trap of being defensive and engaging the bully.

Ashley Falzetti has been confronted for entering tribally-restricted spaces when visiting her territory in Indiana, but she understands the protectionism. In this instance, all it took for her was to explain which family she comes from, and then her skin color was no longer an issue. This was not the case when she was in college, though. Because she has blonde hair and very fair skin, she was dismissed when she would share her Native identity with groups. This was so much the case that she was once asked by a professor to stop speaking from a Miami perspective. Another professor was so turned off by Ashley's identity that he ran around making the classic

and inappropriate ‘wah-wah’ sound and saying, “look, I’m playing Indian like Ashley.” Ashley is only thirty-three years old and she recently completed her doctorate.

Perhaps this is akin to the skepticism Crystal Rizzo feels when she interacts with white people. Ashley says she gets this most places, but, “In the academy is where people have been absolutely cruel and awful.” She even began to doubt her own voice, at times. Similarly, by self-identifying with the Tribal Nation in which she is enrolled, she was made out to be “the most racist of all racists” by a group of Women of Color who had formed a reading discussion group that Ashley had tried to be a part of. They had posited that she’d made up being Native to avoid owning being white and to gain entry to the group. Ashley finds this frustrating because she says she is always willing to talk about her whiteness, as well. Ashley rightfully points out that it is not up to anyone other than her tribe to determine what she has a right to claim. This is the point of tribal sovereignty; tribes have the absolute right to determine their own membership.

Even the issue of sovereign membership criteria can be muddled in the matrix of today’s Tribal Nations. Tribes who’ve moved away from blood quantum in favor of far more open systems of lineal descent, like the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, receive some criticism from the rest of Indian Country (Gover, 2008; Miller, 2014). Christy Bieber explains here how her Nation is viewed by some Natives—

I have a lot of people sometimes judging my tribal background, specifically, because the Sault Ste Marie tribe has a lot of tribal members. There’s this belief amongst Natives of this area that they opened the rolls and that there are all kinds of Native people on them. There’s even a judgment that my tribe holds a lot of white people because we have a high enrollment number and a lot of our people are out of state. I think we have like 40,000 members. It’s really weird because some people get that number in their head even higher than it is, and the rumors start. It’s really strange. I’m like “yo, we don’t have that many tribal members.” We do technically have a lot, but we don’t have as many as some say we do so it’s really interesting how that can happen, too. I’ve experienced that a few different times with a few different people. Some people voice it and other people won’t, but it’s like an underlying thing around here.

Even with enrollment in a federally-recognized tribe, Christy has her Native identity challenged. It is also a sad display of the battles between the oppressed that Freire (1968) wrote about. In truth, forty thousand is a very small number in comparison to the US population. Seven of the storytellers are from state-recognized tribes, and one is from a tribe not currently recognized, so we can make inferences about those experiences based on what Christy offers here.

Most participants from state-recognized tribes make it a point that they want other Natives to know they are still here, and some have grown accustomed to justifying their Nativeness now or at some point in their lives.<sup>29</sup> Members of those tribes can be dismissed by other Natives and non-Natives alike. I myself recall a handful of interactions I had with a white male Anthropology professor while in undergrad at Guilford College. The school sits just miles from our tribal territory, but this teacher refused to acknowledge my people because his research had been with federally recognized tribes in the southwest, not southeastern state-recognized tribes. He displayed little respect despite being a settler guest on our land, and he turned down offers to meet elected tribal council officials who had visited the school, even snubbing a tribal council member at an event. John Scott Richardson is an enrolled citizen of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, one of North Carolina's eight state-recognized tribes. On the issue of state versus federal-recognition he says:

If there's any confusion just look at common sense. Look at the history. Understand what has been done to us again and again. Understand how that has skewed our perspective on how we even see each other in some cases. Once you understand that, I can look at you, Marshall, and know and say—that's my Native brother there and not feel any kind of apprehension about it. Once we can get past that, I think we can accept one another.

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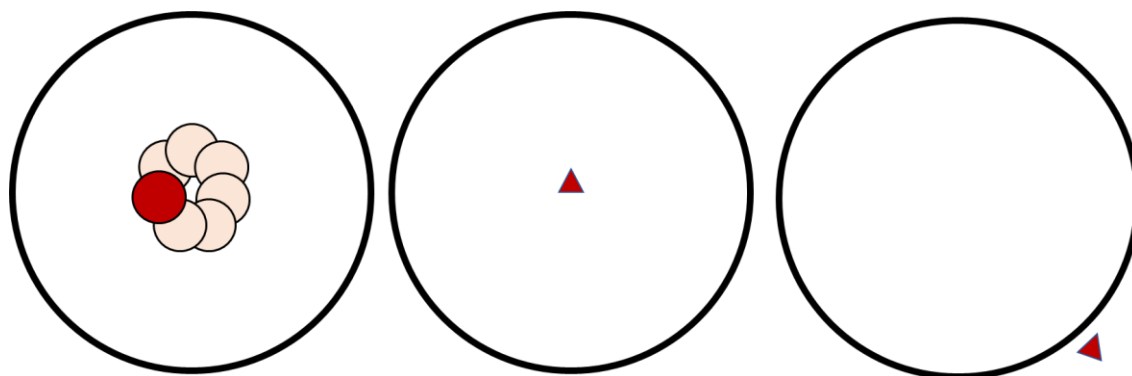
<sup>29</sup> It should be mentioned that on the whole, none of them seem to struggle with this as much as other factors that affect their identities.



John's explanation well demonstrates how recognition status is intended to create fractional parts of self, shrapnel, and even facilitate lateral oppression.

### 3.2.4 *Economic Dispossession*

As earlier stated, Lakota Harden carries traditional teachings from her Lakota people and looks like her ancestors, but she struggles to hold her family together because of diaspora and poverty. Her family is spread all over Turtle Island, a displacement felt by most Indigenous families. She has struggled with poverty most of her life which prevents her from owning a home and hosting her children and grandchildren in the way she wants to and feels she is supposed to as a grandmother. Her struggles with poverty are compounded by the fact that she is forced to live and survive in a capitalist economy while much of the work she does is traditional and cannot be compensated in that way (at least not ethically). She tells me that, in a pre-colonial society, she would be cared for and honored for that work. Instead, she's left to find ways to balance it with the economic demands of living in the San Francisco Bay, an area notorious for its cost of living. She tells me, "sometimes we're struggling because of the way things are in the world now—there's no way to make a living and so we're all struggling with homelessness and there's no security in living out here [on the west coast]."



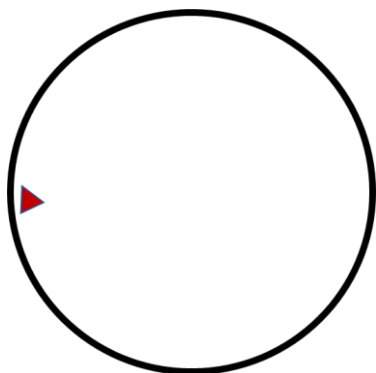
*Figure 19 Lakota Harden's social location--first in the Lakota community, second in both the Bay social network as well as Sitka, and third in the cultural Native community broadly*

Lakota says that this unstable economic situation, especially not being able to truly fulfill the grandma role because of it, is one of the reasons why she sees herself just outside the circle of today's Native culture (see Figure 19 above).

Lee Blacksmith also speaks to this issue. Living back home on the Crow Indian Reservation and in nearby Hardin is hard because it seems impossible to get ahead there. The expectation is that you always put family first. This meant that she found herself moving between apartments, struggling with homelessness, and struggling to make ends meet for her and her and her family. The moment she would get a little bit ahead a family member would fall behind. She and others in this project sometimes found themselves helping care for people whose behaviors were being shaped by unaddressed trauma, abuse, violence, and addiction. Each of these has played a huge role in the displacement of Natives to urban centers because it is difficult to heal from these when Native people continue to struggle for political rights and to fight against a racist social system.

Fortunately, Lee was able to use a family connection to secure housing near Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is far from her Montana home, though, and she uprooted her life from the reservation to work in the urban Midwest hub of greater Minneapolis, an area where many Natives have resettled. Lee frequently longs for home and to be surrounded by Crow speakers, she tells me, but going home means falling back into the grinding effects of severe poverty and all the obligations that come with traditional notions about family that don't always account for the disruptions that firsthand and intergenerational traumas can create. With so few options for job and housing security back home in Montana, Lee has had to choose between a career and being home on the rez. It is also emotionally and financially expensive to visit, so she misses out on some of the best parts of being Crow, such as the Annual Crow Fair, Indian Days

celebrations, and the incredibly beautiful plains landscape where she feels completely at home (see Figure 20 below).



*Figure 20 Lee Blacksmith's social location in the Crow community*

For now, she is another Crow who left the rez, she says.

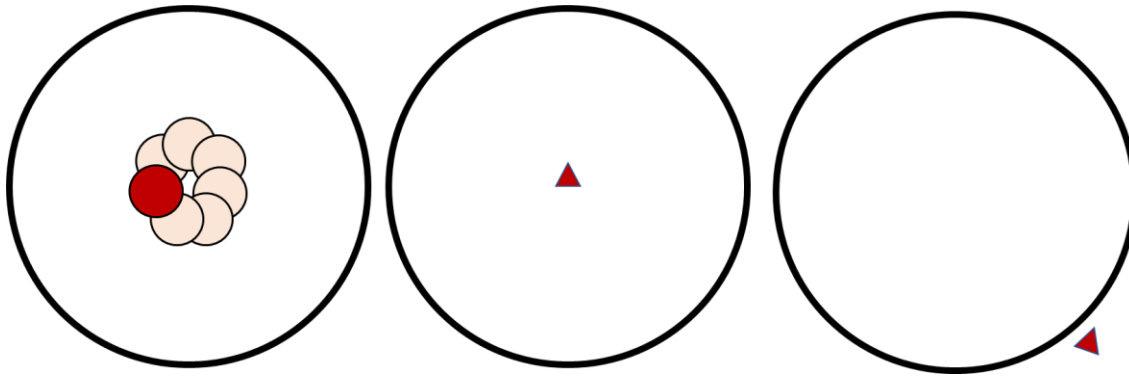
It is likely that this section is shorter than the others because most of the storytellers in this sample have relatively high levels of education and socioeconomic status. This is one area where the sample deviates from the rest of Indian Country. Christian Weaver (Shinnecock) says, “I’ve had certain luxuries and opportunities that a lot of people that have grown up on the rez have not had.”

Ashley Falzetti names geographic distance and social class, particularly education, as significant in why she feels on the borders of her Miami community. There were a few of these sentiments shared in these stories, and most storytellers hesitate to talk about their own social class, likely because they are aware that such privilege is less common in their own communities. In fact, “American Indian and Alaska Native people are twice as likely to have incomes below the federal poverty level, have nearly three times the national unemployment rate, and are less than half as likely to graduate from college” (Sequist, Cullen, & Acton, 2011, p. 1967). Drawing on data from the 2000 US Census, Cornell & Kalt (2010) report that the poverty rate for all American Indians and Alaska Natives is higher than that of any other racial group,

and the rate for reservation Indians is fourteen percent higher than that for African Americans (p. 8). While only a few of the impacts on identity and wholeness are named by the storytellers in this project, Gone (2009) argues poverty is a source of historical and lived trauma for Native people today. Jude Killsplenty Cruz brings up the inflow of money into some Native communities because of the rise of Indian casinos. He explains that this does not always change the health or habits of previously-impooverished people that he has seen, because management of money has not previously been a part of the culture.

### ***3.2.5 Land & Home***

Access to traditional homelands, whether reservation, protected land, or land-based tribal communities/villages/pueblos/rancherias creates large differences between this study's participants. Just as Lee Blacksmith ventures to renew her spirit by witnessing the Crow landscape a couple of times a year, Indigenous peoples and their lands can be inseparable (Deloria, 2003; Simpson, 2014). Lakota Harden and Hawi Hall (St. Regis Mohawk & Cherokee) are in a situation that may seem unusual but that is somewhat common to Natives. Admittedly, their situation feels more common for urban Indians than rural, but the experiences I describe here are rural. Lakota, a fifty-seven-year-old Elder, was raised in a few different locations. Two of the locations were Porcupine, South Dakota and Sitka, Alaska. While she is a Lakota person, she does not belong to the Oglala band, but the family who raised her there are Oglala. Also, when her mom married a Tlingit man from Sitka, AK, Lakota moved there and was raised there as well. She feels at home in both places. In the figure below (Figure 21), you can see that Lakota sees herself as revolving around the middle of several Lakota communities and feels closest to the center when she is in prayer or ceremony. There is also no one place on earth, she says, that feels more home than Sitka.



*Figure 21 Lakota Harden's social location--first in the Lakota community, second in both the Bay social network as well as Sitka, and third in the cultural Native community broadly*

Consider the following statements that Lakota shares with me:

When I was little down in Marty Mission and Greenwood, and with my cousins in Mission, South Dakota...I stayed with them, so it feels more, not so much on the edge but feels closer towards the edge and not the center but when I'm in prayer, I think that's home for me. It's the Sundance, the ceremonies. When I became an adult my uncle made me a Chanupa, he carved it and painted it with his own hands, and my other uncle lived with me daily, teaching me about it and then Grandma Edna who adopted us as we were all AIM kids there, she adopted us and I took it seriously, and so her family became my family, the Oglalas there. It was really forming who I am.

As for her other home, she explains:

But there's no one spot that feels like Sitka. Once the people with the memories of living on the Island and how we grew up are gone, the people who knew my parents...once they're gone, I don't know how I will feel anymore. That's what draws me there, not only the land and the water and eagles and the mountains and the oceans. You know, that's a big part of it—as soon as I get off the plane, it's like my whole body relaxes and I take in this breath of new air and it releases because that Arrowhead Mountain that you see as soon as you get off the plane, right in front of me that was the center of our town...as soon as I see that it's a physical release for me. I'm home and that mountain knows me, you know. Even if no one else there does, it's the land. It's the land where I had my childhood and so it feels like I'm in the center.

South Dakota was a completely different lifestyle and cultural surrounding for Lakota, but both lands are sacred and hold her in different ways.

Hawi was raised on the Onondaga reservation. However, her mother is a Cherokee woman dispossessed of her homelands and ability to enroll, and her father was from the St. Regis

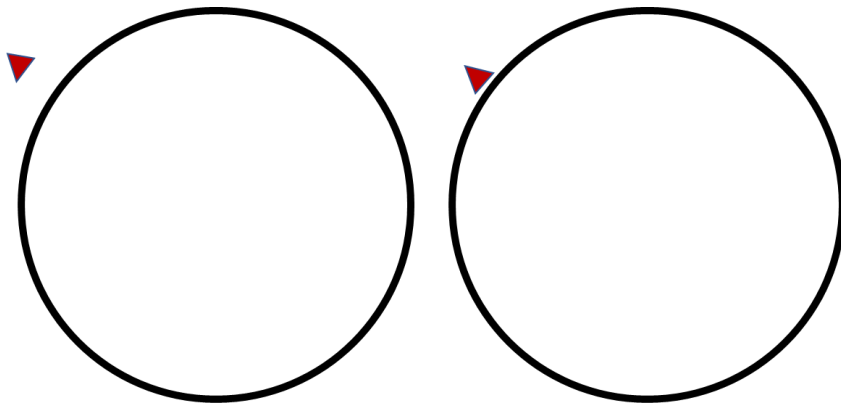
Mohawk Reservation where Hawi is enrolled. Her mother ended up in Onondaga and away from her immediate family, but, like so many Natives, she sought Native relations where she landed. An Onondaga clan mother on their New York reservation took her mother in. Hawi's cultural identity is Onondaga because that is the language she speaks, the culture she grew up in, and the place she knows even though she is Mohawk and Cherokee by ancestry. She loves the land. Its impact on her is similar to the impact that South Dakota and Sitka have on Lakota. Hawi, however, sees herself as presently disconnected from the Onondaga community despite knowing the land and people well.

After the Onondaga clan mother who had welcomed Hawi's mother in passed away, the welcome that her family had always felt there on the reservation seemed to wear off. The fact that her family had been part of Onondaga medicine societies, had been raised in their schools, and spoke the language, did not seem to not be enough. Hawi finds herself defending her place in the Onondaga community. She shares:

Right now, I'm in the process of waiting to go in front of Council to have this resolved. The way that the Iroquois Confederacy is set up is there are 6 Nations, and the Onondaga are the central firekeeper so they're the ones that are centrally located. Also, here at Onondaga, we have the Chief who goes by the name Todadah, and when the Grand Council of the 6 Nations come together, when all the chiefs in the 6 Nations come together to discuss different matters affecting the whole confederacy, Todadah is the leader of the leaders. There is no hierarchy, but he is kind of the one that has historically been the more vocal one. He's the one that is seen more in the U.N. and is recognized more and so he is like the leader of the leaders. In speaking with him and in speaking with the other clan mother for the Deer Clan, they're kind of in agreeance that this can't be decided by the women telling me to leave, alone. These women can't make that decision. It has to go through a process and they can't just decide that our family is no longer welcome. Essentially, because of my family's history, because of the Trail of Tears and the way that my family chose to move around to survive, their issue is that my mom is not enrolled because of that loss of contact with our traditional community on my mom's side.

Hawi is enrolled with the St. Regis Mohawk, part of the Six Nations Confederacy, but her mother's right to belong on the place where she was welcomed and allowed to raise her children

is, for Hawi, a symptom of the type of thinking induced by today's tribal enrollment standards and accumulated traumas of generations of loss and the lateral oppression that results. Based on the understandings that storytellers in this project share about belonging and tribal adoption prior to colonization, Hawi would be Onondaga in an earlier era. Today, she struggles with whether she belongs in the only home she's ever known after having been challenged and pushed out (see Figure 22 below).



*Figure 22 The first circle represents Hawi Hall's social location in the Onondaga community now, and the second represents that location for most of her life*

Hawi says she's always known that her tribal enrollment card, and the card that her mom did not possess, worked against who she was raised to be. She has always been outside the circle, somewhat, but the gulf has grown recently.

While Lakota and Hawi experienced much of their life with tribes or bands not most immediately aligned with their specific families' ancestral histories, both did grow up on tribal lands. Unlike Lakota and Hawi, eleven of the participants in this research grew up in urban areas and/or away from their tribal lands. Some were fortunate enough to live in urban centers with recognized concentrations of Native Americans, which Renya Ramirez (2007) refers to as

“Native Hubs,” while others are mostly surrounded by non-Indians.<sup>30</sup> Urban Indians run the full spectrum when it comes to access to land on reservations or rural Native communities. Some grew up in such a community and visit regularly, others grew up there and never visit, and many are a generation or more removed from such a place. Some of today’s urban Indians live in cities because their families were part of the mid-century assimilationist urban relocation programs (Fixico, 1986; Lobo, 2001). Some, like Esther Lucero’s grandparents, left the reservation in search of work or refuge during that era even though they were not part of such a program. Others are recent arrivals to cities (Ramirez, 2007; Lawrence, 2004). Opportunities in the cities eclipse those available on reservations and in rural Native communities where poverty rates are the highest in the US (Cornell & Kalt, 2010). We may think of Urban Indians, in some cases, as refugees of sorts, having fled extreme poverty, abuse, homophobia or sexism, etc., however, I should also state that duality exists here because reservations can be some of the most beautiful and culturally rich places on the planet. Of course, some may simply prefer an urban lifestyle. Some reservations are part of urban metropolitan areas and the city came to Indian people rather than the Indian people coming to the city. This means that urban and reservation are not mutually exclusive. Regardless of the reason, most urban Indians have a longing for “home,” usually a tribal community. In some cases, that home may be a place they’ve never or hardly ever been to.

The discussion of “home” is an interesting one. For Native people, “home” is often where one’s ancestral roots are buried. Vivette Jeffries-Logan is from a non-reservation tribe with a central rural land-base. She tells me that she feels a certain power when she is standing on her people’s tribal lands. “I stand on the dust of the bones of my ancestors. I am home,” she says. Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) speaks fondly of making the long and winding

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<sup>30</sup> Ramirez (2007) credits the “hub” idea to one of her research participants, a Paiute elder named Laverne Roberts



journey “home” to the Smith River Rancheria in rural California. Claire has never lived there, but her yearly pilgrimage to the place of her mother’s birth grounds her. Her voice cracks describing how she is welcomed by cousins with open arms when she makes the trek. She recalls, “once I was there for 9 days, or maybe less than that, and when I left, they **all** cried.” People she didn’t even grow up with rejoice and exclaim when she arrives, she explains, and they don’t miss a beat since the last time they saw her in person. She always feels welcome there. She shares, “It’s my home and they’re my people, and even though I’ve only met a lot of them you know 4 or 5 times, I know that they love me and that I’m a part of that community.” There is no greater sense of home than this.

Crystal Rizzo (Southern Ute) was raised by her two white adoptive parents in rural Alabama, far away from her Southern Ute reservation in Colorado. The way she describes her homecoming is significant—

You know I didn’t grow up on the rez. But the very first time that I went home as an adult—I refer to it as home—I went home and my cousin, who I think is 2 years younger than me, was like, “welcome home, cousin...finally.” It was just such a relief because I wasn’t going to have to prove anything. I wasn’t going to have to prove my Nativeness. This is in your blood.

O’Tika Jones (Meherrin) explains that she first went “home,” which was well into her adult life, when she learned she was Meherrin and was welcomed in by the tribe. She felt so proud to enter the circle at her first powwow. While Crystal had some limited correspondences with tribal family over the years, O’Tika did not know any of her tribal cousins who identified as such. Her family had hidden their Native ancestry from her and others because of fear, shame, and the toll of racial segregation in rural North Carolina. After she later connected with her tribal community, she successfully went through their enrollment process and felt a sense of belonging that finally felt like home.

Similarly, Esther Lucero (Navajo & Latina) grew up in a Colorado suburb. She is Navajo by her mother, and she is the third generation to live off the reservation. Despite the three-generation disconnect from that place, she invokes the word home when describing her journeys with her mother and grandmother to harvest pine nuts in Arizona. Her mom has recently returned to Arizona to live near the reservation. Esther explains that though she does not know where her grandparents came from on the reservation, or their clans, her experience is one authentic Navajo experience shared by other displaced Navajos and Urban Indians from around Turtle Island. Like Esther, Christy Bieber (Sault Ste. Marie) excitedly shares with me about her trips to go “home” to her reservation where she has never lived in order to learn cultural crafts that have given her a deepened connection to her culture.

The land where one’s home base is located holds a cultural, spiritual, and emotional significance that cannot be easily explained in English. Annabelle Allison was living in Atlanta, Georgia when I interviewed her. She and I had worked together for three years on a curriculum for public health officials planning to engage with Indian Country through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other federal agencies. Annabelle grew up on the reservation in the rural town of Tohatchi, New Mexico. I lived in Atlanta for seven years, and, while there, Annabelle and I had bonded over the experience of living in an urban environment void of an Indigenous presence. Living there caused Annabelle (and myself) to feel at a loss for connection to land and spirit. I was there for school and Annabelle for work. It is a place with a palpable sense of pain. Annabelle tells the following story:

Growing up we had ways that we prayed. For us, you went outside. Your door was always facing East, first of all, so that was your first entry into the Great Morning. So you pray to the east and you were on the ground. You were on dirt. And so, for me, here, although I just moved into a place where I greet the east and I’m very happy about, I’m not on the ground. I’m a couple floors up and its cement on the bottom. For me, I guess there’s this mind block of—what am I giving the cornmeal to? [laughs]. So, I’m not as

apt to pray, although I really want to get back into the practice of it and I am **SO** excited that I found a place where at least my patio doors open to the East.

Vine Deloria, Jr. (Lakota) (2003) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Alderville First Nation) (2014) write about the importance of land to Indigenous peoples and spiritual practices. Many non-Indians may easily overlook the toll of being separated from holy sites on one's land of origin, whereas Christians may be able to find churches most anywhere. For the Navajo, each and every prayer mentions the four sacred mountains, Michael King and Alvin Chee tell me. Michael says that this is how you know where you belong in the world as a Diné person. He also talks about the difficulties of leaving home and not being surrounded by those four mountains that protect Peoples of the Four Corners region as they have done since the beginning of time.

What I love about Annabelle's words is that they also demonstrate the logistical difficulties of upholding land-based traditions in the cityscape. Since Native spiritual practices commonly revolve around specific spaces or places in the natural world, they can be difficult to carry out in foreign or synthetic environments. Considering that seventy one percent of American Indians live in cities, the majority of Native Americans will feel the loss of homeland at some point in their lives. This can contribute to the unhealed and unresolved grief already felt from the accumulated centuries of historical trauma (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004; Gone, 2006; Sotero, 2006; Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012).

The effects of colonialism are grinding and ever-present. Lands continue to be under attack. Consider the words of Jude Killspenty Cruz:

It's kind of hard to escape when you see your Lakota relatives fighting, to this day, for their land and resource rights. Those types of things affect you. Even though I may not live on the Rosebud reservation, or be from there, I see what they're going through with their own economic struggles and still dealing with the repercussions of what happened in the past, it's just not letting up in any way and it's not just the Lakota tribes. You have

Pueblos...they're trying to frack on the Pueblo lands and they're trying to take their water rights. I'm faced with those kinds of things. My kids, if they want to go back to the reservation, they're going to have to deal with these water rights things that some of these Tribal Councils negotiating away. ... It's all connected to how our ancestors set up their lifestyles, their communities and whether we can be connected to that today.

Colonialism divides Indigenous people from languages, traditions, rights to identify and be identified, and dispossesses them of tribal interdependency, trade, lands, and home. Race is in no way the only strategy employed by the colonizers, but it is profoundly connected to the process that creates fractional 'pieces of self' (shrapnel) for the storytellers in the project.

Race may be a relatively a new and imported concept here on Turtle Island, but race and racism continue to be strategically employed through a system maintained by powerful whites to oppress and deny Indigenous livelihoods, treaty rights, and ways of life along with the lives of all People of Color. The imposition of race through the exercise of white supremacy has played out by forcing Indigenous peoples to realize a fractional identity well beyond phenotype, as this chapter exemplifies. Turtle Island was hit with this bomb and Indians and their Nations, communities, and families were sent flying in different directions. Each of the aspects of fractional selves highlighted in this chapter demonstrate unique ways that this bomb has disrupted Turtle Island making the unique political, social, and cultural nature of race in Indian Country that set Indigenous people apart from other People of Color. This also explains why race alone fails to serve its full conceptual utility in describing what would otherwise be racialized experiences. That is, each act of racism experienced by an American Indian has additional political implications regarding land, belonging, and, ultimately, sovereignty. To name a people and employ race-based tactics with the overlay of sovereign and inherent Indigenous rights is to

contribute to genocide (Brayboy, 2005; Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008). With this said, in chapter four I demonstrate the consequences of racism as understood and recalled by storytellers in this research.

#### 4 CHAPTER FOUR- “ARE YOU AN ALCOHOLIC?”

As scholars and storytellers in this project explain, American Indians are not a racial group (Brayboy, 2005; Mann, 2006; Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008). This is not only because Euro-American conceptualizations of race are biological fallacies intentionally forced upon Natives, Africans, and other groups of mostly non-Europeans, but also because political notions of Indigeneity stand apart from the systems regulating most Americans (in the US and elsewhere on the continent), People of Color included, and sovereignty complicates American Indian realities in ways not felt by other racialized groups (Brayboy, 2005; Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008). The legal project to define American Indian as a race, according to Wendy Leo Moore (2008), was primarily an attempt to dispossess the original inhabitants of their claims to land.

It is also the case that tribes were phenotypically diverse even before colonialization of the Americas by Europe (Mann, 2006). If this diversity existed before the now-high rates of intermarriage between Natives and others (mostly whites according to the Census), the question of how to identify a Native based on phenotype is a complicated one (US Census Bureau, 2017). Regardless, as storytellers in this research make clear, Indigenous Americans are subjected to a social system that devalues and oppresses them within all social institutions. This aligns with systemic racism theory as elaborated by Joe Feagin (2006) who writes, “US Institutions have been thoroughly pervaded by enduring racial stereotypes, ideas, images, emotions, proclivities and practices” that uphold a system “created intentionally by [and for] powerful white Americans” (p.12). Each of these facets of systemic racism is well-demonstrated by the stories highlighted in this and the previous chapter (chapter 3). In addition to the application of a

systemic racism lens, though, a larger framework of colonialism and ideological domination must be invoked (Fanon, 1961; Freire, 1968; Essed, 1991; Byrd, 2011). Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) (2011) explains that it is dangerous to conflate colonialism and race because it invisibilizes other mechanisms required for the transit of empire. Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory seems less helpful than systemic racism here because colonialism began before most of what they consider to be "racial projects" were crafted, although American Indians are definitely impacted by focused racial strategies. Through another lens, though, those were just reifications of a larger system of Anglo-European domination put into place through colonialist state-building.

Few today look like the American Indians from the pre-1400s, but participants in this study argue traditional kinship systems and ways of being and belonging were not based on crude race-based understandings of belonging that hinge on phenotype or degree of "blood" or ancestry. Despite all of this, we do have a rough understanding of what it means to look identifiably Native (Weaver, 2015). Socially constructed images have so deeply affected the way this is interpreted, though, that even when faced with a classically-Native phenotype, many people in the US may scratch their heads (Deloria, 1999; Aleiss, 2005; Robidoux, 2006; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015; Weaver, 2015). Without props and material signifiers like braids, beads, feathers, and other symbols, many may fail to picture what that image would even be (Aleiss, 2005; Robidoux, 2006). For these reasons and more, most American Indians are difficult to categorize by phenotype and skin color, including those in this study (Bakken & Branden, 2012; Weaver, 2015). Therefore, they may be easily misclassified as white, Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, or some other group. Each of these experiences is had by at least one of the storytellers in this sample.

Interestingly, because most people from Mexico and Latin America either belong to or descend from American Indian peoples as well, many (if not most) of the Latinx living in the US could be “identifiably Native” based on phenotype. Race, though, is a political and highly fluid concept, and Hispanicity is rarely conflated with Indigeneity in the US popular imagination. That is, “Latinx” and “American Indian” have been operationalized as indefinitely distinct for political and economic purposes. The US Census reflects that from 2000 to 2010, an increase of nearly 300,000 Hispanic people recorded their race as American Indian, a sign that Indigenous consciousness on the continent may be on the rise (US Census Bureau, 2018). I’ve also seen an increase in the awareness of the Indigenous roots of our Latinx populations by Native Americans in the US. When I was at Oceti Sakowin camp at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in September 2016, I remember one of the chiefs addressing a group of Mexica arrivals, recognizing the people of Mexico and Latin America as relatives. Lee Blacksmith says there are a lot of Latinx people in Hardin, Montana. Hardin borders the Crow reservation, and Lee lived there for much of her life. She says, “I felt like they were Indians, honestly.”

The harsh nativism and political aggression toward Latinx people also create damaging consequences for the people Indigenous to the United States. Because identifiably Native Tribal Citizens look a lot like Latinx people (shared ancestry and history), the virulent nativism and racism inflicted on Latinx people affects American Indians who are often assumed to be Latinx outsiders/immigrants. In fact, a lawyer for the Arizona ACLU, James Lyall, reported on behalf of American Indian tribal citizens and other complainants about abuse at Arizona’s checkpoints post-SB1070 (Lyall, 2014). In the report, Lyall writes the following on behalf of one of the clients mentioned in his report:

Mr. Garcia says, “The Reservation has become a police state. It seems like no one can go out in Public without being questioned by Border Patrol agents.” He says Border Patrol



agents do not respect tribal customs or the law, and that abuses of tribal members have become more common because agents “are never held accountable for their actions” (p.9).

This speaks to the shared ancestry, phenotype, and experiences with settler terrorism.

The experiences of tribal citizens at Arizona checkpoints are examples of racial profiling, aggression, and violence. On an interpersonal basis, though, American Indians are assumed to be immigrants which can be thought of as a microaggression. Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino (2007) write about microaggressions experienced by Asian Americans in their daily lives. One of the common microaggressions they name is “alien in one’s own land,” which is when an Asian American is assumed to be a new immigrant from an Asian country rather than a US citizen or someone who was born here (75). It is insulting and nativist, assuming they are less authentically American than whites who are usually assumed to be from the US regardless of where they may originate due to the hegemonic nature of US white supremacy. I argue that to be assumed alien takes on an additional level of psychological violence when the assumed alien is an Indigenous citizen. According to Volpp (2015), this is exactly what US culture and legal history does as well; it casts the “Indigenous as Alien.” It is a reminder of the total social, cultural, political, and social domination of Euro-Americans over the lands and livelihoods of Indigenous Nations, such that whites are thought of as more “Native” with more right to freely exist on this stolen land. In fact, it is hardly micro- at all, rather, it is a blunt continuation of the violent force of settler colonialism.

The overwhelming invisibility of American Indians in media, politics, sports, academics, etc., undoubtedly contributes to these common assumptions and to the outright erasure of Native people and their diversity (Raheja, 2011). As Jude Killspenty Cruz (Ohkay Owingeh, Sicangu Lakota & Turtle Mountain Chippewa) puts it, “we have white channels, Black Channels,

Mexican Channels, and Asian Channels, but you don't see a Native Media network, so we can't actually maintain and take control of our own identities as Native people." Jude is a hip-hop artist who has had to sell records at powwows and face-to-face, so he has a strong awareness of media blackout.

Raheja (2011) refers to this pervasive invisibility as violent in her book *Reservation Reelism*. In this Chapter, I use phrases like identifiably-Native, white-seeming, black-seeming, and other descriptive terms to give the reader a visual frame of reference that is intended to be useful in picturing the storyteller. All are potentially problematic and contentious because it may not always be language readily accessed in many circles or by the storytellers themselves, but it is important to name what we mean when talking about race. The truth is that, regardless of what language I use, racial, ethnic, and other colonialist terms will never be adequate when discussing the experiences of Indigenous citizens, a key point that I reiterate throughout this dissertation.

First, I explore the experiences of those who do look more identifiably Native. There are several in this study. Older participants recall horrific incidents of racism, from systematic racialized torture and abuse in Indian Boarding Schools, to acts of physical violence and hate crimes, memories of forced segregation, and denial of access to resources. In many cases, especially when it comes to the boarding schools, the trauma involves physical and psychological violence. Lakota Harden (Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & Ho-Chunk) shares harrowing stories of the sadistic torture she and her peers endured at the boarding school she attended in South Dakota. She talked of being forced to kneel on grates for hours, to hold her nose on a circle on the chalkboard, and of being thrown from her sleep with mandated early-morning mattress-flipping and glaring fluorescent lights. I heard stories about the sullenness, shame, and grief carried by the parents and grandparents of other of the storytellers, some of

whom wished to not be Indian and who spent a lifetime running from their people and the truth of their origins. In fact, so few are fluent in their tribal languages mostly because of the impacts of these traumas experienced within the institution of education (Adams, 1995; Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005). While the most violent of these racist offenses are less common today, in large part due to the activism of American Indian activist groups like AIM and WARN, our grade schools often do an abysmal job of meaningfully incorporating Indigenous histories and contemporary Native issues in the curriculum (Loewen, 1995; Pewewardy, 2006; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Colleges continue to fail to enroll and retain Indigenous students and expose them to settler-centric curricula and racist school environments that invisibilize the majority of today's Native voices and experiences from across the spectrum of Indigenous diversity (Reyhner, 2006; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010).

The memories Lakota Harden shares are indicative of a well-documented and all-out genocidal assault on Indigenous personhood and nationhood through Indian Boarding Schools (Adams, 1995; Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005). Lucinda Tiger (Creek), ninety-two, experienced the stripping of land and resources from those guaranteed it by treaties, laws and land deeds. Sharon McIndoo (Tlingit & Tsimshian), fifty, remembers having rocks thrown at her and other Native kids as they made their way to school. Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèsah), fifty-one, talks about the dangers of being openly Indian in the south in her parent's and grandparent's generation and of strictly segregated social spaces when she was a child in Hillsborough, North Carolina. Both Vivette's and Virgil Oxendine's parents grew up in the south before the Civil Rights Act was passed. For this project, I want to honor and recognize the centuries of violent racism faced by Native people. Also, I am choosing to focus on the most recent experiences so to understand how race and racism are being experienced through daily interactions in Indian

Country today. I do recognize, however, that the effects of trauma induced by Indian Boarding Schools and all of the manifestations of the American genocide continue to affect Native people vis-à-vis historical trauma (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Poupart, 2003; Meseyton, 2005; Sotero, 2006; Gone, 2009).

Autumn Washington is a 32-year-old mother who lives on the Lummi Indian Reservation in Bellingham, Washington. It is from an experience she had that I named this Chapter. She tells me that she frequently visits Seattle with her family because she is a competition paddler and has to go there for canoe pulls, errands, etc. She recalls one Seattle experience here:

I remember going to Seattle for a race one time. I was playing on the beach with my kids and this white woman came up to me. She was like, "Are you Native?" I said, "ahh, yes I am." Then she goes and says, "So are you an alcoholic? Are you into drugs?" I'm like, "omm, excuse me! No, I am not!" This was really rude. She didn't know me and the first thing that comes out of her mouth is insinuating that I am an alcoholic or a drug addict which really offended me. I didn't respond back in a disrespectful way; [Instead] I politely told her what I do and what I was there for. I was there for a race and I was there with my children. I just couldn't believe what she said in front of my kids.

The drunken Indian is one of the oldest and most enduring blatantly racist stereotypes affecting Native people (Miheuah, 1996; Duran, 1996; Bird, 1999; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). Mainstream America's relationship with Indians has fluctuated between outright loathsome disdain to an infatuation with the idealistic Hollywood stereotype of the Noble savage (Griffiths, 1996; Bird, 1999; Deloria, 1999; Aleiss, 2005).

Other participants have had similar encounters with blatant racism. Ras K'Dee (Dry Creek Pomo) shares the following:

My dad is black African and so that definitely influences my skin tone. I'm pretty tall. I'm big. I have a deep voice. So there have definitely been times throughout my life where I've been discriminated against by teachers, by police, and by people that feel intimidated by my presence.

While deciding to “experiment with Mormonism,” Michael King (San Juan Southern Paiute & Navajo) moved to Richfield, Utah, to attend high school less than ten years ago. Living in this nearly all-white town was difficult for Michael. He was also a teenager and he’d been separated from the family and People he knew. He describes part of this experience here:

[The white Mormons of Richfield] had prejudice against me. When I went to school there, all the white kids would assume I was bad. They would assume that I was a bad person because I was not LDS, I was not Mormon, and I was Native. You know, in their religious beliefs they view us as lesser than. They saw me as a trouble-maker. I was asked if I do drugs, if I steal, if I come from a broken home. These were [the] things that they would ask.

Michael and Autumn are not alone. Tabby Harris (Choctaw) says she has also been randomly asked if she is an alcoholic. Tabby is only twenty-six years old. Once when she was in college, she had gone to hang out with some friends at a local Oklahoma bar and early in the evening she decided that she didn’t want any more drinks. A white man told her that he was surprised she needed to stop because she was supposed to be “a professional drinker.”

Even Milissa Hamley (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), a white-seeming Indian, has experienced this racist assumption. She tells me, “I was traveling with a roommate of my parents for six years. He knows we’re Native—he knows I’m Native—and he’s always making fun of us for being drunken Indians.” This plainly-stated racist sentiment reminds me of how Christy Bieber (Sault Ste. Marie) was called a “Squaw” by her tennis coach with no repercussion in the early 2000s. Such statements are normalized within Euro-American culture.

It is bad enough that Tabby experienced this racist incident in a bar, but what’s worse is that she found similar assumptions being made in less-expected places. She tells me that several non-Indian students that she interacted with at her university assumed she had gone to college for free on the elusive and notorious “Native American scholarship.” Of course, there is nothing wrong with a scholarship, but such ideas are used to reinforce the idea that Native students are

less intelligent and unworthy of admittance based on their own merits. She worried that this suspicion could negate the fact that she made good grades her entire life and had earned scholarships based on merit. At the same University, fellow students, and even her university administration seemed to treat the Native American sorority differently from all the others in obvious and annoying ways, and this bothered Tabby and her sorority sisters. This is likely connected to the toxic and racist narratives that define Natives in educational spaces (Brayboy, 2005; Pewewardy, 2006).

Denise McAuly, who is fifty-six years old, remembers her High School forbidding a Meherrin girl from becoming the homecoming queen because she wasn't white though fortunately, this was some time ago). Sharon McIndoo is just six years younger than Denise, and she remembers getting a C on an assignment when she had all the same answers as her friend, a white-seeming Native who received an A. Examples from the institution of education do not seem rare today, though. When she lived in California for a short time, Jennifer Irving (thirty-six years old) says that she was placed in a special education class simply because her quietness (a behavioral expectation in tribal schools) and, most likely, her race was misread as lack of intelligence. It took a while for the teachers to realize that she did not belong there. Milissa Hamley recalls a traumatic classroom experience here as well:

I had an episode with my teacher. It was the World Cultures class and you're supposed to talk about all different kinds of cultures, right? Well, the only thing he ever said about American Indians was that we have the highest dropout rate and we have the highest drinking rate and we're given all this money from our tribes to succeed but we fail. Being the only Native student and that's what the teacher's saying about you...It's like well...hmmph. So, I went to talk to him about it during my lunch hour. I said, "you know, I really don't think that was..." Well, it was my 14-year old self saying this, "I don't think that was appropriate what you said and you're not explaining things about drinking and dropout rates, and that reservations are some of the most impoverished places in the United States." I ended up getting suspended.

Alvin Chee (Navajo) contemplates the source of these insidious images that string together all these examples, saying, “I don’t like the way we’re portrayed in history or in history books.” It is difficult to address these issues of racism when accurate information is left out or intentionally re-written (Loewen, 1995). Little of what gets considered legitimate truth, according to Alvin, comes from the oral histories kept by tribal nations.

Sometimes, the racist attempts to re-write history unsuspectingly trigger deep intergenerational wounds. In 2017, Washington resident Shawna Gallagher’s (Klamath) eleven-year-old son Blaine came home with an assignment where he was expected to assume the voice of a white colonist and tell the tale of an Indian raid on a white settlement from that perspective (Wilkinson, 2018). Blaine bawled in an interview with a Seattle King 5 reporter as he described what it felt to be asked to complete this (Wilkinson, 2018). His mom was able to push the school to abandon the curriculum, but Blaine was lucky—his mom is a Ph.D. Shawna tells me that she knows that these things usually go unaddressed. Washington State passed a policy (SB5433) in 2015 mandating the “Since Time Immemorial” curriculum in K-12 classrooms. This curriculum prioritizes the teaching of the history of the region’s tribal peoples. A statewide meeting of educators and community members was recently held in 2018 because schools have struggled to comply the teachers themselves are inadequately equipped to teach it and the districts often have scant to no relationships with the tribal communities even though, according to SB5433, schools are required to work with tribes nearest to their district to administer the curriculum (WA OSPI, 2018).

When it comes to higher education, white families of a certain socioeconomic status share with their children resources, powerful social networks, and stories for how to succeed (Johnson, 2006; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). What’s more, legacy scholarships and inside

connections create paved pathways for entry and success into institutions of higher education. If anything, Native families share grief and traumas like those recalled by participants in this study. Lisa M. Poupart (Lac Du Flambeau) (2003) explains the effects of internalized oppression that result from these Indian Boarding Schools. She writes, “in several tribal communities, it is estimated that all adults living within the communities today were either abused or witnessed the abuse of others as children attending the schools” (p. 92). Several others have likewise documented the treacherous history of American Indians in Higher Education (Wright & Tierney, 1991; Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001; Pewewardy, 2002; Brayboy, 2005; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Akee & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Carney, 2017). Institutions of higher learning isolate Native students from their culture and families (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Akee & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

Guillory and Wolverton (2008) report that success rates increase when schools find ways to incorporate family and tradition in the education process. High School graduations are widely and festively celebrated in Indian Country in the way that other groups celebrate marriages, baby showers, and quinceaneras. Graduating high school—surviving the system—is a rite of passage and a testament to victory that must be celebrated. This is not because of a lack of intelligence, ingenuity, and creativity in Indian Country. Instead, it is because of the grinding effects of poverty, systemic racism, cultural hegemony, and overall despair (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Akee & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011). Through dropout, suicide, and assimilation, schools create little deaths, which is why Adams (1995) calls the history of Native schooling “education for extinction.” Every Native who defies this, who comes out alive, who succeeds, should be commended.



Because Tabby Harris grew up and went to college in Oklahoma, the “Indian Territory,” many non-Indians around her had actual experiences with Native people and had been exposed to Natives more frequently than those in certain other parts of the country. Therefore, not all their remarks could be attributed to total (innocent) ignorance. This is what she has to say about those times she experienced or witnessed blatant racism:

People intentionally say things to get you to respond to them. There are different ways they target you; whether it’s spouting things out like “you’re an exception, you get all these [free] things,” or just by the way they treat you. Then there are instances where they’re like, “well, you know, they’re Native. They’re not worth it.” Organizations, too—they’re like, “don’t even bother with them, they don’t have a good retention rate.” There are all different kinds of ways you experience it.

Nearly every participant chuckles when I ask about their interactions with non-Indians. It was an assumed bond, a knowing sign that suggested, ‘you know how it is’. In some cases, random things commonly said to Native people can be hilarious, and other times they can be hurtful and disgusting.

I met Beth Jacobs Hunt (Lumbee) back in 2008 because of an incident in our home state of North Carolina involving blatant anti-Indian racism. This was not the type that warranted a chuckle; it was the insidious, gut-wrenching type. At the time, Beth was a recent law school graduate and was working for a civil rights agency in Raleigh, North Carolina. Bob Dumas, a prominent white radio show host for G105’s “Bob and the Showgram,” went on what Beth calls a “racist tirade” against Lumbee Indians while on the air. One of his interns, a white woman, was marrying a Lumbee man (Robesonian, 2009). Dumas had a lot to say about that. He referred to Lumbee Indians as inbred and claimed he reviewed statistics that proved that all Indians were lazy (Robesonian, 2009). He also asked whether the Lumbee had a wedding tradition wherein all the groom’s friends “get a turn” sleeping with the bride (Indy Voices, 2008). While he is obviously anti-Indian and hostile toward Lumbees, he also remarked that Lumbee women were

extremely hot and even suggested that they were promiscuous, referring to them as “poke-a-ho-nes” (Robesonian, 2009; Indy Voices, 2008). Native women are rarely discussed beyond the tropes of being either alcoholic or sexually exotic (Bird, 1999; Weaver, 2009; Merskin, 2010). Rosalind Chou (2012) argues that mainstream portrayals of Asian American women help to maintain white supremacy but are less likely to be analyzed or discussed than the controlling images of the Black women discussed by scholars like Patricia Hill Collins (Collins, 2005; Chou, 2012). Similarly, the scant images of Native women on Halloween costumes and Disney cartoons perpetuate exotic othering and maintain white supremacy just like the docile yet hypersexual images of Asian women that Chou (2012) describes. As Mueller, Dirks, and Picca (2007) demonstrate, Halloween costumes allow for racist stereotypes to be trivialized and normalized.

Beth was infuriated to learn of the things that Dumas said on the air. She stepped up to organize the protests and Native reaction to this incident. She and others (me included) gathered at the state capital demanding Dumas be fired by the network, among other things. He was suspended for only three days, and the Lumbee tribe quickly settled which disappointed Beth (Robesonian, 2009). She remained infuriated. When I spoke at the protest that Beth organized, I saw white supremacists and Bob and the Showgram fans circling in cars with anti-Indian messages spray-painted on the sides as they shouted racist insults from the windows. It was scary. Simultaneously, it was also a beautiful gathering of Indigenous community members (mostly women) who united across tribal-ethnic lines to stand against hate and racism. Many prepared elegant speeches about fighting for a better future for Native kids.

Beth and I discussed this event as I interviewed her for this project. She recalls the reactions from people across the state and region as mostly being dismissive and, in some cases, outwardly racist. Reactions from “Bob and the Showgram” fans and G105 listeners, local news

observers, and especially online commenters revealed anti-Lumbee and anti-Indian sentiments raged across the state. In fact, Beth says she cringes any time there is an article discussing Lumbee Indians online because the comments are always so insidious and racist that they are difficult to stomach. They are not unlike the things Dumas casually and laughingly stated while on air.

Beth reminds me in this interview of something that she had also said to me back in 2008—if these comments had been about a more visible group, like Black Americans or the disabled, people would not be so quick to dismiss the statements as benign humor. When it comes to Native people, such vicious comments are commonly and easily dismissed, and she argues that it is safe and acceptable to be racist toward American Indians in the US. This is an argument that rings true given the extent to which US football fans are willing to defend the Redskins as the National Football Team’s mascot, and when the typical image of a Native person in the media has remained relatively unchanged since the birth of Western films in the early 1900s (Leuthold, 1995; Bird, 1999; Deloria, 1999; Aleiss, 2005; Robidoux, 2006).

What does stand out somewhat about the segment on the radio show is that the racism was so confidently stated in public. While we have seen an uptick in whites expressing racism openly since the election of the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States in 2016, Dumas’ 2009 was a less common occurrence then. Most people in the US prefer to maintain the façade of colorblindness and instead express their racism in passive and cloaked ways (Bonilla-Silva, 2009). The need to appear colorblind seems to matter less in towns bordering Indian reservations and communities (or in areas where Natives are mostly invisible like the southeast). Jennifer Irving, Alvin Chee, and Jude Killsplenty Cruz all mention “border towns” as being particularly hazardous. Jude, thirty-eight years old, has visited family on the reservation and has this to say:

When I'm on the reservation in South Dakota, the non-Natives near those reservations tend to distinguish you. They'll call you a "prairie nigger," you know what I mean? They'll make you feel unwelcome in their stores if you go to an all-white store and things like that.

Natives have learned to brace for the worse and to be on guard in these places. Jennifer Irving (Oglala Lakota) tells a story that demonstrates how she and her mom were on guard one day when the unexpected happened in a border town—

It still happens. Just yesterday my sister-in-law had my niece and a friend of my niece's, and they're young, they're like twelve or thirteen. They had a person complain about the girls acting up and said that they weren't behaving in the store and all of this stuff. The clerk actually defended my nieces and was like, "no, that's not true, I did not see them act the way that you're talking about." The manager of the store actually defended...us! You know, Indian people! I was like, "well, that was different." We all remarked about it last night at the birthday party that we had for one of our medicine people. My niece said that she had said to herself, "oh my god, we're gonna totally get it," but that the clerk defended them and even said to the other person, "I think you need to apologize to them or we're going to have to ask you to leave." I was just blown away. I live in a border town. A lot of Indians live in the border towns because there's a lack of housing on the rez.

This story of racial profiling could've gone much differently, and Jennifer knows that. She seems optimistic about change, though. She tells me that her mom came to her in excitement the other day saying, "I took my car to get the oil changed in Chadron and the guy changing my oil was Indian!" Chadron, Nebraska is one of the border towns where Indians were not likely to be hired, she says. The fact that these two examples still seem novel and surprising, though, tells us something about the continued threat of racist incident that Indians face, especially in certain places. Both Alvin and Virgil Oxendine (Lumbee) mention places they simply will not trek, though. For Virgil, it's Laurinburg, North Carolina.

Not all racial profiling has consequences as high as being accused of bad behavior in a place of business or being pulled over by the police. Esther Lucero and John Scott Richardson, both in their forties, were profiled when they were in school. They were both asked to play

stereotypical Native roles in school plays. John was asked to be the Indian around Thanksgiving time, and Esther remembers being asked to play an Indian girl in a problematic school play when she was in elementary school, and she had innocently gone along. Her mom reacted strongly, giving her a strong warning about the exploits of white people and the school system. Each of the roles they were asked to play contributed to the monolithic portrayals common in US culture. These same images feed the types of things that Autumn, Tabby, Beth, and Jude describe. Having one's entire Nation referred to as lazy or promiscuous, or being called a prairie nigger, is certainly blatantly racist and offensive.

American Indians are not the only victims of these single-handed monolithic portrayals as nearly any group excluded from whiteness has faced toxic and consequential stereotypes. In fact, we see this more and more with people from Middle Eastern and Latin American countries (as is evidenced by Donald Trump's comments surrounding the travel ban and the proposed wall between the US and Mexico). Often, though, blatant racism can result from sheer ignorance, especially in the vacuum of accurate information about American Indians. As a teenager, Lee Blacksmith (Crow) traveled from her reservation in rural Montana to a youth camp in urban Virginia. While there, (mostly) white peers would ask her questions that she knew to be inappropriate, especially for the early-2000s. These were questions like, "do you live in a teepee?" This was her first time away from the area surrounding her reservation and she found the assumptions people made about Indians to be rude and downright idiotic. In general, she also found people to be less friendly and less likely to collaborate with one another than the people she knew on the rez, and she pointed out that they were the ones with negative stereotypes about her people, not the reverse.

The teepee question and others like it come up a lot across nearly all participants in this research, and most choose to laugh it off or not take it seriously. Jude Killsplenty Cruz finds it impossible to laugh off the inappropriate use of headdresses by non-Indians, especially in the music industry. He considers the disrespect of spiritual and ceremonial symbols to be “crossing the line.” He elaborates, saying, “it’s supposed to represent valor and honor amongst your people and this person is acting dishonorably wearing it, so it affects me. I have to explain that to my kids and still teach them about its sacredness.” The underlying truth of all of it, the total erasure of the real lives of Indigenous people from the mainstream US consciousness, is less than humorous regardless of the intention of the offender.

Even more frequent for these storytellers are incidents involving direct confrontation, wherein non-Indians demandingly assert their self-proclaimed right to know exactly what race or ethnicity they are. John Scott Richardson (Haliwa Saponi & Tuscarora) recalls a fairly recent experience with a white man:

I had a guy come up to me one time just totally out the blue. We were at a thing in downtown Raleigh. He was coming [toward us] and he saw me and my buddy. He’s Apache, so he looks different, too; he was raised in Nevada, but we both had our hair long and so forth and we had on cowboy hats. We were just out there having a good time...and that guy was comin’—I could see him probably a half block away. I start laughing way before he got there. He walked up to me and I knew what he wanted. I knew what he wanted to ask. For some reason, he just stumbled. I don’t know what happened to him—he just said, “w- w- what are you?” Just out the blue! I just laughed. “What’s funny?” he asks. I said, “Well, I don’t know.” I looked at Clark (his Apache friend) and I said, “Are you a human being? Are you a man? Do you stand on two feet?” I said, “That’s what I am.”

John’s words capture something important. He knew what this man wanted. He knew that the man’s eyes had filled with wonder and hope that he had encountered two real Indians. John also points out the absurdity and offensiveness of being asked a question such as “what are you?”

The curiosity with which American Indians and other brown-skinned people get approached with regards to their racial identities is unnerving, and a constant reminder of the expansiveness of white privilege on an occupied brown continent. It is the sort of othering that Said (1978) refers to as orientalism, which is a dehumanizing process of gazing that simultaneously constructs and normalizes stark ideological difference between the Anglo beholder and the colonial subject. Just as John and his friend Clark were aggressively approached and asked about their racial identities, Tabby Harris recalls another experience she had at a bar near her college. She shares the following:

I was in a bar one time and it was a weird situation. I was there with friends and this guy, obviously drunk, comes up to me. He's a white guy and he was cowboy-ish, you know, and so he said, "it's my birthday, will you dance with me?" I said, "no, thank you, but happy birthday." He then made this huge scene. "But it's my birthday!! Dance with me!! You're Indian!!" he says. I'm like, "no I'm not, don't call me [that]. I don't like to be called Indian." He was like "well, what are you?!" He started to guess. "Are you Cherokee?" I said, "No, I'm not." "Are you Chickasaw?" he asks. "No, I'm not." "Are you Pawnee?" I thought he was going to stop. "No, I'm not." I finally turned to him. I said, "I am Choctaw. I am Cherokee. I am Coushatta. I'm all three of them." Then he starts yelling out my tribes and stuff.

While the man who'd approached John had demanded to know his race, the man who approached Tabby demanded more. He demanded information, attention, and most likely, pleasure. He seemed to insinuate that a Native woman should want to give him what he wanted and that by being a white man he had the right to know things about her or to have her attention and affection. There is a connection here that goes back to the racist comments Bob Dumas made on his radio show that all Indian women are objects of sexual pleasure.

Just as Lee Blacksmith had attributed some of her camp peers' racism to cultural difference (whites she believed to be more "cutthroat" and competitive than the Crow people she knew from the rez), Hawi Hall (St. Regis Mohawk & Cherokee) finds the cultural differences between the reservation and urban areas to be jarring. She grew up on the Onondaga Reservation

in upstate New York but moved to Greensboro, North Carolina for a couple of years as a child. While living there, she offered a jingle dress dance for show-and-tell for her entirely non-Native 4<sup>th</sup> grade class just to have them laugh at her as she performed. These dances are treated with reverence and respect on the rez; they are spiritual and sacred, she tells me. “It didn’t make sense to me why they would think it was funny,” she says. Lee describes a related situation where she had to educate a non-Native. She elaborates,

I told her that we did beading, and she thought it was like something that went really fast, and so I had to show her like how fast it really goes. During that, she started asking me about the dancing. She’s the one that actually tried to replicate powwow dancing and it was just really weird. After she tried to do that, I told her she was ignorant, and I told her why it was, too. I just took her aside and told her that wasn’t very respectful and she kind of already knew, honestly. I think it was like a break in her, I don’t even know how to explain it...it’s like she just didn’t think about it first, almost.

Most every Native person can recall seeing open and offensive displays of ignorance that belittle and insult spiritual and cultural practices or harsh empirical realities. If not in their own personal experiences, they see it all the time with Native mascots.

Racial stereotyping, microaggressions, and even blatant acts of racism are regularly experienced by today’s American Indians and the era of racialization did not cease after the colonial era. Systemic racism is just as dynamic for Natives (even Urban Indians) as for other groups more easily defined by the colorline. This is fueled by a combination of pervasive controlling images and a stark invisibility and erasure of accurate depictions of Indigenous lives and experiences. Additionally, the entitlement guaranteed to whites in a white supremacist settler state has meant that Indigenous people and their resources are constantly possessed and consumed, even at the level of the self. Each of the messages in these stories conveys subtle suggestions made to Native people about who really belongs on this land and about the value of persons based on race, culture, and phenotype. They range from seemingly humorous and benign



to insidious and blatant, but, regardless of the delivery, they all achieve the same objective—denial of Indigenous Nationhood.

#### 4.1 “Was that Really Racism?”

Several of this project’s storytellers, whether from reservations or rural Native communities, recall having experiences with glaring forms of racism like the examples in the previous section, but most perceive blatant racism to be on the decline.<sup>31</sup> Similar to the Asians and Latinx in O’Brien’s study of the racial middle, some of the storytellers here tend to minimize racism and its impacts, which she believes to originate from the impacts of colorblind racism on society. For example, Alvin Chee and Virgil Oxendine say that they feel that racism is something that they can only reasonably argue that their parents or grandparents faced. Denise McAuly and O’Tika Jones (both Meherrin) both discuss racism as something that is up to interpretation and they argue that positivity can be the solution. They both seem to prefer rationalizing and not assuming racist intent. O’Tika says she pauses when she has these experiences and says to herself, “was that really racism or was it something else?” This causes her to dismiss being stared at a little too long when she introduces herself as Native American, or even more so when she dances in her regalia at powwows. It does not appear to be generational, either, because there are nearly two decades between she and Denise. In other areas, though, Denise and her niece Belinda recall explicitly racist incidents that they’ve experienced in North Carolina schools.

I find a similar hesitancy to attribute racism when talking with Lucinda Tiger. As a devoutly religious woman, she seems to prefer positivity as well. Interestingly, she recalls

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<sup>31</sup> A caveat here is that they tend to believe this is the case only when they are assumed to be Native, not when/if they are assumed to be Latinx

experiences with glaring systemic racism (which she does not describe as such) but also says that people have been mostly good to her, and she does not believe she has experienced racism. She does discuss difficulties she and other Native students encountered in the white school system, though. She worked for the school system for years, engaging Native youth who needed a cultural liaison because of frequent cultural misunderstandings and difficulties navigating experiences with white teachers and a Western curriculum. Lucinda tells me that, while people are mostly good to her, she prefers to be around Indian people because it is much less difficult. For example, she prefers the safety of Native Christian worship spaces. She also knows that local whites have wild misconceptions about local Indians. She says, “they think [that] the Creeks get money all the time, but we don’t get money from the federal government or anything. When they talk to you they’ll say something like, ‘Y’all got a lot of money’, or something like that, but we don’t.” Lucinda does not want to talk much about events that caused her to know what the locals think of Natives. Jude Killspenty Cruz says he hears the same kinds of things Lucinda does. Non-Indians are “quick to talk about greedy Natives with their casino money” but “have no trouble with the Redskins,” he says. Jude, however, is less forgiving.

Lucinda describes structural and institutional racism employed by the federal and state governments to swindle the Creeks out of their lands and resources, even though she may not use the term ‘racism’ to describe it. She is unhappy about how little land Creek people have today. In the following dialogue, I had asked her what Creek enrollment meant to her. She describes the harsh realities of state-sanctioned terror by the BIA, actions that proved devastating to her tribe, a strong example of structural racism:

Lucinda: They gave the Creeks land, 120 acres a piece, or 160. Some of them got 120 and some of them got 160 acres. They promised to give their children land when they had children, but they didn’t do that. They didn’t fulfill what they said.

Marshall: So that enrollment doesn't mean what it used to?

Lucinda: Not really because a lot of these Creek Indians that I know sold their land because they needed money. They had to go through the BIA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and when they did that, I think that they [the BIA] already know who was going to buy it—it was their friends. A lot of Creeks lost their lands like that. Some didn't sell, and they put taxes on them and a lot of them didn't pay it and lost their land like that.

Lucinda astutely describes why any discussions of systemic racism involving Native people must also account for the deliberate intent to dispossess Native people and Nations of their lands, precisely the thing that Moore (2008) explains race is used for in regard to Indigenous Americans. Jude Killspenty Cruz shares a related observation that further highlights its systemic nature:

We have to maintain our traditional ways and values in order to succeed in life in general... on a universal scale. We have to be able to maintain that kind of perspective but this white society is so prevalent. It doesn't mean that we have to stay away from it. It could mean that we could use it to our advantage, and I think the more that we begin to see that and use it to our advantage with our own philosophies at our core value system, the more we'll be able to succeed. The hard part is that it seems like the government really doesn't want us to do that because, every time we've done that they've stopped us and somehow. They tried to limit us to a reservation and they said "you can only hunt within these grounds" and, "you can only use this much cattle to do this," and as soon as we started thriving in it they cut the regulation again to say "now you have to do it with this much money," or "wait, you're making too much money now so we're gonna have to tax you even though we said we'd never tax you on this resource," or, "we're going to have to cap that resource because we need it for security reasons" rather than us making money off of it. Maybe I'm a conspiracy theorist but I mean it's, to me it's obvious and it's blatant.

At every conceivable point, the white settler government has exploited Indigenous lands and livelihoods, the spoils of white supremacist capitalism. Jude calls himself a conspiracy theorist, but the empirical evidence is called US history.

Because Lucinda is openly critical of this type of State-based oppression, I'm led to believe that she interprets racism as an interpersonal phenomenon—a common misconception symptomatic of the psychology of oppression (Bonilla-Silva, 2009). In fact, the examples shared

by both Lucinda and Jude could easily be overlooked without an analysis of systemic racism which few get in schools. Lucinda also explains that the reason she didn't experience too much racism in her life is that, as an adult, she always places herself in majority-Indian settings whenever possible. I find this to be a powerful statement, and it lets me know that she is aware of the toll and exhaustion of racism, even if subconsciously. This declaration can be paired with the fact that she attended an all-white grade school and experienced difficulties but says most of that had to do with the language barrier (she says she did not speak English well). Her personal preferences are, without a doubt, influenced by those experiences. Based on her reaction to questions about racism, I also believe she considers to it a generally impolite thing to discuss, which a common thought process in a society that prefers colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2009).

Similarly, Alvin Chee shares stories that recount experiences with racial bias, but he hesitates to definitively define it as such. Like O'Tika and Lucinda, he tends to think of racism as not only interpersonal but flagrant or overt. Scholars have noted the shift from blatant and personal racism to coded, colorblind, or more "polite" forms (Eliasoph, 1999; Wright, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Sue, et al., 2007). Additionally, it has been observed by scholars that systemic and institutionalized manifestations of racism are largely invisible to many in the US (Winant, 1998; Vitalis, 2000; Feagin, 2006; Sue, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2012). Alvin is aware, though, of the importance of being Native at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, a predominately white campus. While there, he interacted with non-Native students. They asked him problematic questions about Indian casinos, poverty, homelessness, and alcoholism, as if that was all they knew about Indians. He recalls one dialogue with a white student here:

White Student: "I've been to Gallup."

Alvin: "Oh, yeah? That's where my family shops for food and then they drive back an hour."

Student: "Yeah, we helped some people there. They were asking for money at a grocery store."

Alvin then processes this interaction. He says:

I know people ask for money and its really just the alcoholics and homeless Natives who are there who do that in Gallup. Then it hit me—oh shoot! I hope they don't see me as being someone who comes from a family like that, or who see me like that.

His suspicion is that they do. He shares his approach to mitigating some of these racist assumptions made by his peers came to him as advice from his mom:

My mom is the wisest person I know. She said, "Son, that's why I tell you to dress nice and look nice ... You're going to meet people, the most ignorant people. There are people you're gonna meet in college who will walk out of their bedroom and go to class wearing sweatshirts and sweatpants, or shorts, but you, you can't do that. You can't walk out of your bedroom looking like you just out of bed. Son, that's why you need to wake up early. You pray to the East. Then, you need to get ready. Be presentable. As much as you want to be an individual, son, as much as you try, they will always see you differently. When you walk across the street or if you walk across the campus, there's always gonna be someone there who's gonna say ... they won't say, oh look, there goes Alvin walking in pajamas. They're gonna say, Oh, look! There goes that Indian kid. He's wearing pajamas today. I wonder if all Indians are like that? Alvin, you don't have the privilege of being that individual. You're representing yourself, you're representing your family, you're representing your tribe. I'm sorry to say you're representing Native American people. As much as you don't want to, you are. You know, that's how I was raised. Look presentable. Look good because when people start knowing that you're Native American, they're gonna start assuming things. They're gonna assume that's [what] all Native Americans are. That's what they do and that's how they dress.

This sounds a lot like what Ta-Nehisi Coates has referred to as "the talk" that Black parents have with their kids. In fact, his 2015 book, *Between the World and Me* is a letter to his teenage son not unlike the premise of Alvin's mother's advice. Alvin may have felt this unfair burden of representation and faced the implicit assumption that he was somehow like those homeless and alcoholic Navajos in Gallup, but he hesitates to identify it as racism because he tells me that it is probably nothing like that faced by his parents and grandparents in an earlier time. While this may be categorically true, the result is nearly identical.

Beth Jacobs Hunt's college experience is strikingly similar to Alvin's. She frequently faced the burden of representation, especially in law school where she was one of the only Native students. She didn't necessarily attribute this experience to racism as she had done when discussing the actions of the racist talk show host, but she tells me that these incidents "smack of embarrassment."

The Lumbee have a very distinct way of talking. A North Carolinian can easily identify a Lumbee most of the time because this speech pattern is as identifiable as rez-English is for the Great Plains or southwestern tribes. Beth is fluent in this Lumbee dialect. She remembers how classmates and peers would point out her Lumbee English, and some would ask, "why do Y'all talk like that?" College was her first time away from the comfort and familiarity of Lumbee territory and being made to feel different was not always comfortable. She also remembers feeling like she had to be the token voice to represent Natives any time Indigenous issues came up in the classroom. While she has pride in both her Lumbee English and in being Native American, it can be emotionally taxing to feel obligated to have to speak on behalf of her people all the time—especially when she runs the risk of being dismissed as ignorant because of her pronounced Lumbee accent. She tells me that back in college and even now, she takes the role of educating others seriously, even though she may be unfairly placed in that role at times. Like Alvin, she knows that her behavior will be scrutinized in ways whites do not have to consider.

At forty-nine years old, Virgil Oxendine struggles to identify implicit racism for the same reason as Alvin, who is only twenty-six. Virgil says that his parents grew up when Jim Crow segregation was still enforced in his home state of North Carolina. His parents recall having to sit in the balcony of a local theater because People of Color were relegated to that space. Alvin and Virgil both recount one thing though—there are places that they do not go, even today. Alvin

mentions the presence of sundown towns (places that People of Color don't go after sundown) all around the borders of his reservation, and Virgil names the sundown town of Laurinburg, NC as a place that he does not venture. They are aware that the possibility of violent racist incident still lurks beneath the surface, but they feel fortunate to have avoided it.

Like Lucinda, Virgil credits the fact that he spends most of his time in majority-Lumbee spaces for this good fortune avoiding hostility. Virgil is affected by racism in the media, though. He feels that inaccurate portrayals of Native people drive offensive behavior and creates misunderstanding. He specifically mentions mascots and Halloween costumes. Alvin alludes to a preference for majority-Native settings, and the company of People of Color, as well. Consider the following:

It's really hard for me to connect with a white person, especially when having to talk about my culture. When I talk to a white person they bring up, "oh, what's your ethnicity?" or "where are you from?" "Arizona," I say. "Oh yeah, what part?" they ask. "Northern Arizona." "Like near Flagstaff?" "Like 2 hours North." "Ohhh, so on the Navajo reservation...?" ...that's if they know their geography. I'll be like "Yeah." Next, they ask, "So, you're native?" "Yeah." "Oh! I thought so!" It's like a game and that's always how it starts. After that, it's more focused on me and having to tell them stories about how I grew up or whether I miss home...that type of thing

...

But for any other race...I mean, I get along with a lot of People of Color because that's not what they talk about first. They ask about where I'm from and I'll say "Arizona." They're like, "Oh, is it hot there?" It's like, "Oh yeah, sometimes during the summer" I'll say, "but during the wintertime it's wonderful." They're like, "oh, I'm from..." wherever and so, say like "Louisiana." Then it's like, "Oh, I've been to New Orleans!" "You have?! Did you like it?" I'm like, "Well, Bourbon street's trouble, but yeah, I love it!" You know, that's how we connect.

...

I open easier towards People of Color rather than the Euro-American people, you know, because I don't like focusing on myself, and in Navajo, you're not supposed to. You're supposed to be humble and not talk about yourself. You're supposed to greet people and find a connection where you can get along together.

He goes on to explain that it is even easier to talk to other Natives. He says:

For Natives, we connect around food and it's completely different. We Natives automatically just start making fun of each other from the get-go. "Oh, you're Navajo?"

Pshh- You guys are taking over!" It's like, "Hell yeah we're taking over, you'd better watch out!" Then they're like, "Ok, but we make the best frybread." I say, "Oh please, come over to my house, I'll make you the best frybread you ever had." It's just different, you know, they're not focused on me or getting information from me. We just find something in common... that's what I've found.

Ease and comfort are important, and they communicate a message about power and privilege in US society. Crystal Rizzo goes even further, telling me that she has found whites to be much more likely to be skeptical of her Nativeness than other Natives or People of Color. I suspect that, though they do not elaborate as much on their preferences, Lucinda and Virgil feel as Alvin does when it comes to these interactions. The demands by whites to gain information is woven throughout the stories shared in the previous section, as well.

While O'Brien's (2008) "racial middle" experiences are somewhat similar, these Indigenous storytellers do not seem to state any conditional preference for the company of whites, a phenomenon she commonly finds with Asians and Latinx Americans (pp. 40-53). This could be because many Asian and Latinx people are close to their immigrant histories and may face added pressure to appear assimilated and therefore, less foreign. That is, to appear "too Asian" or "too Latino" means being "less American" (p. 40). While American Indians have also been forced to assimilate, Native identities are perhaps less contrary to "Americanness" and may trigger less nativist backlash. It could also be because white racism is more pronounced in the lives of these Indigenous storytellers than for O'Brien's respondents, some of whom suggest that it is better to be Asian or Latinx than Black; hence, her participants commonly avoided grouping themselves with Blacks (pp. 61-94). These Indigenous storytellers do not make any such claims about Nativeness nor do they avoid grouping themselves with other People of Color (at least not the people in this sample), even though they do admit that anti-Blackness and nativism are features of American Indian communities.



Whether racism is self-attributed within the stories and memories shared here or not, its many forms are woven throughout these narratives. In addition to contributing to fractional identities, they also convey a certain discomfort that comes with navigating public spaces, especially where non-Indians are present. Even when they don't blame racism, the storytellers' preference for the comfort of Indian-majority spaces is a profound statement about psychological and perhaps even physical safety. I find it important to state here that no-one shared with me any experiences where racism led to sexual violence or exploitation. While these are thought to be relatively common experiences among Native people, it is likely that conducting most of these interviews via video conferencing made it less intimate and therefore it may not have felt safe or appropriate to share something of that nature (I also didn't ask about that, specifically). Lee Blacksmith did share one story that helps to see how the racist imagery perpetuated by this society contributes to the over-sexualization of Native women, though. Consider her words:

One time that I feel I especially need to educate people is during Halloween. You see these girls that walking around in slutty little "Native" dresses and you're just like, "what are you doing?!" Once I educated myself about it, I think then it started getting more serious to me, especially when you consider how many people on the reservation... not only on our reservation but other reservations are Indian women that are being abused every day. To add to that, Indian women are so hyper-sexualized that everybody just assumes that that's how we are...that we dress like that all the time because that's how the media shows us. In all reality, Crow women would never ever even think about going on my rez wearing anything that was above the knee. I hate to say it like that.

The racist radio show communicates some of the same toxic messages. Because participants were more or less silent on this topic, I implore the reader to pause and take a moment to reflect on the portrayals of Indian women they've seen in their lifetimes, and to say a prayer for the thousands of missing and murdered Native women<sup>32</sup> who've likely been made victims of trafficking and to the many who continue to live in silence in their homes and communities.

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<sup>32</sup> #MMIW

## 4.2 “It’s in the Eyes”

The tendency to essentialize race, attributing supposedly “natural” negative characteristics to People of Color and positive ones to whites, is a commonplace feature of US racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Sometimes, the essentialized characteristics can feel somewhat positive or non-racist on the surface but still serve to reinforce coded racist ideas that are ultimately damaging (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Several storytellers in this study (all women) report experiences where they’ve been treated as exotic, mystical, or treasured because of their Nativeness. These experiences could fit in either of the two previous sections, as some identify this as racist while others simply see it as just another odd feature of US culture. Because it was such a common occurrence, and because it seems uniquely gendered, I discuss it here in its own section. It certainly contributes to the idea that race is innate and helps reinforce toxic stereotypes that actual Native people do not always measure up well against, such as the Disney Pocahontas cartoon version of Indian connectedness to Nature, spirit, or even magic (Bird, 1999; Deloria, 1999; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015).<sup>33</sup> While the idea that a Native American has exclusive access to wisdom or the world of dream and spirit may seem like a compliment, it means that when those seduced by this image encounter actual Native people in real life, they may pity them for falling short of this ideal, or inappropriately approach them with the intent of commodifying and consuming their culture (which can lead to cultural misappropriation, at minimum) (Gere, 2005; Aleiss, 2005). Attribution of seemingly-positive stereotypes has negative psychological consequences on other groups as well, as Cheryan & Bodenhausen (2000) point out as they discuss lags in the performance of Asian

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<sup>33</sup> Consider the Pocahontas theme song “Colors of the Wind.”

American students traced to stereotypical assumptions that Asian Americans are inherently good at math (stereotype threat).

Supposedly positive attributions sometimes come in strange places for these storytellers. O'Tika Jones is Black-seeming, and she identified as Black alone for most of her life (now she prefers to identify as a multiracial Meherrin or Black *and* Meherrin). She once told a white coworker that she would be out for part of the day for a meeting. The woman responded by asking what the meeting was for. O'Tika explained that it was a Meherrin Tribal meeting. The woman went on to say something that had O'Tika, Denise, Belinda, myself, and even Hoang (my husband who was serving as the cameraman) laughing; she said, "Oh, well I guess I can tell a little bit by your eyes."

This strange and seemingly-benign statement said to O'Tika by a white coworker sounds funny but these statements and the orientalist and essentialist sentiments behind them are messages that Indigenous people are regularly subjected to (Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg 2015). Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) shares a story almost identical to O'Tika's. She tells me:

I have freckles and my last name's Norwood and people always thought that I was Irish or some kind of European. The freckles come from my Native side—my grandfather has freckles. It's just what we look like (she laughs). My mom is covered in them, too. It's funny. People would say, "Oh, you don't look Native, but I could see it in your eyes that you're different." I get that still to this day when I tell people that I'm Native. They say, "I knew I saw something different, it's in your eyes," or "it's in your bone structure." It's like UGGHHH.

The idea that one can "see" Indianness in ways that transcend logic and genetic empiricism is common, and I believe it to be based on the Hollywood idea that Indians have a spiritual presence that can be sensed and felt beyond logic, celebrated at boy scout camps and featured in popular media all over the US (Deloria, 1999; Bird, 1999; Aleiss, 2005; Raheja, 2011). Hawi

Hall finds that this type of thinking flavored many of her encounters with peers in college in the early 2000s, and she aptly refers to it as “exotic intriguement,” a conceptualization that aligns well with the work of Said (1978). Interestingly, she experiences this mostly through interactions with non-Native People of Color and finds that whites seem more likely to instead dismiss her Native identity or be more blatant with their racist insults.

Christy Bieber is also bothered by this seemingly positive attribution because it does not feel normal or warranted. She explains, “once they find out [you are Native] they start saying how beautiful of a person you are and different things like that—it’s just kind of weird.” This not only invokes an uncomfortable fascination but also contributes to the exotic but endangered Indian trope that so much of our mainstream culture seems to normalize (Bird, 1996; Pewewardy, 2006; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). This disappearing Indian is one that race scholars unknowingly contribute to. Encountering Natives undoubtedly triggers white guilt and the image of the Noble Savage who is mystical but sure to perish (Bordewich, 1997). In interpersonal interactions like those experienced by O’Tika and Hawi, it can be awkward and uncomfortable at the least, alienating and offensive at worst. According to Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche & Kiowa) (2006), this can be especially damaging when it occurs in the classroom where Natives are out-numbered and Native instructors are few and far between. What may be presented as a fun activity could erase a Native student’s reality.

Sharon McIndoo has lived on the Alaska sea islands around Sitka for nearly all her fifty years. She remembers when non-Indians did not care about Natives and even treated them with hostility. She and the other Native kids used to have rocks thrown at them on their way to school. In her adult years, she noticed a real shift where non-Natives moved to a place of not only acceptance by whites, but outright fascination as some of the others similarly suggest. She was

once a resident artist at the Sitka Cultural Center. While doing a demonstration, she had a group of women come up to her that started commenting on her glowing skin and beautiful hair. They immediately started to touch her face and stroke her hair.<sup>34</sup> Sharon found this very strange and unnerving. She admittedly prefers this over the threat of physical violence that she felt as a child, though, and even finds space to laugh about the strangeness of this encounter. In the end, both communicate the same message, that racial difference is innate.

There was often a lot of laughter when discussing these strange encounters with each storyteller who brought it up. Indian humor is a tested way that Native people remain resilient through the ever-evolving sociopolitical landscape of US-Native relations, which is far more overwhelming than funny (Deloria, 1969). It would be hard to find a moment during these interviews that I laugh more than when Esther Lucero (Navajo & Latina) discusses this exact phenomenon of exotic intrigue. She explains that, in the San Francisco Bay, the largely progressive social justice culture contributes to (rather than impedes) this phenomenon. According to Esther, white guilt creates a situation where white people feel that supporting all things Indian is a way to demonstrate their progressive alignment and allyship. She tells me about a common joke told among Natives in the area:

We get this romanticized version of what it means to be Indigenous...I don't know, it's this shamanistic kind of perspective...like you must have some kind of holiness or something—it's really strange. We joke around here that you can put some pigeon poop on a rock and sell it, you know, just say it's some sort of Native medicine or something.

Again, the thought behind the exotic attribution may not make rational sense, especially in progressive social justice circles where most know that race is socially constructed. Yet, the familiarity of this statement is something that likely brings forth a knowing chuckle from most

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<sup>34</sup> Touching someone's hair can be a serious offense in Indian Country because of the significance placed on hair in many Native traditions

any Native who reads it. In fact, the cosmetics retailer Sephora was recently slammed for selling “witch starter kits” that had crystals and white sage in them, something Adrienne Keene sees as yet another recent example of corporate cultural co-optation (Keene, 2018). It also reifies the toxic stereotypes Hawi, Claire, and Sharon have been subjected to.

Hawi admits that the exotic intrigue did cause some friends and acquaintances to feel drawn to her. In her case, this was especially true for her African American friends in college. But as a Native with a medium-to-light complexion, her physical features can positively or negatively affect her. While celebrated as exotic and Native for some, she also seems to fail to embody certain other aspects of the stereotypes for others. She explains:

I remember when I was in college and people would say the ignorant comments you get about being Native—they’d say, “I thought that Natives had darker skin,” or “I thought your cheekbones would be a little higher,” or “I didn’t know that Natives had freckles.” You know, those kinds of really stupid comments.

Not only is Hawi’s ethnicity being essentialized here, she is also being unfairly compared to standards that may or may not be real. As Native women, Both Hawi and Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) were simultaneously exoticized and judged for not being Native enough, based on their physiological features (Nagel, 1994; Merskin, 2010). Interestingly, both Claire and Hawi seem to be judged for having freckles, which apparently don’t commonly get read as a Native feature.

Lakota Harden also brings up another important consequence of this phenomenon that happens among Natives themselves. “Everyone wants to talk about the sexy stuff, the pretty stuff, the leather and feathers part of Native culture,” she says, but “nobody wants to talk about ... the hauntingness of it, of carrying these generations.” Lakota points out that these ideas affect not just non-Natives conceptualizations of what it means to be Native, but Native self-concepts as well. This is discussed both Deloria (1999) and Leavitt et al. (2015). Deloria (1999) explains,

these portrayals of authenticity provide Indians with scripts as well, and you end up with “Native people playing Indians” (98). For Lakota, these scripts not only threaten Native traditions but can also harm those who are connected to those traditions, their origins, and their histories from being asked to speak on them because the platform is offered to those perceived to have less trauma. She says that Native and non-Native groups seem to prefer the Natives who will do the song and dance (which she calls “medicine shows”) rather than those who talk about the truth. The exotic Native is far more seductive than the traumatized Native.

Crystal Rizzo was adopted by a white family in Alabama and somehow slipped through the cracks of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) even though she was born in 1986. Her adoptive family was good to her, she says, and well-intentioned. These good intentions did not always create the healthiest self-concept, though. When Disney’s animated blockbuster *Pocahontas* came out in 1995, her family decorated her room with memorabilia from the film. They celebrated, as any well-intentioned white family would, the rise of a cartoon character that their daughter could relate to. Lakota explains that, for Natives who are less connected to traditional cultural experiences, these images can sometimes form all they know about Nativeness, which is extremely problematic. Fortunately for Crystal, although she was adopted, she regularly received correspondences from family on the rez and was able to deepen her relationship with them as an adult.

Cornell Pewewardy (1998) cautions that one should not assume that all young Natives have access to information that counters these pervasive scripts because not all have access to the traditions or ceremonies. S. Elizabeth Bird (1999) notes that Disney’s portrayal of the child-sex slave *Pocahontas* sends a particularly toxic and overly-sexualized message about Native girls and women, which causes me to reflect on the experiences of kids in Crystal’s former situation.

Isaiah Brokenleg (Sicangu Lakota) believes that these watered down, pan-Indian versions of cultural knowledge become accepted as fact among Urban Indians. I do think that he and Lakota are on to something, but to attribute this just to Urban Indians is to assume Urban Indians are not connected to their tribes or have no other sources of information, which I have learned to be untrue. Also, rez and tribal land-based Indians may struggle with these images as well. In Tabby Harris's experiences on the Choctaw reservation in Oklahoma, she sees these pan-Indian ideas being awkwardly adopted by her tribe. Some of the storytellers in this project seem unknowingly affected by the idea that Nativeness is something that can be magically or spiritually "sensed." Denise McAuly says that, no matter what they look like, Indians know who one another are because being Native is about "what's in your heart," and that if you feel the "Native part is in you," then you are Native.

I want to point out that this idea is not a new one, and I do not intend on judging Denise for asserting it. Simultaneously, it is worth mentioning that this mystical conceptualization of Indianness contrasts with many of the definitions that exist for Indians according to the State and various tribal governments and may inadvertently contribute to the epidemic of cultural misappropriation woven into US. The "Indian in your heart" explanation, specifically, has been used to fuel misappropriation by non-Indians and has allowed white scholars who study Natives to dismiss actual Native people for being too culturally assimilated (Hall, 2005; Gere, 2005; Olson, 2017). Lakota Harden and John Scott Richardson (Haliwa Saponi & Tuscarora) pose an alternative narrative—Nativeness is about culture, knowledge, community, and family. This is echoed by the work of Professor Kim TallBear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) who has made a name for herself by critiquing the cultural phenomenon of whites (and People of Color, as well) claiming Native identities because they learned they had supposedly "Native DNA" sequences.



This is, as she explains, maligned with Indigenous community belonging and cultural practices (TallBear, 2003). John says that being Native is about, “understanding how these things that come from your community have helped your people to live and survive and learn,” a statement that does align with more traditional ideas about belonging shared by TallBear and other storytellers in this project in (chapter 3).

### **4.3 “Raped Indian Woman in a Past Life”**

The Hollywood version of Indianness is ultimately quite destructive (Baca, 2004; Aleiss, 2005; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015). While in college, I volunteered for a community house in Greensboro, NC that provides services for people living with HIV and AIDS. One day, I came in at the tail-end of a Native hand drum-making class being offered by an older white woman. She had a bounty of colorfully died chicken feathers that she was having residents decorate the drums with. I had never seen anything like this and considered it to be disrespectful to the drums. I politely asked her who taught her to make drums and who gave her permission to make them. She responded with a line that has stuck with me ever since. Coolly and casually she said, “Oh, I was a raped Indian woman in a past life.” Her emphatic and resolute tone was unnerving. My mind began to spin at the sheer offensiveness of every part of her declaration; I became speechless. I walked away but wished for years after that event that I had said more to her. Perhaps the “raped” detail of this dialogue makes it seem somewhat unique, but the underlying sentiment is not as unheard of as one may hope (Hall, 2005; Means, 2013).

The modern pervasiveness of Native cultural misappropriation is well-documented by scholars like Philip Deloria and Lisa Aldred and featured on internet blogs by folks like Dr.

Adrienne Keene,<sup>35</sup> so it is not my goal to explain the phenomenon. Instead, I intend to communicate some of the impacts this has on the storytellers in this study. If true Nativeness is equated with the romanticized and popularized version, then those who connect with that version of Native identity can be measured as the most authentic by applying all the right props (Deloria, 1999; Gere, 2005; Weaver, 2014; Riley, 2015). This means that non-Indians may pity the Indian who does not appear to have these overt spiritual connections and seek to do it better themselves; academia is fraught with this (especially anthropology) (Miheuah & Wilson, 2004; Gere, 2005).

In this way, being Native is something that you can buy at a metaphysical store or costume shop or practice your way into—it is based on loose and intangible criteria (Aldred, 2000). This must be what the \$15 sweetgrass braids at Whole Foods are for. Everyone can come to attain the level of Nativeness that they seek, employing it when convenient and dispelling it when it is not; that is, everyone except actual Native people who belong to what is easily the most regulated racial-ethnic group in the US (Gonzalez, 1998; Schmidt, 2011; Berger, 2013). Senator Elizabeth Warren has recently come under fire for strategically employing family lore about Native ancestry. Rebecca Nagle, a writer for Native News Online, explains in a 2018 article that the way that Warren backtracked on her claims is dangerous to the Native community. Warren said her blood quantum couldn't have been any more than 1/32<sup>nd</sup>, insinuating that it was very low, but truth is some enrolled Natives have a lower blood quantum than that but they are connected to their communities and claimed by their people (Nagle, 2018). As Nagle puts it, Warren's assertions have "no grounding in reality," and a similar argument was used to dismiss and undermine Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) protections for Baby Veronica

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<sup>35</sup> She produces the "Native Appropriations" blog, <http://nativeappropriations.com/>

by the supreme court because of her low blood quantum despite being from an enrolled Cherokee family (Goldstein, 2014).

Despite the protected existence of sovereign mechanisms for determining tribal enrollment and, even more contrastingly, traditional ways for determining belonging, Warren later released the results of a DNA test which reveals that she has a Native American ancestor six to ten generations ago (Brueck, 2018). Though she may have been trying to defend herself against Trump, arguably the world's ugliest bully, she may have established a dangerous precedent. Consider this, Senator Lindsey Graham now rebukes he is more Native than Warren and is getting a DNA test to prove it (Shamsian, 2018). When powerful whites start using DNA tests to demand access to the ability to identify as Native American, all of Indian Country is in tenuous jeopardy. Indigenous people will be spoken for (even more than now) by those like Warren with no connections to tribal communities. Understanding this, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma has referred to Warren's tactics as "inappropriate and wrong" (Pignataro, 2018).

The images that contribute to the racist assumptions, misappropriation, and toxic racial stereotyping are also exacerbated by the nation's fascination with Indian mascots (Pewewardy, 1991; Bordewich, 1997; Deloria, 1999; Baca, 2004; Robidoux, 2006; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Several participants express outrage over the use of these mascots, though Christy Bieber is concerned that the debate is a distraction from bigger concerns in Indian Country like the undermining of treaties and continued land theft. Both perspectives are valid. In the following story, Isaiah Brokenleg explains how Indian mascots contribute to racist violence against American Indians by telling a story that occurred several years back:

My cousin was beaten up because of an Indian mascot. There's a there's a town near my reservation called Winner—it's about 45 minutes from my town. Their mascot is the

[Indian] warrior, even though they're like the most racist town ever. Their mascot was, I don't know if it still is, the Winner Warriors. Ours was Todd County Falcons. Anyway, they had lost this game and my cousin was walking home from the game. They were angry that they lost, and they decided to take it out on him. It was this terrible hate crime. They started teasing him like, "you were supposed to be our warrior, why didn't you..." They ended up beating him up, peeing on him and leaving him there. It was a very bad situation. I'm convinced that if we didn't have the Winner Warriors as the mascot that wouldn't have happened. I mean, I'm sure they would've yelled or something, but I don't think it would've escalated to that point. So, in that sense, I guess they (the mascots) affect us. But in the sense of how Indians are portrayed in films and movies, often I find myself watching those and being like "oh, that's so bullshit. This is not how this would happen," and "that is not what this would look like," and blah blah blah blah. I get frustrated in those kinds of ways and it affects me internally—emotionally and psychologically.

Because of pressures placed on the US Department of Education over the use of Indian mascots by schools, the department studied whether mascots create "hostile environments" as defined by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Trainor, 1995). They curiously conclude that while high schools with these mascots do violate Title VI protections, colleges with Native mascots do not (Trainor, 1995). Lawrence Baca (2004) strongly disagrees with their conclusions and writes this compelling argument to defend his position:

Now think about the reality for the Indian child who attends a school where there is an American Indian mascot. The child arrives at school, and when the child gets off the bus, he or she is confronted with the 22-foot-tall statue of an American Indian, usually in some form of "warrior" dress, such as a loincloth and nothing more. The "warrior" will wear one or more feathers and most likely hold a spear, club, or tomahawk. The Indian child walks into the school and sees a painting of this same image on the wall outside the principal's office or perhaps a caricature with a large belly and an over-exaggerated nose, often with a bent feather in a headband. The child goes to class and sees the faux image on the classroom wall and on schoolbook covers. When the child goes to the gym, the same ubiquitous, but not real, Indian is painted on the floor, and non-Indian students run back and forth over the face bouncing a basketball. If the child attends a school sporting event, it is likely that a White student will dress up in some form of Indian "costume" and perform fake ritualistic dances for the fans. These events occur daily, weekly, hourly. These images are omnipresent in the life of the Indian child while the child attends school. She does not see any other race singled out for this kind of caricature treatment. And, these images are all done with the acquiescence and the imprimatur of the state. In *Brown v Board of Education*, the court specifically noted that the very nature of separation of the races, which was the badge of inferiority of the Black race, was made even more severe because it was done with the sanction of the state. Here, the

characterizations, the faux imagery, the secular use of religious iconography are only those of American Indians, and they are sanctioned by the state (p. 76).

Relating to the psychological toll that Isaiah describes, Alvin Chee (Navajo) says he didn't even know how much he'd been psychologically affected until he saw a counter-image that moved him greatly—it was a beautiful and moving ad produced by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) ahead of the 2014 super bowl. The ad features a line that Alvin remembers fondly; “Native Americans call themselves many things, the one thing they don't is Redskins” (NCAI, 2014). The powerful imagery made Alvin feel proud and angry at the same time. In her book, *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States* (2014), Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz explains that the term redskin came from the crude description of the bloodied backside of an Indian scalp that could be traded for currency, especially during the French and Indian Wars (64-65). There is no way more profound to end this section than to note that the National football team celebrates genocidal scalping of Indians at every game while claiming to “honor” Indian people.

#### **4.4 “Where Do We Go?”**

While anti-Black racism seems scripted, marked by seemingly prescribed experience at the hands of US institutions, American Indians often face racism by omission. I refer to this specific type of racism as colonialist erasure. To deny the presence of the Indian is to deny and commit colonialism and genocide. In a critical race review of anti-Black racism in middle school history textbooks used in the state of Georgia, Michele Mitchell (2013) finds that whites were discussed on a whopping seventy-one percent of the pages in the Georgia history texts, as opposed to Blacks who were discussed on thirty percent of the pages, and Native Americans who were discussed on only ten percent of the pages (26). Her data shows that Native Americans are mostly omitted from the sections regarding modern or recent history and are marginalized in the

other sections (38). On this marginalization, she writes, “Native Americans ... were framed with a White perspective ... and all of the Native Americans discussed by name were those who ‘helped’ whites” (61). This absence from the curriculum stands out to Belinda Rudicil (Meherrin), too. She says she remembers learning about Columbus Day but never had sections in the curriculum that were devoted to any Native holidays, and the schools she attended did not incorporate Native American heritage month or even focus on Native people at all.

Storytellers in this study recall encountering differing levels of omission and feel those consequences differently based on several key demographic variables. Being from a small tribe in a state that practiced Indian removal through ethnic denial (racial eugenics laws), Denise McAuly recalls an incident in her county high school that left her confused. She explains:

There was an event in school one time. It was like an uprising in school between the whites and the Blacks. We [students] were all sent to the auditorium. They (school administrators) said, "We need Blacks over here (points to her right) and whites over here (points to her left)." A lot of us (Meherrins) sat in the middle like, "*where do we go?*" Where do you go? We're the most overlooked people.

This high school was in the county in which the Meherrin tribe resides. “We felt like we had to fight for who we were,” she says. Denise is in her 50s, so one may want to think this indicative of an earlier time. However, her niece Belinda is far younger—late 30s—and recalls something similar happening as part of a classroom activity. Indeed, something similar happened at my high school in rural North Carolina, and I’m nearly a decade younger than Belinda. Belinda once had to defend her racial identity when interacting with school officials who had misclassified her race as “mulatto” on a school form. They would not allow her to change it to Native American because they denied the modern existence of Native Americans in North Carolina (something that still happens today). This feels surprising because Belinda is only thirty-seven and she looks

identifiably Native. However, her story is consistent with others I have heard from across the state and region.

Having spent much of his teenage years in a suburb outside of Atlanta, Christian Weaver (Shinnecock) knows the ignorant denial of American Indian existence all too well. He laughs as he tells me:

I have some friends, long-term friends that I've had for twenty two years that still don't understand that I'm Native even though they know me, they've seen my family, they know that I go to powwows, and they know that my family lives on a reservation. They're just small town, small minded people, and I'm the only Native that they've ever met so they don't take that seriously.

He attributes this to the scant to outright non-existent Native presence in the Atlanta area, along with the stereotypical image that he admittedly does not fit. Christian is multiracial and says he looks "racially ambiguous." Regardless of his phenotype, it could also be pointed out that, unless dressed in buckskin and standing in front of a teepee, many of today's Indians would not easily be recognized by non-Indians who have, on average, had such little exposure to real Native people and Native communities (Raheja, 2011). Christian also argues that the Cherokee Princess grandmother phenomenon is so pervasive in the south, especially among Black Americans, that people in Atlanta had grown accustomed to hearing and dismissing claims to Indigeneity, or they've made them as well. Again, Senator Elizabeth Warren is not helping here. Claire Norwood and Milissa Hamley also feel affected by this cultural phenomenon. Milissa says that she can feel others judging her when she introduces herself as Chippewa and she knows they're thinking she is the "1/16th Cherokee princess type."

While many American Indians might not be readily classified as Native in certain regions (even if full-blood or identifiable based on phenotype), US persons are acutely aware that brown skin means non-White. For some, this means having their bodies read as Hispanic or Latinx.

Because of harsh anti-immigrant sentiment and hostility toward immigrants from Mexico and Latin America in this current political moment (and arguably throughout US history), this identification can have serious consequences. Beth Jacobs Hunt was once in Raleigh (North Carolina's state capital) attending an anti-war rally protesting the US occupations of Iraq & Afghanistan. She recalls the following events that transpired:

I was at an anti-war protest. Gosh, it's been probably 10 years ago. One of the people who came to oppose our protest, who were pro-war, apparently, was screaming at me. "Show me your green card! Where is your green card?!!" Then, this man actually spat upon me, Marshall. This man spat on me. I had to be escorted out by the Sheriff's Deputy because I was in a group of otherwise all white people ... I mean these were my friends, you know, they all worked for progressive agencies in Raleigh ... but I just happened to be the only brown-skinned person there in the group. They (the pro-war protestors) assumed that I was Hispanic. Because of their level of ignorance, they assumed that if I was Hispanic that meant that I was undocumented, or "illegal" as they like to say.

A 2014 letter by James Lyall, an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorney, to the US Department of Homeland Security documents how Native Americans have been racially profiled and asked to supply citizenship documentation at immigration checkpoints and border patrol stops in post-SB 1070 Arizona (Lyall, 2014). Beth is not alone.

Michael King has only Native ancestry and, having spent nearly his entire life on a Paiute corner of the Navajo Indian Reservation in Utah, he'd never had that questioned. He was rather surprised when he traveled to the south for the first time. Michael went to spend a few months in Tampa, Florida. There, he found that people were likely to attribute just about any race or ethnicity to him other than American Indian. In fact, some even thought him to be African American because of his dark complexion. People would speak Spanish, or even Portuguese, to him on a regular basis. "When I was living in Tampa, Florida," he says, "I had long hair and I would keep it within a traditional hairstyle—whether it was a Navajo hair bun or braids—but they still would not believe that I was Native American."



While region seems to matter here for Michael's experiences in SW Florida (the south being a place where such things seem disproportionately likely to occur), the specific area within Florida where Michael was located likely mattered here as well. John Scott Richardson, also identifiably Native, was often assumed to be Seminole when he lived in Florida, but he lived in the Southeastern region of the state, near Miami, which is not far from that tribe's headquarters and popular casino. This high degree of contextual and intersectional variability seems to deeply influence how American Indians will be perceived and the race or ethnicity they will be ascribed. For Jude Killsplenty Cruz, Nativeness is only really assumed if he wears Native jewelry and has his hair long or in braids. He tells me that, like his father, he is light-skinned compared to his Pueblo relatives, but he definitely looks identifiably Native. Props are often required to fulfill stereotypical notions, even for a Lakota, for whom the stereotypes were constructed (Deloria, 1999).

Like Michael and John, location matters for Virgil Oxendine, too. He is well-known and actively involved in the larger Lumbee and Robeson County community and that means that everyone knows that he is Lumbee and the son of two prominent Elders and traditional artisans. That is not necessarily the case when he leaves Robeson County. He and Beth Jacobs Hunt both explain that their accent is a marker of Lumbee identity within the state of North Carolina, but, despite this, Virgil says, "during the winter time, depending on the area I'm in, some people would probably consider me being white. But at the same time, I know for myself that during the summer months my skin tone changes because of the sun." The scripts for reading Blackness are far less variable, even for multiracial African Americans (Khanna, 2010).

Other People of Color may have more similarities to Natives here. Eileen O'Brien (2008) discusses the experience of being in the "racial middle" that most Latinx and Asian Americans

encounter. She finds that they are likely to be misclassified as other groups and shift their own identities based on the assessments of the preconceived notions of the beholder. I would argue that the scripts are even less predictable for American Indians than the Latinx and Asians she studies because of the sheer invisibility of the Native in the sociopolitical awareness of US citizenry, media, politics, etc. Therefore, not only might Virgil be perceived differently at different points in the year, he may be guessed to be a whole host of different ethnicities before most non-Indians would guess that he is Native.<sup>36</sup>

Belinda Rudicil relates; she says, “people always are guessing what I am ... they think I’m Polynesian, Hawaiian, or Filipino. [Native is] the last thing that they guess.” Of course, because race is socially constructed, there is no one way to “look” Native, or anything else. The fact that people cannot “guess” that someone is Native is not really the issue here. What is problematic is the fact that, as Belinda puts in, Native is the last thing someone might assume, and that people demand the right to know. Patients at the hospital where she works can be rather insistent on knowing. While this exact experience does not represent that of every storyteller in this research (largely because some Natives live on reservations), it is an experience shared by Urban Indians and those not living on reservations, regardless of their phenotype. I mention this earlier, but it is worth restating that this reminds me of microaggressions faced by Asian Americans who are routinely and bluntly asked, “Where are you from?” (Sue et al. 2007). Sue et al. (2007) problematizes that particular question that Asian Americans get asked because it is accompanied with the implied assumption that one is an alien in their own land (often the land where they were born and/or hold citizenship). The cut runs even deeper in the case of Indigenous Americans. Assuming a Native person to be an immigrant is a denial of Indigenous

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<sup>36</sup> This appears to be more true when he travels outside of Robeson County, he says.

rights, belonging, and thousands of years of survival and resilience on Turtle Island, regardless of the intention of the questioner. The cherry on top is that the question most often originates from a person who does indeed belong to primarily immigrant stock, adding a level of subtle settler violence and white hegemony.

The invisibility of Native people and experiences pervades all social domains well beyond middle school textbooks. In practice, this means that Native people are routinely misclassified (Knight, Yankaskas, Fleg, & Rao, 2008; Haozous, Strickland, Palacios, & Solomon, 2014). Misclassification occurs when an incorrect assumption is documented. Evidence of this can be seen in an article by public health researchers who document racial misclassification of American Indians by healthcare providers in North Carolina (the state in which six of this project's storytellers reside) (Knight, Yankaskas, Fleg, & Rao, 2008). While it may seem benign, misclassification can have devastating impacts. Those researchers find an "estimated 18% misclassification of non-federally recognized American Indians in cancer registration in North Carolina and subsequently determine an underestimation of cancer rates in the population" that "may affect resources allocated for prevention, screening, and treatment programs, as well as funding for research" (Knight, Yankaskas, Fleg, & Rao, 2008, p. 7).

Given that American Indians, on average, have higher rates of numerous types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other serious health indicators, this oversight has life-or-death consequences (Hutchinson & Shin, 2014). Vivette Jeffries-Logan is from the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, a tribe whose members are misclassified up to 88% of the time (Knight, Yankaskas, Fleg, & Rao, 2008). She explains how the impacts of this sort of invisibility go well beyond the realm of healthcare: "American Indians are rarely included in key events, planning, or decisions in North Carolina and nationwide. If we are included, it is at the last

minute and as a tokenistic afterthought.” She explains that, as a social justice trainer, she frequently gets asked to provide a traditional welcoming at major conferences only days before the events are to be held. All of these experiences leave many Native people asking the question that Denise McAuly asked her Meherrin peers on the floor of her high school auditorium—  
Where do we go?

#### **4.5 “I’m Pretty Ambiguous Looking”**

Whether racism is employed through overt or implicit mechanisms, the result is the same for Indigenous Americans. That result is that Native people have had few avenues to define what Nativeness is and how it should be defined, understood, and invoked. Because American Indians report among the highest rates of multiraciality in the US according to the US Census, Americans’ confusion or lack of information about Native experiences is further clouded (US Census Bureau, 2018). As Alvin Chee’s story about the history of the Navajo clan system suggests, we know that American Indians have always engaged in interethnic marriage as a routine part of tribal life. These practices continue to the present day. What has changed is the diversity and phenotypes of the many people whom they come to share this land and eventually, share families. When it comes to racial phenotype, ascription, and interpersonal experiences, American Indians run the full gamut (Nagel, 1994; Pewewardy, 2006; Lawrence, 2004; Schmidt, 2011; Weaver, 2013). I do not intend to downplay the rich diversity in Native phenotypes that existed prior to Western contact (as was discussed by Mann, 2006), nor that which exists today between “full-bloods” but simply to recognize that wide multiracial variance is one of the realities of surviving the bomb of colonization.

This spectrum means that many of today’s American Indians also face racism usually reserved for other groups, like anti-Blackness, or nativist impulses generally directed at other

groups of people like Asians and Arabs. Only in certain areas are there more scripted code-sets set aside for Native racialization (such as reservations and border towns). This means that distinct forms of racism, like anti-Blackness, cannot always be discussed as totally separate from anti-Native racism because plenty of Natives also have African ancestry, or, in the case of Michael King and others like him, Native darkness can be confused for African ancestry. We still tend to think of racial groups as insular despite becoming an increasingly multiracial society, not unlike the racial typologies (such as that by Linnaeus in 1758) that thrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century era of scientific racism rather than recognize the Latin Americanization that Bonilla-Silva (2004) argues is taking shape in the US.

Just as Belinda Rudicil explains that she is more commonly assumed to be Asian or Pacific Islander, O'Tika Jones and Ras K'Dee (Dry Creek Pomo) are more likely to be assumed Black. When asked about experiences with racism, O'Tika tells me that the racism she experiences is because of being Black and is not clearly attributable to being Native. However, the fact that entire communities of Meherrin people would see themselves as mostly Black is still the result of racism directed at American Indian people designed to eliminate Native populations on paper. The fact that she feels compelled to divide the two is a consequence of systemic racism and a representation of the pieces of self (shrapnel from the bomb). In sum, those anti-Black experiences are also Native experiences because O'Tika is both. She is a whole person and sits at multiple intersections that affect her experiences—not a Black woman at work and a Meherrin woman at powwows.

One third (twelve) of the participants in this study identify as multiracial. A couple of others recognize that they have ancestry other than Indigenous North American but do not identify with the term multiracial because it contrasts with who they are in the world or the way

they understand their belonging in their tribe(s) or communities. The fact that a third of this sample identifies as multiracial in a country where less than three percent of people identified as such on the US Census in 2010 well represents this feature of Indian Country (US Census Bureau, 2018). When we add this multiracial reality to the complex myriad of ways that non-Indians do or do not understand Native Americans today, everyday experiences of real Native people become even less visibly Native to the outside eye. Dismissal by non-Indians proves to undermine Native sovereignty at the level of the self as Native people are forced to question their own authenticity. Christian Weaver says,

I'm ambiguous looking. I used to live in a very diverse neighborhood and people just assumed I was Puerto Rican or Cuban or something. When I moved to Georgia, I went to high school in metro Atlanta, and I went to college in South Georgia, a very conservative area. They're not exposed to a lot of things that other cities in the country are exposed to and so they would always want to put me in a black or white box. They wouldn't even want to put me in a Puerto Rican box or a Cuban box, they would only put me in the black or white box. They'd ask, "what are you, white or Black?" Where I lived the only people that looked like me were mixed between white and Black, and so I remember countless times I had to educate people about who I was and who my family was.

This speaks to the Black/white dichotomy ever-present in the south that the Meherrin women bring to light. It also demonstrates the degree to which American Indian people are put in a position where it becomes a burden to defend a public Native identity. O'Tika says that it can be easier to simply say "Black" than to have to explain, meaning it is easier to fit into an assumed box than to assert one's sovereign right to exist. Such compromises and negotiations seem common among multiracial Black Americans regardless of what their other racial or ethnic identities may be (Khanna, 2010).

Christian understands the hesitation that some may feel when they are reticent to accept his Nativeness. He recalls countless times when he introduced himself to others (especially in the south), Black, white, and other, who immediately respond with the overused and inherently

inaccurate Cherokee-princess type claims. That is, they assume they are “as Native” as he is. This, too, is an act of aggression. It conflates a mythical fairytale—family lore—with a Native person’s actual experience with their Indigenous community and history. Christian grew up near his reservation in New York, visiting Shinnecock family frequently and living as an active member of his community. Keep in mind, actual experiences in Native communities can be as difficult as they are pride-inducing. The Cherokee princess claim invalidates his sovereignty of self and dismisses the legitimacy of his Shinnecock experiences and the existence of his community. Christian also adds that being from a little-known tribe in an area where Native people are assumed non-existent, ignorance creates misunderstanding and dismissal that is simply unfair and difficult to counter.

The ambiguousness that Christian finds others experience when they encounter him is similar in some ways to the middle-ground experiences which are highly shaped by context that O’Brien (2008) finds Asians and Latinx people experience. While being “ambiguous” is irrefutably less dangerous than being unmistakably identified as a member of a highly-target racial, ethnic, or religious group, in the case of Indigenous people, it is also problematic to call this a privilege. Another difference that stands out between individuals in this research and those is O’Brien’s *Racial Middle* is that the Natives in this project don’t “switch” their ethnicities or trade it their Native identity in order to seem more “Americanized,” though that was seen in earlier generations (O’Brien, 2008, pp. 40, 52). Perhaps because Indigenous is not an immigrant identity, not invoking the same sort of nativism allows for more interpersonal safety from nativist attack.

If being free of a heavily-scripted and monolithic ascription is a privilege, though, it is one with an extremely high cost—the denial of Indigenous personhood. Indigeneity is the

connection to the land, rights, treaties, history, and lineage that is at the heart of the colonialist impulse itself. In my view, protecting Indigenous rights is a non-negotiable part of becoming a more equitable and honest society. If monolithic racialization is the reason why today's (mostly multiracial) Indigenous persons are dismissed, challenged, or denied, then what needs to change is our public perception of how Indigenous identity is defined and constructed instead of asking multiracial Natives to think of themselves as categorically less Indigenous. To do this requires returning to earlier conceptions of Indigenous belonging, an act of decolonization.

#### **4.6 “Too White to Be Indian”**

Most multiracial Indians (and some who do not necessarily identify as multiracial but report multiple ancestries) claim some European or white ancestry, as many as 88% (Pew Research Center, 2015). Overall, American Indian phenotypes quickly became markedly lighter as colonialism waged (Nagel, 1994; Bakken & Branden, 2012; Weaver, 2013; Schmidt, 2011). This can be easily noticed by gazing upon early photographs of Native people in the US. The process began through the colonial matrix of rape of Native women and girls by European colonizers (Deer, 2015; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Schmidt (2011) also explains that some Native women sought out white men to have children so that they might gain security in an increasingly white supremacist society. These realities are exacerbated by the equally-insidious process of racial construction that created devastating internalized oppression and instilled white supremacy that encourages Black and brown people to seek white partners to bolster their external validity and internal worth. Even today's “full-bloods” often look lighter than Indians in early photographs of Indians that anthropologists cling to (Gonzalez, 1998; Gere, 2005; Bakken & Branden, 2012; Weaver, 2015). This is because colonialism began far before enrollment or the imposition of blood quantum (Garrouette, 2001). Quite a few Indigenous people today



conditionally or completely seem to be white in the eyes of most in the US even though they may be active parts of their communities, speak their languages, or fulfill any other proxy for cultural involvement.

In a 2015 article, I described myself as someone with “white passing privilege” because I can and do receive the everyday interpersonal perks of seeming white. Adrian Downey (Mi’kmaq) published a 2018 response to that work and other articles where Indigenous authors employed similar language, challenging the concept of “white-passing” and posing the alternative of “white-seeming privilege.” The first premise for the correction is that, in many communities, like her own, the word “passing” is used to describe one’s journey to the spirit world (Downey, 2018). This is valid, although there are often many uses for any one word, even and especially in tribal languages, and when paired with “white,” I doubt anyone would read it that way. The second premise is that the privilege actually comes from “seeming” white versus “passing” for white; not everyone intends to pass, so seeming is more passive language. Using “white-seeming” removes the implied deceit (Downey, 2018). This is a valid critique, although it cannot always be assumed that deceit cannot be employed or never is. Downey’s (2018) third premise is that white-passing reinforces the white-brown dichotomy that dominates US discussions and conceptions of race. Perhaps white-seeming narrowly averts that script, but the difference is subtle. Lastly, Downey argues that referring to oneself as white-passing causes one to participate in their own subjugation; that is, “passing” allows for the Indigenous person to see themselves as in the group with whites, the colonizer, on the basis of their skin tone, whereas “seeming” white avoids accepting that grouping (Downey, 2018). This notion resonates with me and may resonate with many others like us, as well. However, I must note that some in this study accept whiteness and their white identity as unproblematically and congruently part of who they

are. They carry “white” as one of their primary intersecting identities that they unapologetically pair with Indigenous. They do not prefer any hyphens at all. Because I advocate for the sovereignty of self, I urge people to use the language they wish to use when self-describing. As for me, I am appreciative of Downey’s critiques and plan to use white-seeming to self-describe and to describe others.

Every Native has preferences for how they wish to identify themselves. For Indigenous people in general, place and connection to the land are important to cultural identity (Deloria, 2003; Simpson, 2014). This fact highlights the devastating toll that the displacement and dispossession endemic to systemic oppression of American Indians reap. The majority of American Indians are displaced from their original homelands (Evans-Campbell, Walters, Pearson, & Campbell, 2012; Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012). Entire tribes have been displaced, and individuals are also increasingly dislocated from their tribal people and communities through removal (Fixico, 1986; Churchill, 1999; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). One systemic driver for this was genocidal urban relocation programs designed to remove American Indians from treaty lands and to weaken and destroy communal tribal networks and reservations from the 1940s through the 60s (Lobo, 2001; Fixico, 1986). Long after these programs have formally ended, entrenched poverty, despair, and lack of educational and vocational opportunities continue to turn rural American Indians into Indigenous refugees of sorts (Davis, Roscigno, & Wilson, 2016).

In a book chapter, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David Embrick (2006) argue that the US is moving toward a tri-racial social system similar to that in Latin America. In their racial trichotomy, they place “assimilated (urban) Native Americans” in the “white” category, skipping the “honorary white” category, and “reservation-bound Native Americans in the “collective

Black” category (p. 34). There are flaws with this argument, and the biographies of several in this study bring those to light.

First, urban is conflated with assimilated. My experience at the Seattle Indian Health Board as well as the experiences of these storytellers allow me to conclude that Indians who live in metropolitan areas like Seattle and Oakland exist on a wide spectrum of traditional knowledge and practice, Indigenous language fluency, phenotype, cultural community participation, connection to land base, etc. Renya Ramirez (Ho-Chunk & Ojibwe) finds similar diversity in the *Native Hubs* that she describes. She argues that, because of the fluid movement and connections between the urban hubs and tribal lands, many Urban Indians maintain a “transnational existence” (Ramirez, 2007, pp. 155-170). She goes on to say that Urban Indians are in a “liminal space between the traditional and the modern” (Ramirez, 2007, p. 26). What I see in my new home in the City of Seattle is exactly what Ramirez describes and that Tommy Orange (Cheyenne & Arapaho) alludes to in his 2018 monograph titled *There, There*—Indian people come together with members of their own tribes and also gather intertribally to surround themselves with community, spirit, belonging, and traditions.

Many Urban Indians are like Annabelle Allison, Crystal Rizzo, Christian Weaver, Ras K’Dee (Dry Creek Pomo), Lakota Harden, Lee Blacksmith, and D’Shane Barnett (Three Affiliated Tribes) have such a transnational existence because they frequently visit their tribal communities to participate in a wide range of cultural activities involving ceremony and language and flow freely between those places and the city (Ramirez, 2007). Only one of these participants are ever assumed white, and each is actively working to resist assimilation in a myriad of ways. This is likely to be one of the biggest differences between what O’Brien (2008) finds in the middle-ground experiences of Latinx and Asian Americans and Natives in this

study—American Indians today do not seem to want to appear more assimilated when separated from their cultural environments. There are also Urban Indians in this study who've lived on their reservations for part or all of their lives and could seem white some or all of the time. They would not fall into Bonilla-Silva and Embrick's (2006) "collective Black." Some Tribal Nations, like the Muckleshoot and Puyallup Tribes in Washington State, are both Urban and Reservation Indians because our cities have grown to consume nearby reservations, and their phenotypes seem to run the gamut as well. This means that urbanity is not a good predictor for assimilation nor white-seeming privilege. This intuitively makes sense because assuming a connection between the two is an essentialist impulse.

Second, their trichotomy supposes that Urban Indians are categorically white. Logically, where one lives has no predictable bearing on their phenotype, though different historical and regional contexts can lead to diverse processes of racial ascription (Vargas & Kingsbury, 2016). Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaq) explains that the Urban Indians of Toronto are more visibly interracial than Natives in the First Nations villages, but she contends that they are Native precisely because they come from Native families (Lawrence, 2004). It is imperative that we talk about colorism in Indian Country. To ignore the reality of internalized oppression and colorism would allow for the effects of white supremacy on this colonized population to go unexamined and unchecked. Simultaneously, if Indians who leave the reservation automatically become white, whether through assimilation, intermarriage, or both, then the prospects are grim for this increasingly metropolitan and diasporic group of people.

I recently attended a Navajo community gathering held at the Seattle Indian Health Board with my friend Jeanette. The room was full of Navajo people speaking their language, cooking together, basket weaving, and recreating semblances of home far from the reservation. I was the

only white-seeming person in the room. Among the Seattle Indian Health Board's Elder day program, fewer than five of the more than one hundred and thirty Elders served monthly would seem white to those who encounter them. Esther Lucero (Navajo & Latina) argues that some people in cities work harder to preserve cultural knowledge and traditions because being removed from a homeland made them take less for granted, and they become more acutely aware of impending loss. Isaiah Brokenleg (Rosebud Lakota) cautions that these (re)membered urban (and especially intertribal) traditions may be distorted or altered from their original intentions. When they are piecemeal or taken on without learning at the feet of tribal community elders, this may very well be the case. We must understand two things. One, culture-keepers migrate to cities, too. It cannot be the case that only those with no cultural knowledge end up in city centers for part or all their lives. Two, traditions and culture have always evolved over time to fit new landscapes and environments. It is a human reality.

Among the tribal and reservation communities as well as in cities, there are Natives who seem white along with those who do not. Jennifer Irving says she wants other Natives to know that. Urban and otherwise, there are Natives who are assimilated and those who resist in the ways they know how. Also, to be Native and assimilated is yet another common condition created by the colonialist bomb, but it does not guarantee the privilege of being white-seeming. Both Annabelle Allison and Tabby Harris have noticed that Indians who serve on tribal councils and become the representatives of tribal governments and organizations tend to have lighter complexions. Also, those with white-seeming privilege (one of the privileges that I possess) are more lightly to be academics as well. Those in Bonilla-Silva's & Embrick's (2006) "collective Black," whether assumed Black, Native, Latinx, or else, face more systemic oppression such as police brutality, interpersonal racism, hate crimes, etc. than those of us who are fair-skinned.

This is true for every group of people who have been excluded from whiteness because of their ascribed race and phenotype.

In 2010, John T. Williams, a Seattle police officer shot and killed an Urban Indian and local Nuu-chah-nulth carver under a city bridge when he did not respond to the policeman's commands; he was deaf in one ear (Hing, 2011). This event occurred in a city where Native Americans are over five times more likely to be homeless than whites (US Census Bureau, 2017; Davila, 2018). Additionally, according to a 2018 report from a study conducted by the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) in 2010, ninety-four percent of a sample of one hundred and forty-eight Native women in Seattle had been sexually assaulted in their lifetimes (p. 2). Of those women, fifty-three percent had been homeless or lacked stable housing (UIHI 2018, p. 5).

In my opinion, it is dangerous to assume assimilation or whiteness for Urban Indians because it further invisibilizes these experiences which are already unknown to much of the public. Furthermore, eighty-six percent of those Native women in Seattle reported being affected by historical trauma, a profound statistic (UIHI, 2018, p. 5). In response to the now international Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Campaign (MMIW) and the release of the UIHI report, Marissa Perez from the Yarrow Project,<sup>37</sup> a non-profit that works with Native victims of sexual exploitation, created a list of Native women missing, murdered, or abducted from Washington State. There were over 100 names on the list. Some of the names were accompanied by pictures, and many of the women were living in metro Seattle when they were abducted. Few of the pictures depicted white-seeming Indians.

Fair-skinned Indians are affected by colonialism too, though, even if privilege mitigates some of those effects daily. Those who participated in this project are acutely aware of their

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.yarrowproject.org/>

privileges relative to darker members of their tribes. Despite the suspicions of some People of Color, both Claire Norwood and Ashley Falzetti explain that they avoid checking the ‘Native’ box when they believe it will gain them any sort of edge, such as on an admission form. While they recognize their privileges, it becomes obvious as they tell their stories that white-seeming Natives recall facing racialized social consequences for being Indigenous. For some, these consequences mean having their Nateness trivialized or dismissed regardless of their belonging, enrollment, or acceptance in their tribal communities. Others find that whites uncomfortably exoticize them. Sometimes, they feel disproportionately valued by whites over other Natives for their more “acceptable” version of an Indigenous identity (a fairer version, at least). Along with those who do not benefit from fair skin, Indians with light complexions can face the same harsh systemic realities such as loss of traditional land or access to it, loss of language or access to it, difficulties accessing services such as adequate healthcare and education, and all of those pains of intergenerational trauma uniquely reserved for Indigenous Americans (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). They are not given a pass from feeling the full weight that genocide bears on their communities and cultural ways.

If we discuss racist microaggressions and more blatant (macro) aggressions that Natives face as an extension of colonialist violence as I have supposed earlier in this chapter, and we value tribal Nations’ sovereign right to declare their own citizens and descendants regardless of phenotype, we must also be able to identify similar aggressions enacted upon fair-skinned Indians as part of the same racist system. Milissa Hamley recalls being the only Native American in a college classroom where a professor was mostly leaving Natives out but occasionally sharing inaccurate and disrespectful pieces of information with the class. Milissa is a speaker of

her language and her family is tribally-involved, so she would speak up in the class. She told me that this teacher would regularly shut her down.

This also happened to Ashley Falzetti, another white-seeming Native, while she was in college. In fact, she was once asked by her teacher never to mention being Miami again because he did not believe her. She is an enrolled tribal citizen. Hilary Weaver (Lakota) (2015) writes “If Native Americans possess skin tones that are lighter than those presumed to be typical or authentic for Native Americans, external entities may presume an individual is somehow less Indigenous” (p. 8). Because this is not motivated by Ashley being perceived as a Person of Color, many would dismiss the incident as non-racist. It may not be according to some definitions. I am little concerned with whether it is or is not since American Indians are not a racial group. Clear to me is that it is colonialist violence and an overt denial of tribal sovereignty.

Ashley Falzetti tells me that part of the reason she identifies as both white *and* Native is that, having grown up mostly in rural Virginia in the 1990s, she is acutely aware of the grave consequences faced by people with unmistakably Black and brown bodies. She also knows this is not her experience and says, “It is important that I address my privilege as I move through the US so white.” In Both Indiana and Virginia, many think of her as “too white to be Indian.” In fact, when she would visit her Native relatives in Indiana, she recalls she’d often appear whiter than some of the white people there. Simultaneously, she makes no apologies for being Miami, and she is not okay with the fact that she was made to be the “punching bag” for people’s pent-up frustrations over race and racism when peers and instructors in college would assume she was employing a Native identity to co-opt her way out of whiteness.

White-seeming or not, I know that Indigenous people are targeted for a variety of things. When it comes to academia, theft is one of those things. When I was teaching at a community



college in Washington State, I co-designed a curricular project to re-teach US colonial history from the firsthand recollections of the southeastern Indigenous and African peoples who remember and talk about this still relatively recent era. A white instructor traveled with me to my homeland to meet with representatives from my tribe and two others, along with Black southern cultural educators. Little did I know that this white Instructor sought to use their names, our tribal seal, and the authority those conferred in order to legitimize those same racist materials and narratives she had been teaching in the college classroom for decades. When I approached her about the erasure of the participants' actual stories and dismissal of their explicit precautions, she approached the Board of Trustees to try to mar my tenure process. Next thing I knew, I was defending my "collegiality" to the Board of Trustees when that measure is not part of the tenure process as written in the faculty contract. I had been used and discarded.

When I first met Christy Bieber, I did not think that she seemed white. Her mom is Native, and her dad is white. But she tells me that when she was growing up away from her people in Northern Virginia, her friends assumed her to be white (maybe because she also did not belong to the more identifiable groups of POC there in the school). She says that she was generally assumed white unless she said something otherwise. She explains what this meant for her, saying, "it was really hard having this strong pull towards my cultural identity and then having that not be recognized or supported in my friend groups; people did not really understand what it means to be Indigenous, so, with that came like a lot of challenges." One such challenge, as Christian Weaver contends, is that all multiracial Indians (white-seeming included) will face consequences of the Cherokee grandmother cultural phenomenon. As a white-seeming Indian, Claire says introducing herself as Native American usually elicits a "me too" response from whites, coupled with a story leading to the mythical and elusive Cherokee woodpile. For Claire

and Hawi, non-Natives would sometimes say things like, “you don’t look Native.” Multiracial Indigenous people, whether assumed white or not, face frequent denial and dismissal.

Again—white supremacy and white-seeming privilege must be discussed. As an academic, I try to leverage my platform to find ways to elevate the voices of people from my community without that specific privilege, especially women and Two Spirits. However, it is also essential that we discuss Indigeneity as a concept larger than race and phenotype and avoid lateral oppression in either direction. As stated above, the white-seeming storytellers in this project freely discuss privilege. Claire highlights what is lost for her when she is dispossessed of the rights to claim her Native identity:

My mom just always wanted me to know that there was family there (on the rez) who loved me and that it was important that I knew that there was a community that would always support me. That was like very important for her. So, there was never a time when I didn’t know I was Native. I’ve just always known. There are pictures on our walls of family. One of my great-great grandmothers is someone who Edward Curtis had taken a picture of. It’s this gorgeous picture where she’s on this huge cliff in full regalia, and it’s just absolutely beautiful. There were also pictures of me from when I was a baby in regalia.

Like most Native people, legacy and pride are important to Claire and her mom. We should not overlook nor over-privilege white-seeming members of Native communities in any sphere.

On such privileges held by certain members of Native communities, Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèsah) advises, “For our continued survival in a racist social system, we need to have these conversations inside of our communities.” It is also important, she says, to humanize all our people. As a Native without any white-seeming privilege who lives the south, she has seen firsthand the damages inflicted by ostracization, regardless of the direction, but she also explains that it is important that white-seeming Indians do as Ashley, Claire, and Christy have done—reflect on and interrogate their own privilege. Of course, not all white-seeming Indians demonstrate this level of introspection like those in this study, and this could have to do with

both their young ages and high levels of education. Vivette powerfully states, “I don’t want to have relationships with white-passing Indians who aren’t willing to talk about and acknowledge their privilege.” Like Vivette, Hilary Weaver (2015) has strong words for the Native community. “Decolonization,” she writes, “presents an opportunity to divest from the historical legacies that place power in the color of an individual’s skin” (Weaver, 2015, p. 13).

From the blatant and insidious to the subtle yet damaging (and sometimes even humorous), this small group of Native storytellers paints a diverse portrait of racism experienced by Indigenous people across Turtle Island today. It is in no way complete or all-encompassing, but this provides a good look at some of the varied ways in which sovereignty of self and Nation are routinely undermined and how white supremacy is waged upon Indigenous peoples in ways that parallel with, but cannot be evenly equated to, the experiences of People of Color. These portrayals allow us to see the complicated and nuanced manifestations of modern colonialism made to fester precisely because of how difficult they are to identify, name, and target. Remarkably, though, young Native people today, the prophesized eighth generation, are challenging these manifestations at every conceivable site and challenging assumptions made about Indians from outside and within Native communities themselves. I discuss the healing of race-based trauma and systemic racism through Indigenous decolonization in the following chapter (chapter 5).

## 5 CHAPTER FIVE- REPARING TURTLE'S ATI

One can imagine Turtle Island before 1491—a vast land with thousands of rich and vibrant Nations spread across the continent, each with its own culture, system of governance, territories, and complicated and dynamic relationships with other nations. Each People was a rich and continuously connected part of the turtle's ati.<sup>38</sup> To an extent, Turtle Island looks similar today—diverse and complex. However, the Indigenous pieces of this shell are fewer, more spread out, geographically isolated from one another and, in some cases, from other populations altogether. Indigenous people and communities face the consequences of the bomb that Lakota Harden (Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & Ho-Chunk) describes in chapter three.

This project is not a story of the brokenness of tribal communities, though. It is a story of incredible resilience and survival, of holding cultures together in the wake of centuries of massive disruption. It is easy to gaze upon Indian Country and see the shrapnel, and there is no shortage of people willing to point it out. Make no mistake about it—settler colonialism is well designed. It is engineered to be all-consuming and to leave no room for the possibility of an actualized Indigenous sovereignty or personhood. It is creative beyond common imagination and is the backbone of modern capitalism—a winner-takes-all game. The campaigns to erase Indigenous people and the constant undermining of the few scant protections for First Nations makes it seem unfathomable that Native communities would persist in this matrix in 2018.

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<sup>38</sup> the turtle's ati, "house" used to refer to its shell in the Tutelo language because the resemblance it bears to their pre-colonial huts or dwellings

Alas, not only do Indigenous Americans persist, they perpetually find ways to defy and outlive even the most insidious and direct of attempts to eradicate them from the planet. Like many organized groups of People of Color across the political spectrum today, Indigenous Americans are reinventing their identities and ways of life through strategies that confront and disrupt the colonialist impulse. While it is important to document the ways in which the literature on race and racism fall short of capturing the unique complexity of indigeneity and sovereignty as I have done in chapters three and four, it is even more important to demonstrate resistance to these constructs at multiple sites in today's Indigenous communities, both urban and rural. Just as tribal warriors of old resisted the violent settlement of North America in colonial times, today's Natives find ways to resist the misclassification, labeling, denials of sovereignty, and hegemonic exploitation of their personhoods, communities, cultures, and lands. Especially within works on racism and other -isms, the story of resiliency is eerily absent, as is work on the nuanced experiences of modern Indigenous Americans.

In this chapter, I explore this resistance through the lens of healing and (re)membering.<sup>39</sup> This resiliency, thousands of years in the making, is a story that needs to be told. Modern global society appears to be on the brink of environmental, social, financial and spiritual catastrophe, but, before Turtle Island was invaded, societies had sustained themselves here for millennia with complex social orders and sustainable collectivistic traditions. In the case of the Indigenous

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<sup>39</sup> The language of Re- Membering is used by the Occaneechi Health Circle and by other Indigenous groups such as the Pine Ridge Re- Member organization (<http://re-member.org>), and neither I nor the Health Circle claims ownership over the term. I elaborated on the use of the concept within the Occaneechi community in a 2015 article I titled "Re-membering Our Own Power." It is hyphenated because it involves not just collectively remembering and taking back traditions but also recreating a shared sense of membership and belonging in their communities. Cultural and collective memory is a common theme in American Indian literature, as in the following: Jeanne Perreault, "'Memory Alive': An Inquiry into the Uses of Memory by Marilyn Dumont, Jeannette Armstrong, Louise Halfe, and Joy Harjo," and Shari M. Huhndorf, "Indigenous Feminism, Performance, and the Politics of Memory in the Plays of Monique Mojica," both in Suzack et al., *Indigenous Women and Feminism*; and Ines Hernandez-Avila, "My Eyes Breathe Fire and My Fingers Bleed Tears That Are the Ink of My Dreams," *Social Justice* 31, no. 4 (2004): 125– 27.

people in this study, the ways in which each highlight and exercise sovereignty at micro and macro levels is as hopeful as enlightening. Of course, not all the storytellers in this research have engaged with the same level of resistance or healing, and even fewer would choose to describe their narrative in this way. As is common across the population, some hold a level of denial about traumas they may have faced or continue to face. However, it is here that I find it necessary to highlight the way that those stories offer promise for the turtle's ati.

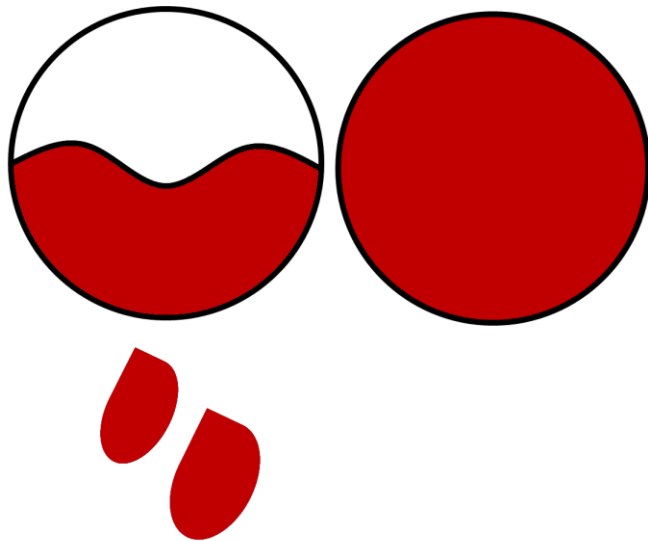
This endeavor also informs the body of work on the racism experienced by Indigenous people. By bringing the voices of a diverse sample of Indigenous Americans from the shadows, I seek to insert their experiences into what we know about race and racism. I also expect for the Indigenous political framework to challenge the tendency to mention Native Americans in comparison to other People of Color in ways that both marginalizes Indigenous experiences and conflates the two. Lastly, I implore race theorists to discuss the realities of structural racism and oppression faced by Indigenous Peoples only when paired with the legacy of resistance and resiliency that I describe in this chapter. Each of these implications is as true for educators in classrooms across the US and elsewhere as it is for those generating scholarship and literature.

## **5.1 Hole or Whole**

Native people are commonly portrayed as more of a “hole” than a “whole.” Indigenous people have always presented a dilemma for the inherently contradictory US democracy, and our Nation's earliest presidents planned for their extinction (Deloria, 2000). The extinctionist narrative is grim and resolute (Neath, 1995; Pearson, 2007; Duthu, 2008). In many ways, the over-historicization and omission of Native people by contemporary race theorists perpetuates this narrative. Just as blood quantum (as defined by the BIA) was intended to precipitate, “Indian Blood” is being diluted (Neath, 1995; Pearson, 2007; US DOI, 2018). Far beyond blood

quantum, Indians are judged on fabricated and unattainable standards and learn to judge themselves according to the same (Weaver, 2015).

As I explain in chapter three, the Native people in this study, and I suspect elsewhere as well, commonly feel like something is missing, preventing them from being a whole part of their communities. That is the state of “hole-ness.” It seems that each Native person is conditioned, by design, to see themselves as some imagined fraction of what they are supposed to be in the settler imagination. They are left with pieces of self through which they are forced to justify their Indigeneity to an inherently skeptical Euro-American critic. They are a percentage of a “full-blooded” ideal, or they do not speak their language, or weren’t raised or don’t live on the reservation, were Western-educated, are too Queer, too vegan, etc. (Weaver, 2001). It is as if there is a hole in every Native person through which their Nativeness is escaping or eluding them and they are not psychologically allowed to be a whole Indigenous person without justification. Consider the graphic in figure 23 below.



*Figure 23 The state of hole-ness is portrayed on the left, versus wholeness on the right*

In their own unique ways, nearly every participant in this study resists this hole and instead finds (sometimes unapologetic) ways to be whole in a system designed to dismember their existence (whether they recognize this or not). Just as Denise McAuly explains that all Meherrins are Meherrin, whether from Archer Town or Murfreesboro, several who share their stories with me are carving out spaces to be whole (Indigenous) persons in this land in ways that conflict with colonialist expectations and the forces of systemic racism.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Frantz Fanon poignantly portrays the process of othering by which the oppressed comes to exist as a subject externally defined by the colonialist “master.” This colonial subject is without individual personhood and is defined entirely by their relationship to their oppressor (Fanon, 1967). We see many recent examples of such dehumanization such as the assignment of prisoner identification numbers to prisoners of Hitler’s Third Reich, the deculturalization, enslavement, and renaming and deculturalization of abducted Africans, and the renaming and forced assimilation of American Indian children in state-sponsored boarding schools, to name a few. The loss of name and personhood is a powerful image and a marker of terror and subjugation. One of the most significant and gut-wrenching scenes in Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976) (portrayed by an ABC TV series by the same name in 1977) comes when trafficked and enslaved African Kunta Kente is broken to the point of referring to himself as Toby after a brutal and life-threatening beating by a white plantation owner. The abuser intended to ameliorate Kunta Kente’s dignity.

Like this agonizing scene in Haley’s script, Lakota Harden (Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & Ho-Chunk) explains how the uniformity of boarding schools affected the minds of teenage girls like herself. “Anytime they took us off the campus,” she says, “we had to all wear the same thing, and the town kids and people would make fun of us because they knew where we



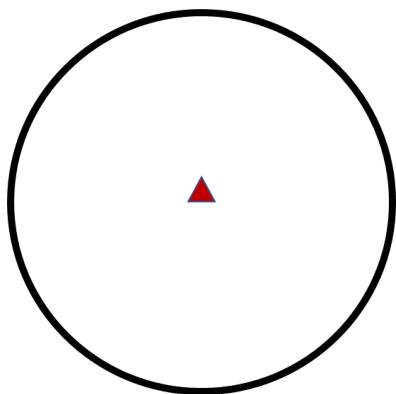
were from—we were like a long line of ants walking. We all looked the same, we all had the same color shirts, the same shorts, the same socks.” Impacts of tactics like this are rarely linear or one-dimensional. Even in Haley’s work of historical fiction, Kunta Kente finds ways to pass down history, wisdom, and power to his lineage through naming and song (Haley, 1976). In fact, African languages and speech patterns have shaped African American vernaculars despite efforts by slave traffickers to deculturate captives (Green, 2002). Similarly, feminists of color have engaged the use of counter-narratives, along with other intentionally subversive strategies, to interrupt hegemonic processes (Coloma, 2008). Like Kunta Kente and his lineage, Lakota has found plenty of ways to resist the cycle of trauma in her lifetime.

I was only ten minutes into my first interview at the UNITY Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, before the first theme of this nature would rear its head. Denise McAuly, Belinda Rudicil, and O’Tika Jones, all Meherrin women, convey the sentiment that unifying their community is imperative to their survival as Meherrin (and Indigenous) people. They have a need and a motivation to move beyond and heal from racism. Denise, the eldest in the group, provides social and legal context (described in chapter 4) explaining how today’s Meherrin people came to be so diverse and so fractured upon the imposition of white southern race tactics. In North Carolina, racial politics like those in the Meherrin and other NC tribal communities led to divisive tribal politics and devastating family separation (Gonzalez, Kertesz, & Tayac, 2007; Jeffries, 2015). As Denise explains, though, the Meherrin and their historians are actively confronting the tendency for Meherrin families to fall away or be pushed out because of the legacy of these 19<sup>th</sup> Century racial politics. As she put it, many Meherrin had more or less “gone off into other races.” These three women who themselves demonstrate phenotypic diversity but originate from the same Nation convey to me that, regardless of skin color, a Meherrin is a

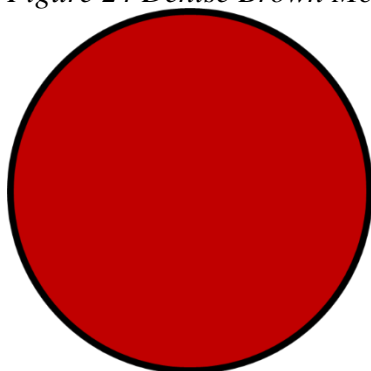
Meherrin. This embodies Hilary Weaver's (Lakota) (2015) call to decolonize the way we think of skin tone and race in Native communities (discussed in Chapter 4).

These Meherrin women speak to the obvious diversity in even that small group of three when it comes to phenotype and family history. The story of the Meherrin is a narrative complicated by intermarriage, southern race relations, and eugenics legislation. The Occaneechi also faced serious hostility from other tribes in the state, in part because of this same type of diversity and the intermarriage between Blacks and Natives, says Vivette Jeffries-Logan. While there are unique features of southern race relations in comparison to the rest of the country, the resulting diversity of phenotype and experience that emerges in the Meherrin community is not as unique (Krouse, 1999; Weaver, 2013). Even in isolated land-based and reservation tribes, some of which were colonized far later in most cases than the First Peoples of North Carolina, Jennifer Irving (Oglala Lakota) points out that wide skin color and other forms of diversity are becoming increasingly common.

Denise's family is at the core of the Meherrin community, and her brother is the sitting Chief. Denise is a clan mother and as such, sees herself as the center of the circle (see Figure 24 below). Denise grew up knowing she was Native. O'Tika, on the other hand, had some family stories about that possibility but grew up in a family where it was taboo to even speak of being Indian. She learned of her heritage and joined the tribe just five years ago when she was thirty-four years old. Denise explains the healing journey her tribe has undertaken to reunite Meherrin families torn apart by race and racism. As a testament to the healing being done in the Meherrin community, O'Tika also sees herself as completely inside the circle, unseating over a hundred years of genocidal tactics to do the opposite and despite a lifetime of not being allowed to be Native.



*Figure 24 Denise Brown McAuly's social location in the Meherrin community*



*Figure 25 O'Tika Jones social location in the Meherrin community*

This does not mean that O'Tika doesn't struggle from time to time. She feels subjected to strange stares sometimes from other Native powwow goers who see her in her regalia, but she knows who she is and is gaining a powerful sense of self-acceptance. While the Meherrin are engaging with resistance to race-based tactics as a tribal Nation, I find similar resistances to the trope of the disappearing or fractional Indian at multiple levels in this sample.

Since early on, Lakota Harden is a resister. She comes from a family of resisters, in fact, forming part of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Women of All Red Nations (WARN). Lakota discovered her gift for organizing back in an Indian Boarding school in South Dakota when she was able to advocate on behalf of girls in her dormitory for point system that would allow them to earn the right to make outfits; this meant that they could express their

personalities and dress in a way that made them feel more human. She was also able to organize the other girls in her dorm and bargain with the nuns for a solution to the abusive way that they were being woken up. They worked out an arrangement where they could exchange good behavior for music to play before the fluorescent lights would be shined which avoided the need to flip mattresses. Certainly, examples of resistance in the most difficult of places are common. At the 2017 training for the Circles of Care Project put on by the Seattle Indian Health Board, Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee & Athabascan) told the story of two of her uncles who had gone to Indian Boarding School together. The older of the two would take great risk to call his brother by his name, which was forbidden at that school, reconnecting and reminding him of love, family, and personhood.

As colonized groups heal, regaining whole personhood and sovereignty over self is critical. African Americans engaged with this, in part, by developing unique ways of naming that contrasts with norms of whiteness in the US and draws upon traditional African convention (Lieberson & Mikelson, 1995). After the 1970s, American Indians have similarly begun to assert sovereign rights to speak tribal languages and are reclaiming rituals of naming and taking back ceremonies (LaDuke, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Carroll, 2014; Jeffries, 2015). Artists like the Reclaiming Our Power collective, the 1491s, Red Eagle Soaring, A Tribe Called Red, Litefoot, Louie Gong, Frank Waln, Ras K'Dee, Half-Smoked, Monique Bedard, Chief Lady Bird, Mary Kim Titla, and Sunny Red Bear have meshed Indigenous imagery with pop culture in refreshing and creative ways that capture the hearts and minds of today's Native youth. The forms that decolonization and resistance take in the face of pervasive social systems like race are scantily talked about in comparison to the deficits they create.

American Indians may struggle to attain success in multiple spheres of mainstream US life (including education, business, economy, and politics) but any systemic analysis, (be it Critical Race, systemic racism, internal colonialism, racialized social systems, etc.) quickly rules out the possibility that cultural deficits are to blame. In fact, as global citizens, we are quickly realizing that Indigenous knowledge will be necessary for the world to survive impending climate devastation that Western science failed to prevent (Little, 2018; Robbins, 2018; Pillar, 2018). Still, cultural deficit-based arguments are common in mainstream conceptualizations of Indigenous people and carry racist messages about the motivation, sobriety, and intelligence of Native Americans. They construct multiple enduring holes in the psyches of Indigenous children who hear them in schools (Pewewardy, 2006). Richard Valencia (2010) discusses the problematic nature of describing oppressed groups as being plagued by handicaps, contributing to the same process of subjectification discussed by Fanon (1967). Leonard Long (1993) writes about similar tropes of deficit-based thinking in relation to the African American community, stating, “the deficit model begins with the concept of self-depreciation, and is characterized as genetically inferior, pathological (Blacks as a diseased culture), socially disadvantaged, culturally deprived, and possessing a slave culture” (87).

Just as they’ve done with Black people in America, the colonizers have long implemented capitalist strategies of systemic racism designed to deter self-actualization and sovereignty from being realized within US institutions (Marable, 1983; Feagin, 2010; Glenn, 2002). For example, if carried out without revision or sovereign resistance, blood quantum would lead to the total extinction of American Indians as formal political entities (Neath, 1995). The Boarding Schools, also, were so culturally damaging that *whole* Indians rarely, if ever, emerged from them. Without heeding Long’s (2003) call to abandon emphasis on deficits, Indigenous

Americans appear passive victims of colonization made possible by a culture inferior to that of Europeans.

Occasionally, I see comments to this effect on Facebook or media articles. Online commenters openly espouse such arguments. With the recent release of a report about experiences Native women in Seattle have had with sexual assault, trolling users quickly pointed fingers at the Indian community citing glaringly racist assumptions about cultural deficits and perceived perversion of Native people, hardly mentioning historical traumas or ongoing exploitation of Native women in the media or in body. Indigenous people have been uniquely conditioned to think of themselves as fractions of a historicized and fictitious whole. That fictitious whole is a pure and untainted pre-colonial Indian who was noble yet inferior to Europeans and unfit to survive in a modern world (Bird, 1999). If carried out without revision or sovereign resistance, blood quantum would lead to the total extinction of American Indians as formal political entities (Neath, 1995). If such colonialist conceptualizations pose threats to the sovereignty of Tribal Nations, they certainly threaten the sovereignty of self and person for Indigenous individuals.

Healing and decolonizing are not so much destinations as they are an ever-evolving process of making space for the sovereignty of self and Nation. Having survived Indian Boarding Schools, Lakota Harden tells me that it takes a lifetime of work to even begin to heal from it, to regain wholeness. She admits that, after years of going to ceremony, counseling, classes, and protests, her journey to reconcile grief and trauma is ongoing. In a white supremacist society, this work of resistance is inherently political. Despite the resistance that I find participant stories, these Indigenous Americans continue to struggle with fractional pieces of self, complicating their relationships with their own bodies, minds, spirits, communities, and tribes.

The subtle and not-so-subtle effects of racism and anti-Indigenous sentiments continue to impact self-perception and wholeness. For example, Crystal Rizzo (Southern Ute) may always see that poster of Pocahontas from her childhood room stacked against her own image when she looks at herself in the mirror. It may always be a backdrop in her subconscious thoughts. The image, fictitious but powerful, is confounded by the Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) she carries—a legal document which sends equally confusing messages. The struggle these storytellers experience with imagining themselves as a whole Indigenous person now or at some point in their pasts is often evidenced by reported social locations outside the center of one or more of their Indigenous communities. This is true whether someone self-declares as “full-blooded,” multiracial, reservation, urban, or none of the above.

## **5.2 To Make Frybread**

When I was younger, I had a conversation with a Tuscarora dancer at a powwow in Hillsborough, North Carolina. He had beautiful men’s traditional regalia and his large bustle looked remarkable. Upon closer examination, I saw several recycled items in it. For one, at the center of the bustle there was a compact disk. I asked him about the bustle and learned he had made it himself. I asked about the CD and he said that he used all of what he had to make his regalia.

This caused me to reflect on the history of frybread, a cultural phenomenon that emerged out of commodity rations on Indian reservations. Frybread is a testament to survival. It is a way to create food and warmth out of a set of provisions meant to precipitate starvation. The challenge was to feed a family on a box of flour, lard, sugar, cheese, beans, and other useless starches. The creative genius of frybread is irrefutably a story of resilience—of rising when pushed down. But, as Sean Sherman (Oglala Lakota) warns, it is also a story of the pervasive

destructiveness of colonialism because frybread is a deadly food (Sherman & Dooley, 2017). Frybread is the story of finding a way to hold family and tribe together against insurmountable odds. While frybread undoubtedly attributes to the poor health outcomes in Indian Country, blaming the practice of making frybread is to overlook the systemic context in which it arose.

What I see in some of the stories from today's Native people is what I saw in that man's regalia, and in frybread: resilience. As resources become available to Indigenous communities (in large part because of the political savviness and creative genius of Native people and their tribes), US First Nations are finding ways to honor frybread and what it represents while also returning to older memories and practices of growing, consuming, and eating traditional and sustainable foods (Corntassel, 2012; Grey & Patel, 2015). Frybread was survival in a time when physical wellness could not be afforded, but Indigenous communities are now looking to heal in more balanced and sustainable ways. Abigail Echo-Hawk, Seattle Indian Health Board and Director of their research division, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI)<sup>40</sup>, talks about the need to move beyond being resilient to thriving. Interestingly, her sister Hillel is an Indigenous chef and founder of Birch Basket, an Indigenous catering business featuring pre-colonial foods and looking to re-empower traditional foodways (Clement, 2018). To “make frybread” in this context is to, as Audre Lorde puts it, dismantle the master's house using his tools. Hillel Echo-Hawk is sharpening tools of her own, and she's not making frybread.

Often, as in the case of frybread, we are constrained by our circumstances and resources. The Elders in Native communities made frybread to ward off starvation so that the young people could imagine something even better. In Lakota Harden's story of organizing her peers in the boarding school—negotiating with the nuns and priests to get rewards in a system designed to

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<sup>40</sup> UIHI ([uihi.org](http://uihi.org)) is one of 12 tribal epidemiology centers in the nation, it is housed under the Seattle Indian Health Center (SIHB) ([sihb.org](http://sihb.org))



consume and destroy Indian children—is an example of remarkable brilliance in the face of extremely limited circumstances. Lucinda Tiger’s stories of working to help Native coach Native kids to survive interactions with racist teachers and to graduate in a mid-century public school system in Oklahoma intended to fail them is a similar story of brilliance in the face of grim odds. As Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèsah) provides an example, too, explaining that Occaneechi families evaded white settler aggression by practicing their spirituality and conducting community gatherings in the relative safety of church houses, hiding in plain sight—Native brilliance.

The dreams of thriving Natives that keep people like Abigail Echo-Hawk up at night, those of self-sufficient and sustainable Indigenous communities, require the creation of systems and ways of being that subvert these created to keep Indigenous, POC, Queer, Immigrant, and other groups pushed down. Learning she had the gift for organizing while in the boarding school, Lakota went on to be a part of the Oakland group that would come found the anti-racism movement in the US. Tribes are realizing the needs of kids like those Lucinda worked with and are taking charge over their own education. Resilience only occurs when one is reacting to being pushed down, like grass popping up after being mashed. Today’s Indigenous Nations and people are actively exploring ways to invoke sovereignty of self and Nation to navigate the legal and social systems in ways that reposition themselves as agents of their own histories and fates (Corntassel, 2012; Jeffries, 2015). They are engaging with decolonization, even if through the words and dreams of their youth. Last and most relevant to the stories in this project, Natives are constructing identities that challenge colonial hegemony and erasure.

The story of the Urban Native Hub, brilliantly portrayed by Renya Ramirez (2007), is a similar portrait of resiliency. Urban relocation programs, poverty, unemployment, abuse, Indian Boarding Schools, and other traumas have pushed Native people off the reservations for well

over a century (Fixico, 2000; Ramirez, 2007). Especially in the case of urban relocation programs of the 1940s-60s, the goal was to give Native people another “ration” that was not intended to sustain tribal life because of the isolation and broken promises of workforce and housing assistance (Fixico, 1986; Lobo, 1998; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). However, instead of melting away, Indian people congregated and, in many cases, created systems of tribal clanship and infrastructure to support it (Straus & Valentino, 1998; Fixico, 2000; Lobo, 2001; Ramirez, 2007). Tommy Orange (Cheyenne & Arapaho) (2018) writes a powerful and endearing monograph about Urban Indian life that beautifully portrays the heartbeat of the hubs that Ramirez (2007) describes, imperfect but home for so many Natives.

I recently heard a story told by Jania Garcia (Haida), an Elder and board member for the Seattle Indian Health Board. She spoke at the annual community service awards banquet created to honor the memory of her late mother, Adeline Garcia. Adeline was a matriarch in the Seattle Urban Indian community and was one of the early activists credited with today’s health board. Jania stood before hundreds of Native philanthropists and non-Native allies in early 2018 and spoke about the origins of the American Indian Women’s Service League, a predecessor of today’s Seattle Indian Health Board. Her mother, she says, along with other Elder women from the Indian Center used to go travel around to the memorials held for displaced Natives who had died in Seattle. They would serve as witnesses so that when their families would come from Spokane, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and other areas from which they had been displaced, they could recall that the service was done in a good way and tell the family where their loved one was buried. It was what they could do.

This story highlights something so connected to the human experience—loss. It also highlights the importance of the family structures created in the vital Native Hubs that Ramirez

(2007) describes. Without these hubs, Indian people often disappeared. Within these hubs, Urban Indians have connected across tribal, regional, and cultural difference and held one another as tribal kin. In a political era when tribes are realizing the powerful potential of exercising sovereignty, Urban Indian organizations are similarly advocating for political recognition, resources, and a recognized space in Indian Country. These hubs are families. They are proxy tribes. They are survival. They are love.

### **5.3 (Re)Membering Our Stories, Reclaiming Our Existences**

Urban Indians, Reservation Indians, Casino Indians, Queer Indians, all Indigenous people are in a state of flux—one in which sovereignty, ingenuity, and resistance are being asserted and taking on new meanings. Healing and decolonization took root as the world witnessed the people of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation called upon the many Nations for support in standing up to the massive Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) that threatened their way of life and, ultimately, the lives of all humans who indelibly need water. The movement at Standing Rock is thought of by many as the spark, and, in some ways, this must be true, but it could have just as well been the smoke from a fire already burning...the fire of change being lit by the eighth generation that Frank Waln and other Lakota people speak of. Standing Rock is the manifestation of seeds planted in sorrow, grief, pain, and survival.

As I reflect on the stories and experiences this group of people from across Turtle Island shares with me, they have begun to mesh and weave into one collective story. This is a story of Indigenous People navigating a society created to destroy their existence. It is a story of victories and triumphs as much as one of pain and trauma. They are a collective storybook of proud survivors of centuries of genocide. I take note as several participants pause during the telling of their own stories and remark the foreignness of examining them in this way. Indigenous

personhood has been so intricately challenged that Native people often struggle to speak personal truths perhaps for fear that they will offend, be dismissed, or that they are not authentic enough to speak on the topic (Weaver, 2001). What I also find is that when they do decide to speak their truths, they do so with the hope that their story might be helpful to other Native people. That is love. I also feel a certain frustration—Indigenous people are tired of just “making frybread,” of surviving with whatever they’re given. This is the era of memory, restoration, and strength. Indians are demanding to be whole.

In their book, *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (2005), Waziyatawin (Dakota) and Michael Yellow Bird (Three Affiliated Tribes) define decolonization as “the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation” (5). Because it is intelligent, calculated, and non-linear, it is not imagined as a total return to an imagined pre-colonial state which would be unlikely to succeed in the modern context and environment and would necessarily not be in anyone’s best interests. Therefore, Kim Anderson (Cree-Métis) points out that it involves building “a new world out of the best of the old” (Anderson, 2010, p. 89). The stories that emerge here provide glimpses of Native people drawing upon ancient wisdom, family stories, and a personal commitment to refusing to be erased. They are rethinking who they are in the world and, in turn, contemplating a future for their families and people.

The concept of decolonization (as defined by Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, 2005) is a powerful one. Because I seek to describe actions taken by this study’s storytellers as I understand them, I choose to use (re)member as a descriptive verb that captures the essence of what I believe

decolonization to be. At some point in this project it dawned on me that when participants contemplate a better future for themselves or their communities, it involves restoring or (re)membering Indigenous knowledge and wisdom and integrating it in contemporary life. Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèсах) speaks about konspe'wayi— “blood memory” in her language—to describe when one knows something that did not come from firsthand learning. Native people have long known that people are born with knowledge from their ancestors, the earth, and the universe. Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee & Athabascan) laughs as she tells groups of Natives about how long it took Western science to catch up to this wisdom, “discovering” the existence of epigenetic markers. Regardless of what it is called, this sort of memory, and the act of restoring or (re)membering Indigenous knowledge as it was before, and as it was meant to be, is melded into the stories in this project. Epigenetics is not reserved for Native people. My argument is not an essentialist one. Rather, all people are born with information about our people’s accumulated experiences along with knowledge necessary to heal, attain balance, and create wellness for themselves. All people are shaped by their past experiences, firsthand or intergenerational. Simply put—Native people are listening, despite centuries of tactics employed by settlers to make them forget. The opposite of (re)membering is dismemberment, which is an astute way to describe hole-ness and the toll of the colonial bomb.

The title of this dissertation is based on the premise that through the sacred act of (re)membering, Native people are finding wholeness in places where colonialism creates holes. Jude Killsplenty Cruz (Ohkay Owingeh, Sicangu Lakota & Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) provides a great example of (re)membering. The Ohkay Owingeh, formerly San Juan Pueblo, recently took back their original name, sacred to their people. Like so many tribes, they had been externally defined by settlers for over a century. The stories of taking back, or (re)membering in ways that

connect people to their ancestors in a modern and seemingly inconducive world, is the essence of decolonization. The stories now emerging from all over the Turtle's ati are beginning to look different now than in the era of frybread.

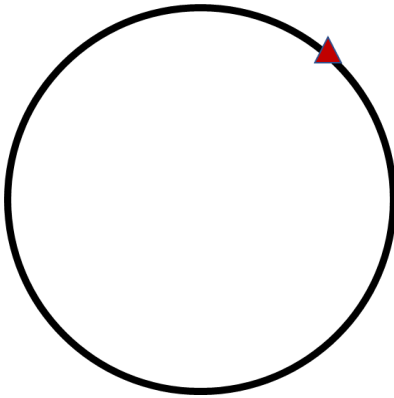
Asserting the freedom to (re)member, to take back, means asserting sovereignty and self-determination. This can be achieved at the level of the Nation and the self (Deer 2015). Rachel Qitsualik (2013) discusses the sovereignty over self inextricably tied to traditional notions of Inuit being. It is the respect of oneself and others in alignment with the traditional core values of their people, which involve (among other things) balance with other living things and the natural world. She explains that possessing this self-sovereignty makes one responsible for and accountable to their own knowledge. I find this to be a powerful concept necessary for resisting at the site of colonization of identities. Similarly, Sarah Deer (2015) discusses what she calls "soul sovereignty," arguing that self-determination over one's own body and spirit is central to solving complex problems like healing bodies, minds, and nations from rape, firsthand and intergenerational. Relevant to the usage of the term employed in this text, she writes, "the most important sources of recuperation [of self-sovereignty] are oral traditions, stories, and traditional belief systems" (p. xv). She connects sovereignty of self to decolonization and (re)remembering.

I have known Michael King (San Juan Southern Paiute & Navajo) for 13 years. At only twenty-five years old, he is one of the most traditional young people I know. He grew up in rural Navajo Mountain, Utah (which he calls Paiute Mountain). There he helped raise the corn, herd the sheep, and tend to ceremony. Many Natives long to have access to original knowledge about these things, but even Michael is healing from the internalization of hole-ness created by colonialism and race. He tells me that for a long time he thought of himself as half Navajo and half Paiute. His father's family are San Juan Southern Paiute and his mother's family are Navajo.

This is a fractional and deficit-based self-conceptualization because the language suggests he can only have one foot in either culture or family and that he will never be wholly one tribe or the other. It represents a hole through which half of his being is taken out.

Michael's maternal grandmother once referred to him as Navajo and he reminded her that he was only half. This elicited a powerful response. "You are my grandson, you are Navajo," she said, and "you are Paiute." She was bothered by the idea of having a "half grandson," something she does not believe in. His self-definition was called into question and ultimately shifted when she reminded him that he is a whole person. Heeding the lesson from his grandmother, Michael now balances both as central to who he is, and by doing so, can honor both of his families and himself as a sovereign person. She was clear in telling him that system of blood quantum and CIBs comes from the Bilagáana, the white people.

Identifying as half Navajo and half Paiute versus identifying as Navajo **and** Paiute may sound like a small difference to some, but it involves the removal of an imposed deficit; shrapnel. It is also a powerful example of what it means to (re)member traditional wisdom and to (re)member Nations. Of course, and I stated previously, healing is not linear, and colonialism is multifaceted. Michael's grandmother may have helped him to pivot away from imagining himself in terms of blood quantum, but he remains near the psychological borders of his communities for other reasons (see figure 26 below).



*Figure 26 Michael King's social location in is Navajo/Paiute Mountain, Utah community*

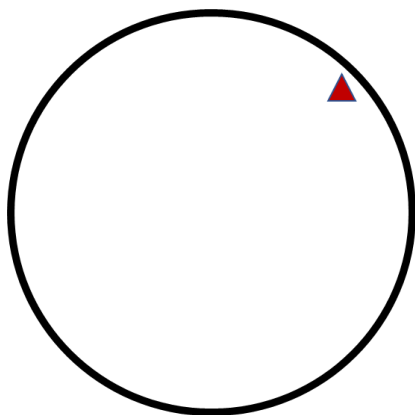
He cannot fully embrace his Navajo side, he tells me, because of resentments the Navajo have about Paiute self-determination. As for the Southern Paiute, they struggle to claim an existence in the place they know as Paiute Mountain (referred to on the map as Navajo Mountain), where they hid in plain sight for generations. This points out something incredibly important—an actualized sovereignty of self is inextricably linked to a realized sovereignty of Nation.

Standing next to Michael, Ashley Falzetti (Miami) would appear to most to be non-Native. She seems white, a reality she has been hyper-aware of throughout her life. Ashley was the first person I've ever had to tell me that she is both Indigenous *and* white. She does not feel like a "Native who looks white," nor a "white person who is Native;" she is both. She celebrates the contradiction and the messiness of owning both intersections. It is her truth. "Indigenous is not a race," she explains. If not a race, Indigeneity is a complex system of belonging informed by tribally-specific definitions and stories along with criteria set by sovereign governments (Cook Lynn, 2007; Villazor, 2008). Ashley's insistence that one does not need to define oneself using fractions or deficits was refreshing and is like Michael King's (re)membered identity. It is a (re)membering of ways of being before Euro-American standards that can help one (re)member their right to exist as a sovereign person, intersections and all. Michael and Ashley are not the



only ones who've arrived at this bold self-concept. Though Ashley has spent more time discussing and analyzing the implications of an identity involving whiteness, Claire Norwood (Tolowa, Karuk & Yurok) also identifies as both Native and white.

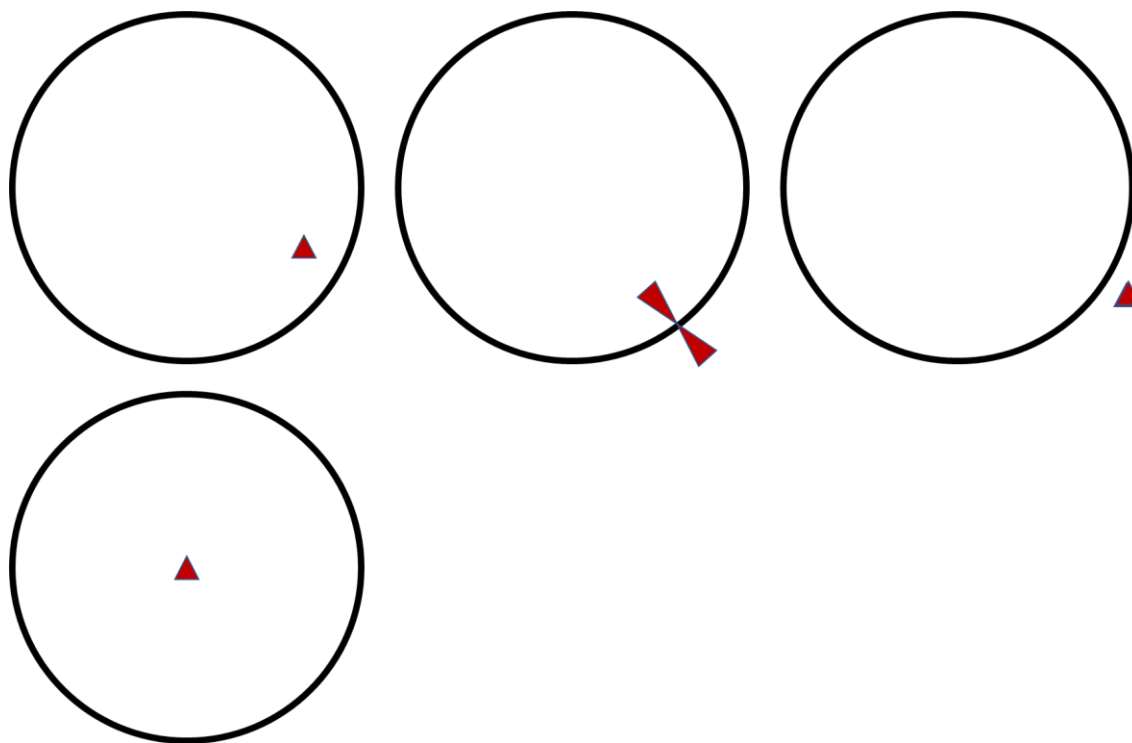
It is common for multiethnic and/or multiracial people to feel out of place in either of their origin communities; the entire anthology *Half and Half* (1998) is based on that very experience. Michael, Ashley, and Claire claim identities that suggest healing. Of course, each still struggles to feel fully part of their tribal circles for different reasons. Skin color is one part of Ashley's distance, but both she and Claire grew up largely away from their people and feel they likely have more social class privilege than some in their tribes. Despite growing up away, though, I do believe Ashley's self-reported social location inside the circle (albeit near the edge) is a testament to the healing she has done in her life because her mother distanced herself from her Native heritage, sending Ashley complicated messages as a child (see Figure 27 below).



*Figure 27 Ashley Falzetti's social location in the Miami Tribe of Indiana*

Through time and dedication, Ashley was able to learn the Miami language and teaches it at immersion camps for her Indiana Band as well as the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. She has built relationships with her Miami family and others in the tribe. Claire has engaged in similar acts of (re)membering as well, and, while she feels practically on the borders of her Tolowa (Dee-Ni')

community, she is closer now than she once was, and she has found a home in Urban Native Hubs in Philadelphia and Washington, DC (see Figure 28 below).



*Figure 28 Claire Norwood's social location. The top row represents the Tolowa community now, as a young person, and finally at birth. The bottom is the pan-Indian Native community.*

I can anticipate some of the potential reactions to Ashley's and Claire's identities. Some will perceive the two stories as continued attempts for those possessing proximity to whiteness to make claims over Indigeneity, especially given my argument that such an identity is (re)membered. It is important to add that neither Ashley nor Claire appear to identify as both Native and white in an attempt to avoid critical examination of white-seeming privilege, and they both speak about the need to discuss privilege, especially because they know that some in theirs and other families in their tribes do not carry the privilege of seeming white. Importantly, they are both learning to live in their bodies both inside and outside of Native spaces by (re)membering other ways of being. Just like Michael King is learning to live in a Navajo and

Paiute existence in an area where such a thing has been all but erased, Ashley and Claire demonstrate experiences increasingly common in Indian Country. If light skin means that one cannot be Indigenous, then racial essentialism and colonized thinking becomes acceptable (Beth Hunt calls this the “colonized mind”) (Weaver, 2015).

Of course, not all multiracial Indians are white-seeming. Christian Weaver (Shinnecock) identifies as multiracial. Despite what centuries of legislation and blood quantum would insist, his multiracial identity does not compromise his confident self-identity as a modern Shinnecock warrior. Christian has arrived at the same conclusion that Alvin Chee (Navajo) began to make after Crystal challenged him over his CIB. Alvin tells me that he now sees his CIB as simply a piece of paper. He has come to think about his own Indigeneity as something that doesn’t derive from the “4/4ths” printed on that paper, and instead, something derived from the knowledge he carries and the community that holds him. When in Ganado, the place named for “tall reeds in a stream,” it is being Helen Lincoln’s grandson and the son of Shirley that give him a claim to belonging to the community and the land. It is the history of his maternal and paternal clans, and his grandparent’s clans—a legacy of lineage beyond the confines of blood quantum. He tells me that, as a young adult, he’d assumed that all Natives had CIBs and their tribes were recognized by the federal government. He now says, “I didn’t understand what it means to be Indian until I came off the reservation.” It is off the rez and beyond the confines of his community that he met Natives from all over Turtle Island and learned about the bombing.

Alvin says he now hopes for change when he thinks about cousins who are “half” Indian on paper and the several Navajo people he has met who were raised on the rez but cannot enroll because they do not meet the stringent  $\frac{1}{4}$  requirement for doing so. He implores the Navajo and other tribes to think about other/older ways to (re)member belonging like clan adoption. He asks

why the clan adoption practices and tribal enrollment processes are not one-and-the-same. Restoring those traditional practices, he argues, will allow his cousin's grandchildren to remain enrolled and be fully part of the Navajo Nation. His realization is profound: “when I look at that paper (CIB) now (CIB), I think about how much knowledge we are losing, like the story of the clans my Dad told us; we’re not “full” anything, and that’s part of our story.” Alvin’s revelation is that the Navajo already had the answer; they had it right the first time. It is exciting to see this not only in this study but in my recent experiences in Indian country. I worked with youth at a recent Youth Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) in Seattle<sup>41</sup> who challenge the idea that being multiracial, multiethnic, or urban means they are less Indigenous. The story of the Meherrin and O’Tika Jones are inspiring, and hopefully they point to a long-awaited revolution toward wholeness and memory.

Jude Killsplenty Cruz helps to explain why the psychological and spiritual shift Alvin proposes is critical to (re)membering. He is enrolled Ohkay Owingeh but is also Sicangu Lakota and Turtle Mountain Ojibwe. He laments the political reality that he can only be enrolled with one of those tribes. He shares powerful words:

I do come from Pueblo ancestry and I also come from Lakota ancestry and Ojibwe ancestry. These all have different ceremonial ways. As an individual, I’m not limited to where I can participate, though. I can take from my Lakota ways, I can take from my Ojibwe ways, I can take from the Pueblo ways. I can choose to live all of them without any kind of repercussion. When it comes to enrollment it's different because it’s meant to be a limiting factor.

Lakota Harden and Donna Chrisjohn (Sicangu Lakota & Navajo) also critique blood quantum. They are both identifiably Native, but both Donna’s and Lakota’s grandchildren are or will be in a situation where they cannot enroll in a tribe. This happens so frequently that Eva Marie

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<sup>41</sup> Sponsored by the Seattle Indian Health Board and held at the Intellectual House at the University of Washington in August 2018.

Garrouette (Cherokee) wrote a whole chapter titled “enrollees and outalucks” in her book *Real Indians*. Lakota refers to blood quantum as a “yoke of colonialism,” and Donna names it as one of the three American Indian exterminations.

Donna’s family also highlights the fact that blood quantum is not the only significant way that race is imposed on Native communities. The ancestry someone is “mixed with” also matters. In the case of three of Donna’s kids, who have a Black father, racism creates additional shrapnel. Racism traumatized Donna’s family as it had the Meherrin Tribe of North Carolina, dividing her family through anti-Black race-based ideologies. Again, the race construct is a tool of the colonizer that works to destroy Native personhood, culture, and sovereignty, and this takes numerous and unexpected forms. The essentialist messages that it invokes cause Native people to measure themselves against pseudo-biological ideas that never existed in tribal communities prior to colonization.

Donna now sees herself near the center of the circle. She recalls why this was not always the case. Her family carries a lot of trauma, and her own mother is a multigenerational Indian Boarding School survivor living with the scars of the assimilation process. Donna experienced a shift since her younger years where she moved from the outside of the circle to her current location. Her mother’s pain and wariness about being Native had a lot to do with her outsider position as a young person because she took on some of her mother’s grief and anxieties. This is the transmission of intergenerational trauma (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Sotero, 2006). Later, just after she had children, that distal position was reinforced for a short time because she was ostracized from her family. Their racialized proclivities caused them to treat Donna and her children differently, even though Donna’s mom has French ancestry and dons red hair. “The entire family was upset with me,” she says. Donna was ostracized, and the

family or community would frequently say things like, “Donna Jean has Black kids,” clearly overlooking the fact that the kids are Native because they are Donna’s children.

For a long time, this wound was too raw. Donna kept herself and her kids away from her family, mostly. She has a lot of compassion for her mom despite this behavior. She knows where it comes from. Most all the participants in this research know exactly from where the ills in their families and Indian Country originate.<sup>42</sup> Donna seems to well understand the source of her mom’s specific behaviors, too. Her mom has always had anxieties and insecurities about not measuring up. Because of the abuse and torture resulting from the legacy of the boarding schools that she and her mother (Donna’s grandmother) attended, and because of likely insecurities about her own complexion, as well. Her mom did not feel whole or secure about her own being in the world and wanted her children to measure up. Poupart (2003) explains that as a massively traumatized people, Natives sometimes replicate the same abuses within their families and communities that they experienced themselves. Donna has seen this firsthand. She has also made a choice to do as Poupart (2013) suggests, to interrupt the cycle. She is not alone. Lakota Harden tells me that one of her greatest accomplishments was telling her mom before she died that despite all the violent abuse they’d experienced in the boarding schools, she nor any of her siblings had ever struck their children. She knows this gave her mom peace in her final days.

The shift that Donna recalls experiencing when she began to see herself as being closer to the center of the circle and being more whole, and when she knew she had to break the cycle, was when she experienced two things. First, her children began to be old enough to become

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<sup>42</sup> When the UIHI report regarding sexual assault of Native women in Seattle was first compiled in Summer 2018, the agency decided to give community a chance to respond before it’s public release, and they held a Native town hall. Community members there connected the findings to the various traumas inflicted on the community and looked toward ancient tradition for the answers. It was a beautiful and empowering meeting with brave and eloquent participants.

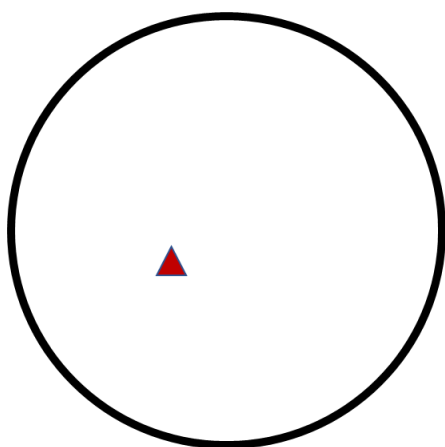
curious and to ask questions about their own Indigeneity. As a Native woman, she realized she was responsible for carrying on the culture, and that her kids understanding of who they were in the world would be shaped by what she taught them. She explains:

I think that all those questions come up when you have children. Children are naturally curious, and they ask a lot of questions. It makes you did deep sometimes. They just ask the simplest question and it can make you think back to what you were taught, and the way things are supposed to be for our people. As a parent, we have a responsibility to make sure that we do as much as we can while we're alive to ensure that they have a better future, not just for them but for their kids as well. That's where that responsibility comes from—I have a responsibility to my... not just my kids but all Native kids, that they're able to have positive imagery, better education, and educational outlets, more cultural understanding... I think we have a responsibility to provide that for them and give them a sense of security... a lot of the things that I wasn't given growing up. I want to give them more than what I had.

The second experience is that she did the work of learning to separate the intergenerational trauma she was experiencing with her family and to define herself on her own terms. It was an empowering moment. She says,

I might feel outside of my family, but I don't feel outside of my people and my culture. I feel very grounded in who I am. That has everything to do with me and what I think and what I know about myself and my culture. I think as young adults, you naturally question where you come from. You don't know where you fit in, so certainly, at a point, you feel like you're on the outside and nobody understands you, you know? For myself and for my tribe, we're very strong, we're very forceful with who we are. I mean I've always been taught that we should not be happy to be prideful... it's more honorable and respectful to be humble, but with all that being said, we are very proud of who we are and where we come from. We feel very strong with our culture and our history. When I think about what even my Grandma and Grandpa went through and then what my mom went through, the assimilation process, the boarding school initiative, the Relocation Act, all these things that happened during the 20th Century, and I start reading and learning about different Ancestors, different family members and what they went through in the late 1800s... Some of those incidents are now books or movies because they are so powerful [and they remind me] we weren't going to go down without a fight. We were going to fight for who we are because we had done nothing wrong. We believed so strongly in who we were and what we were doing that I think that showed through in fighting to the very end. Even after being placed on reservation land we continued to try to leave and to try to form our own ceremonies within the reservation confines. I think that says a lot of the strength of our people. That's a hundred percent respectable and honorable for me and I think that we need to talk about that and talk about those stories a little a little more often.

Donna is describing the process of (re)membering and the importance of memory in reconstructing images and narratives to empower self and family. Having conscious and curious children led Donna to her healing. She had to look outside of the trauma and outside of her immediate family to see the larger picture. She's come to realize that her sovereign right to exist and to be proud of her history is about more than just grief. It's about resiliency (see Figure 29 below).



*Figure 29 Donna Chrisjohn's social location in the Native community*

It is powerfully remarkable that Donna is so resolute in who she is being just one generation removed from the Indian Boarding Schools, but this is a shift we are witnessing with the coming of a new (eighth) generation of Indigenous people.

Through exploring and accepting her history and developing her (re)membered Indigenous consciousness, Donna has also realized that being a woman conveys a cultural importance worthy of honor, and that requires responsibility. She tells me,

I think women rule the world. We are life givers and everything that entails, good and bad. The natural ability to give life in this world is an honor and it should warrant the utmost respect because without women we would not have life, and I'm strong in that. When introducing myself or talking about myself I will say how many kids I have and that I'm a mother first. That is what my life is about. My job has to work for them. It doesn't have to work for me. My house is my kids' house. I think that that has everything

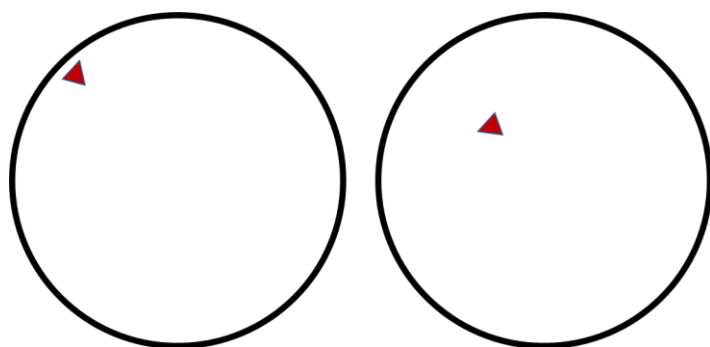


to do with being a woman and being a mother and making those choices in life and realizing that this is my responsibility as a woman and as a mother. I don't consider them sacrifices—this is the choice I made. The responsibility I was given was to live my life for them and to make sure that they have what they need and that everything is secure for them.

Most tribal nations in North America were traditionally matriarchal and matrilineal, and Donna finds power in this responsibility (Hamby, 2000; Weaver, 2009). It helps her to see herself as the life-giver and culture-keeper, which allows her to rise above her own situation and the traumas she grew up in to see that she is an active part of her own history and the legacy of her family and tribes. She finds power and strength in being a Native woman. Denise McAuly (Meherrin) is older than Donna, but she finds a similar strength and purpose in that role. She sees herself as at the center of the circle precisely because she stands as a matriarch in her Meherrin community (something that was strongly reaffirmed by the reactions of all three women when Belinda referred to Denise as a clan mother during the interview). Men, too, are realizing the effects that colonized gender roles have had in a Nation where Native women report the highest levels of domestic violence (Weaver, 2009). Jude says that he has used Ancestor and Elder teachings to retrain his brain because he (re)members that Native cultures “held women in high regard.” He says, “they’re sacred beings that are capable of bringing life forward.” As Sarah Deer (Creek) explains, “Patriarchy is largely a European export. Native American women had spiritual, political, and economic power that European women did not enjoy” (p. 18). These storytellers are (re)membering these truths.

As a testament to (re)membering and decolonization, Michael King and Isaiah Brokenleg (Sicangu Lakota) feel closest to the center of their community when practicing traditions associated with traditional Two Spirit roles (though both prefer traditional words to refer to it). Both recall being asked to do prayers and blessings and to fulfill significant spiritual obligations

because of the teachings that their people hold on to about these roles. This is nearly inconceivable in a society that subtly and explicitly others, and even demonizes, people who are not gender-conforming and/or heterosexual. Michael's experience with this contrasts with the ostracization that Alvin feels because of his sexual orientation, but this speaks to the vast diversity of the Navajo community (even the reservation community). Although Isaiah notes that he may be practically separated from his community, living now in the Great Lakes area, being part of the cultural fabric of his people keeps him feeling close to the spiritual center of Rosebud (see Figure 30 below).



*Figure 30 Isaiah Brokenleg's social location first in a practical sense (due to geography) and second in a cultural sense*

He elaborates on this connection:

The word winkte is actually short for the word (he sounds out) wi-i-inkte, which basically means 'talks like a woman' because in Lakota men talk one way and women talk a different way. There's a different way that they end words, like the word 'thank you'; if you're a girl you would say pilámayaye, and if you were a boy, you'd say pilámayalayo...but its root is the same, just the endings are a little different. People who don't know the language well will tell you it means 'to kill a woman' which is not true because wi- is 'woman' and -tke is 'to kill' and they just put them together and that's not how the word is supposed to be. That's the way it is with a lot of things. Based on what I was taught by my grandparents is that you're expected to live your life in a good way, and you're expected to imbue the values of the community, their values and virtues as yours. You are a highly respected member of the community but at the same time, you're viewed as a leader. In the Indian way, or at least in my culture, leaders lead by example, it's really more of a servant leadership, so although you might be highly respected, you're also expected to do whatever you're asked. If it's like 3-o'clock in the morning and some

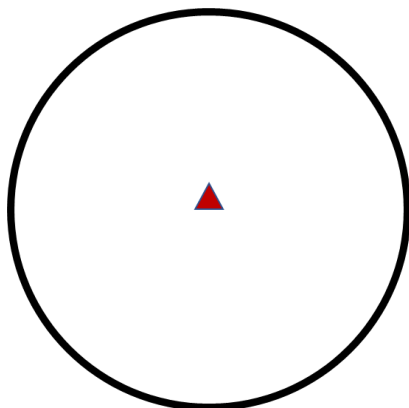
says, "come over, my baby is sick, I need you to pray for my baby," then you're getting up at 3-o'clock in the morning and going over there and praying for someone's baby who is sick at 3-o'clock in the morning. It's not like a leadership where you're sitting on a throne reigning over people. Your job is that you are there to serve the community in the ways that they ask you to, and to live your life in a good way.

Though it is thought that many tribes on Turtle Island had complex gender systems beyond male and female, the community connection Isaiah feels as a winkle person is not something all Queer Natives feel (Williams, 1992). Isaiah also speaks to this here:

It's different coming from a traditional Indian place to a Westernized place. In certain communities, especially down in the south, such as [he names a tribe that he asks me to omit], they're much more conservative...although I'm still me, I still make jokes and that was part of my winkle role is to make inappropriate jokes...they don't always take it as well.

Negative experiences Queer storytellers in this project have had in their Native communities range from the detrimental othering of gay, Queer, or Two Spirit people, to fears of bullying and even disenrollment. Being Queer can draw one closer to the center or move them away from it depending on the response of the community. In some cases, Queer Indians are refugees, of sorts, seeking urban centers where they may have more freedom for certain types of expression, but they face a variety of new challenges in the cities as well (Yuan, Duran, Walters, Pearson, & Evans-Campbell, 2014).

Autumn Washington (Lummi) is also someone who sees herself at the center of the circle which she describes as the Lummi community, and, like Isaiah, she belongs because she fulfills certain roles (see Figure 31 below).



*Figure 31 Autumn Washington's social location in the Lummi community*

Autumn's understanding of her social location overlaps with both Donna and Denise. She tells me:

I see myself in the center because I try and do the best that I can for my people. Professionally, I work one-on-one with youth and their families to help them get out of trouble or to stay healthy. In my personal life, as you've seen, I do canoe paddling. I try to reconnect our youth and families to the culture, so they have something to connect with, something to be proud of. My name is out there all over the community, which can be a lot of pressure at times, but I know that I'm doing the right thing. I'm trying to preserve the culture and help heal our people.

In 1989, some coastal PNW tribes, including the Lummi, revitalized the inter-Nation canoe travel and routes their people made for thousands of years, attempting to slow impending cultural loss and to unite tribes in the region around tradition and protocol (Johansen, 2012). As I was told, tribes like the Puyallup had lost nearly everything, but women like Connie McCloud stepped up to fight for her people. The annual "Canoe Journey" is now a massively well-attended event. This has been a process of (re)membering and one that Autumn makes part of her life's work.

I ask everyone in this research whether gender affects their position in the circle, and I find Autumn's response to this to be both telling and on track with other women in the study.

She responds, saying:

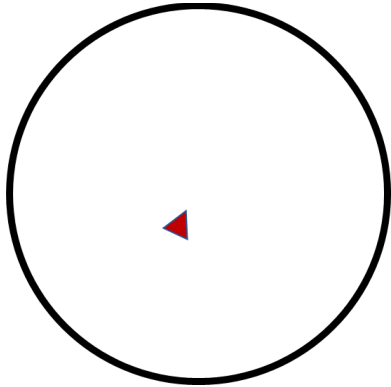
When I was growing up women weren't really supposed to be heard, but then we are also like the matriarchs. We're the ones who hold everything together, so it's kind of goes back and forth between whether I think I'm doing the right thing or if I should or shouldn't do something because I am a woman. I'm just going to do it anyways. I was brought up with a lot of powerful Aunts, so they had a big influence on how I carry myself.

These conflicting messages speak to the tensions between traditional and colonized narratives, but, like other women who see themselves at the center, traditional roles weigh heavily in Autumn's self-concepts and (re)membering process. Hilary Weaver (2009) finds it remarkable that Native women have experienced so much oppression and violence yet continued to serve as the strength and backbones of their communities from the arrival of Europeans to today. Of course, it can be an overwhelming expectation for some, like Lee Blacksmith.

Fulfilling these traditional and decolonized roles gives Autumn not only purpose but strength and importance. It gives her wholeness despite these messages that women cannot be whole or have a voice in the same way men can. She also focuses not on her Western credentials but on the work she does for her people when she explains who she is. I find this to be a consistent theme among those who see themselves as closer to the center of their own Native communities (and those who understand their relationships to the circle through the lens of traditional teachings). Autumn's work speaks for itself, though, because teaching/healing through culture and tradition is a well-demonstrated protective factor for mitigating the effects of historical trauma (Sotero, 2006).

Christian Weaver notes that working for his tribe and for Native people gives him a strong and clear identity, and Donna thinks of herself similarly because she works to educate

Native youth, and non-Natives, too. By working with the schools, she gets plenty of chances to interrupt the spread of toxic messages. John Scott Richardson is an educator and role model, too. At forty-five years of age, he has traveled and lived all over, but I somehow manage to see him at most NC Native events. He describes his location as being in the twenty percent closest to the center of Haliwa Saponi life, and this is impacted by the roles he plays (see Figure 32 below).



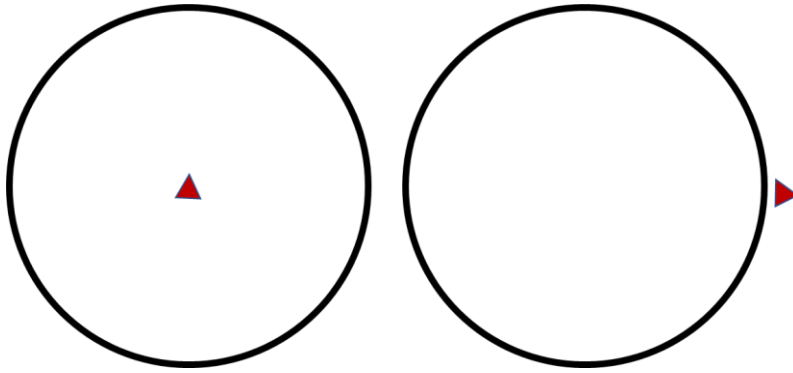
*Figure 32 John Scott Richardson's social location in the Haliwa community*

He says,

When I first came back home to North Carolina, I was just more getting involved and I started drumming and singing and learning that aspect that I hadn't ever really indulged in before. Then my cousin Arnold, he was in the community and he was connecting me, and he had so much knowledge. Now I feel like I've been able to travel to other places, I've been able to speak at other places, I've been able to meet other Elders from other communities, and so now I see my role as someone who can help encourage or pave a road for the younger people and say, not say I don't want them to look at me and say they want to be like me but to say, if I saw him do it in a good way, then I know I can do it in a good way.

John sees himself as an Elder-in-training and has a lot of ideas about how he'd like to engage the youth in the future. He knows they are key to the survival of Indian Nations. (Re)membering community and tradition was a turning point in his life.

Ras K'Dee also sees himself at the center of his Dry Creek Pomo community, and there are two primary reasons that he credits (see Figure 33 below).



*Figure 33 Ras K'Dee's social location first in the Dry Creek community now and second when he was younger*

First, gaining sobriety gave him clarity of mind, body, and spirit. Second, he has been learning about his people from his Elders, and he works for their education and empowerment. These two combine to give him a strong and resolute grounding in his Pomo identity and belonging in the circle. He says:

I'm in the middle right now. I'm still a young person but I'm not *that* young, so I'm kind of moving into this adulthood stage; I'm 35. In terms of the circle, I'm kind of more towards the middle. I'm an educator and I'm also a musical artist and so that puts me more in a leadership position. People look to me for guidance and leadership.

...

When I was a little bit younger and wasn't really involved in my community or my culture, I guess I was more of an outsider. I was outside of the circle. I wasn't inside the circle yet, you know? Even though I always was, you know, I'm always in the circle, it's just that feeling of like not embracing or wanting to embrace my own identity.

...

I was going through a lot of family stuff, a lot of death in the family, and there was a lot of things happening in the community and in my life in terms of my transition from leaving the nest, from home, and moving into the city, San Francisco. It was a transition time for me, mentally, and I think that sobriety really helped shape my clarity and my decisions for the next coming years. That's something that opened me up to like embracing my culture. Being sober and having that clear thought and vision and having a lot of like really vivid dreams that opened me up thinking about my culture, my identity, and embracing those. After my sobriety, after maybe a year of being sober, I started getting more into my culture. When I was around 20 years old, 21, I started dancing, embracing my culture and spending time with the Elders and learning the language and the cultural base that comes with. There wasn't just one specific thing, it was a lot of things.

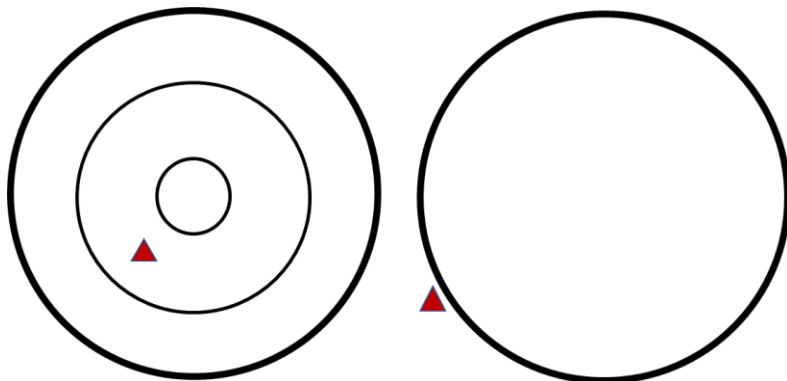
According to the White Bison Wellbriety Model, a spiritual- and Native cultural model for recovery, “reclaiming our power” through sobriety is one of the twelve sacred teachings to bring alignment to Native people through the application of the medicine wheel philosophy (White Bison, Inc., 2013). Ras is confident that sobriety has helped him to access his power and deepen his spiritual journey. His language also gives him a cultural base, which is consistent with Jude Killspenty Cruz’s remarks in chapter three. Since arriving at adulthood, Ras has helped to foster cultural connection through the arts, both with his music but also through his creation and support of Seventh Native American Generation (SNAG) magazine. Its purpose is to provide “Native youth the opportunity to achieve balance and harmony, address historical and modern grievances, and explore and develop leadership and community skills through arts and cultural expression. Through a holistic approach that combines spirituality, tradition, and multi-media skills, we aim to shape the next generation of Native leaders” (SNAG Magazine, 2018, para. 1).

While modalities such as this are diverse across the sample, (re)membering cultural knowledge and practice are critical to wholeness and community belonging across these stories. Like several others, Jennifer Irving names spiritual and cultural roles as significant to her proximity to the center of Oglala life (see Figure 34 below):

I’m towards the center for a couple of different reasons, politically and professionally. I work for my tribe. I’m there, I’m in the mix... but I think even spiritually and community-wise I’m pretty close to the center. I have a lot of connections socially and spiritually here. I go to various ceremonies. It’s not just ours, because there are lots of different Sundances that happen here in Pine Ridge and we attend a lot of them as supporters. We have a lot of different circles, what we call Sundance circles, and a lot of different ways to go to pray and support. We take shoes there because those are our relatives need different things. My family—my mom and my brothers—we go and be firemen there or help with the pipes or whatever the different roles are. I’m sewing a lot of the times for dancers at different circles and Medicine Men have approached me for some of my beadwork and things of that nature, so I feel very connected in that way. Relationship-wise, my boyfriend’s also from here. I wouldn’t say I’m in the center but if



there was like one ring around the center and then a second ring, I'm definitely between the first and second ring. Definitely.



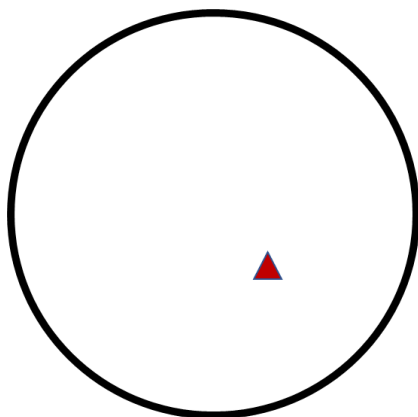
*Figure 34 Jennifer Irving's social location in the Oglala community. The first is her current location and the second is when she first moved back to the rez from California*

Attachment to ceremonial life is a powerful way to (re)member, especially since Native spiritual practices were outlawed (in attempts to eradicate them) until the signing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) in 1978 (US Congress, 1978). For Jennifer, it also took years of trust-building to feel part of the ceremonial circles she describes. This is because she struggled when she first moved back to the reservation from the Bay in her high school years. I have since spoken to Jennifer, and she has been participating in a language immersion course through her latest workplace, the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation. She is learning quickly along with her whole family and community—it is deepening her cultural connection. In her interview, she names language as one of the reasons she is not completely in the center.

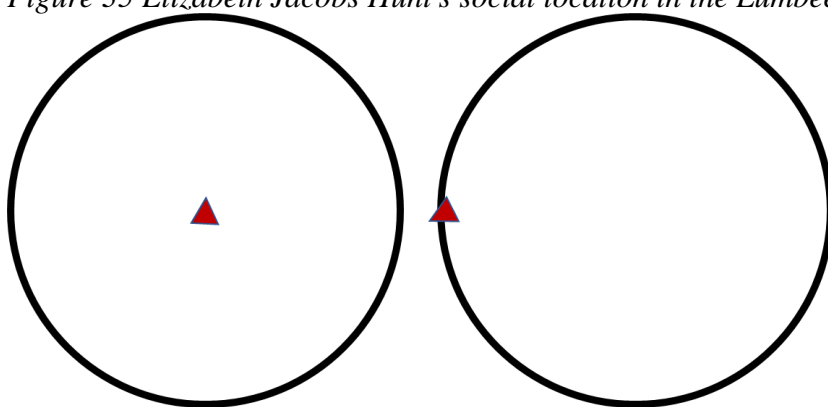
The implications are profound because, amid devastating language loss, tribal communities all over Turtle Island are engaging in innovative tactics to revitalize languages. Some are even using phone and internet apps to reach younger Native people (Hermes, Bang, & Marin, 2012; Begay, 2013; Morris, 2015). This is hugely significant. Not all participants are moving toward the center of the circle. Lucinda Tiger, an Elder Creek woman, sees herself as

further from the center now than when she was younger because she struggles to find places where she can speak Creek and people she can speak it with. “Creek is the only language I like to speak in,” she says. She conveys pain in talking about seeing the massive wave of loss of Creek speakers, but she speaks with exuberant joy when she talks about her daughter who is currently learning the language. This reiterates the importance of efforts like that at Thunder Valley where Jennifer works.

Beth Hunt (Lumbee), Virgil Oxendine (Lumbee), Vivette Jeffries-Logan (Yèsah), and Sharon McIndoo all express frustration with the fact that adherence to cultural practice in the community can be interrupted by the toll of Western-imposed political structures and dynamics. They all struggle in their own way with belonging in their communities because of political tensions. Like language loss, politics can impede cultural protocol and decolonization. Beth went head to head with some Lumbee political leaders when they advocated for finding ways to gain the right to bring casinos to Robeson County. She argues that this attempt did not reflect the views or interests of most Lumbees in the community, especially the Elders, and was not in the best interest of the young people. Her surety and resolve only deepened when she received personal attacks and threats upon standing up against this endeavor. Virgil has also resisted powerful political voices to protect the legacy of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke as a Native American institution. He and Beth both believe in standing up for community and conviction (see Figures 35 & 36 below).



*Figure 35 Elizabeth Jacobs Hunt's social location in the Lumbee community*



*Figure 36 The first circle represents Virgil Oxendine's social location in the Lumbee community now and most of the time, while the second represents moments when he feels at odds with the tribe*

Because they fight for Elders, women, and youth in Lumbee country, they see themselves near the center. It is their sacred responsibility, and Beth is inspired by a rich legacy of Lumbee resisters throughout North Carolina's history, especially Henry Berry Lowry.<sup>43</sup>

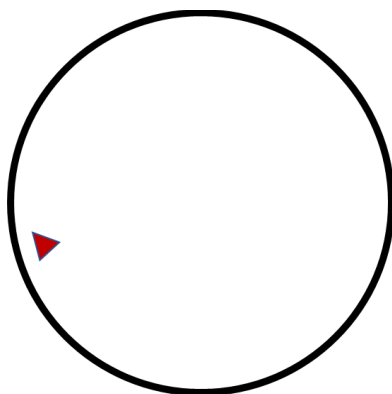
Sharon served as a Judge in tribal courts for a period of time, and she felt isolated and disillusioned when the tribal government turned a blind eye to Domestic Violence and blatant misogyny by prominent members of the court. She knows this presents a strong contrast when compared to tradition. She tells this story:

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<sup>43</sup> See the digital history exhibit on Lowry at UNC Chapel Hill's digital archive: <http://lumbee.web.unc.edu/online-exhibits-2/henry-berry-lowry/>

I started asking the Elders how they handled Domestic Violence (in the past). It was not tolerated. If a woman and a man were married and the man was abusive to his wife, she was taken away from him and given to his aunts and he went to her uncles. They had to live with them for a year until they felt that they were ready to get back together and be a husband and wife. If that did not work, he was dealt with severely. It just wasn't tolerated.

Based on her words, the disconnect for Sharon is not caused by a lack of (re)membering on her part, but in her tribe's leadership because it was operating in a way that was dismembered from tradition and felt too much like shrapnel (see Figure 37 below). This is nearly identical to frustrations felt by Beth and Virgil.

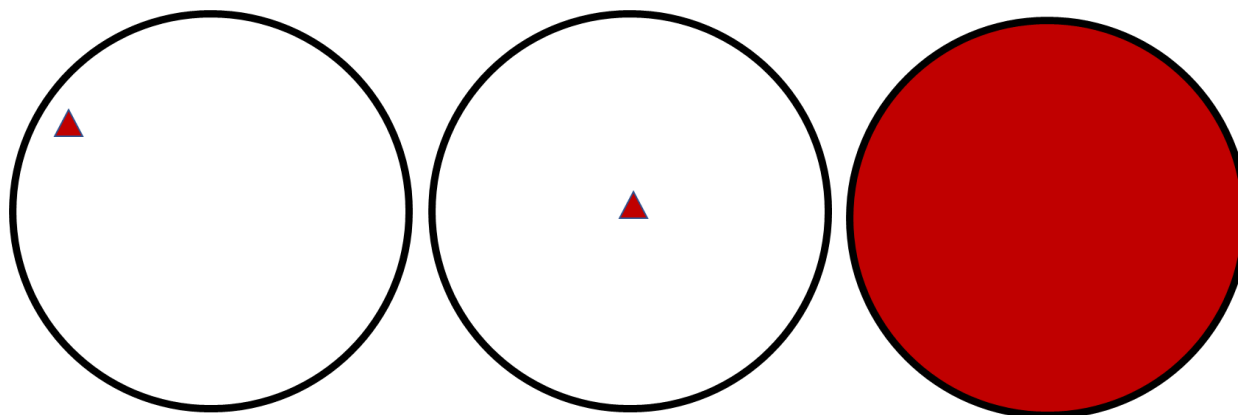


*Figure 37 Sharon McIndoo's social location in the Sitka Native community*

Vivette Jeffries-Logan also feels a similar division between the traditional protocols and modern tribal governments. She shades the entire circle in when describing her location in the North Carolina Indian community broadly, where she is known as “Miss Vivette.”<sup>44</sup> Simultaneously, Vivette sees herself more along the periphery of the formal Occaneechi political entity (see Figure 38 below).

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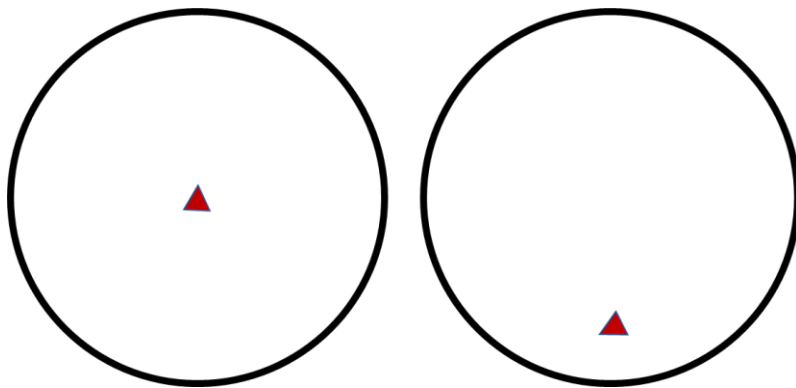
<sup>44</sup> This is a way of showing deference or respect in southern Communities of Color, usually used with women who are considered community Elders



*Figure 38 These represent Vivette Jeffries-Logan's social location. The first represents her current location in the Occaneechi community, and the second is where she was prior to her current location. The third represents her location in the NC Native community*

She served on the Tribal Council for seven years, and, by the end of that time, she felt closer to the edge. Her rationale for total belonging in the NC Native community parallels with Denise's belonging in the Meherrin tribe, because Vivette is seen as a Clan Mother and an Aunty in her community and in the southeast.

Tabby Harris also becomes disillusioned with dismemberment. She is fully at the center of the Choctaw community and Choctaw life. She speaks her language, participates in community churches, and goes to stomp dance. However, there are times in which she moves away from the center. For her, these times come when her tribe tries too hard to appeal to pan-Indianism in their attempts to revitalize their culture or market themselves to the outside Indian or the non-Indian world. She sees these attempts as misguided. It is awkward and ingenuine to her, and she feels a sense of embarrassment (see Figure 39 below).

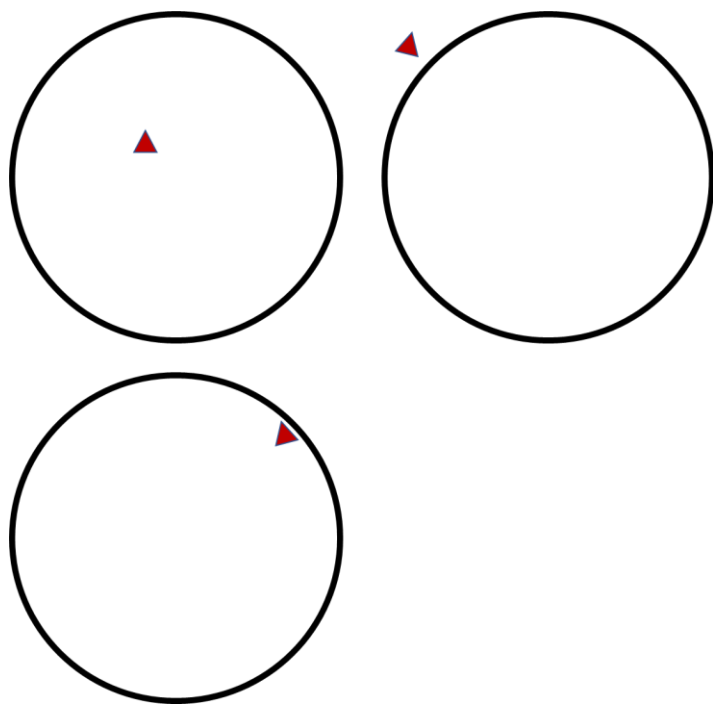


*Figure 39 The first circle represents Tabitha Harris' current social location in the Choctaw community and the second represents her location when she is unhappy or ashamed on the way the tribe represents itself*

When she is speaking her language with her friends, though, even (or especially) if to poke fun or say inappropriate things without being detected by non-Choctaws, she feels inside the circle. Most associate pan-Indianism with being away from the reservation, but Tabby experiences it right there on the reservation, and not in a way she is comfortable with. She knows she is lucky, though, to have grown up among her people. It is also clear that the Choctaw Nation is doing something right, though, because Tabby is a twenty-six-year-old language speaker who sees herself at the center of her community. That is not a small feat amidst the shrapnel and dismemberment.

Esther Lucero (Navajo & Latina), Crystal Rizzo, Christian Weaver, and Annabelle Allison (Navajo) have all done healing around what it means to grow up away from their reservations. Esther's story exemplifies this process. She struggled with her Navajo identity for years. As a third generation Urban Indian, she grew up knowing few Navajos aside from her mother and grandmother, and she did not know her clans (important to the ways Diné people understand their identities and connectedness to other Diné, the land, etc.). Esther's grandparents fled the reservation for work and love, leaving the reservation with the railroad. Family stories

tell her that her grandparents fell in love but couldn't marry back home, perhaps because of their clans. As a young person, she felt anxiety and the pinching fear of rejection when she met other Navajos. She experienced self-doubt and hole-ness but she credits one mentor, Polly Olson (Yakama), for helping her to begin to see herself as a whole Navajo woman. Esther is now forty-one and says she eventually made peace with the understanding that this disconnection from land and relatives was the trauma that she had inherited. As she tells it, she had a decision to make—she could be defined by this trauma or she could live in her body, the body of a Navajo Latina woman. She chose to live. Esther now knows that, while her experience, identity, and way of being Navajo may differ from many who live on the reservation or have a closer connection to that rural rez life, the Urban Indian experience is also a legitimate and authentic Indigenous and Navajo experience. “I have a strong connection to my urban Indian identity,” she says (see Figure 40 below).



*Figure 40 The top row represents Esther Lucero's social location in the urban Indian community--first when she is working and helping, and second when she is learning. The bottom row represents her location in the Navajo community*

In fact, over seventy percent of American Indians live off of a reservation, so she is far from alone (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012). Esther now works to meet the needs of Urban Indians in Seattle and nationally. While she explains that she is unenrolled and still does not know her clans, she is unapologetically Diné, and a fiercely proud Urban Indian.

Crystal Rizzo sheds light on her parallel realization as both she and Esther are undergoing a similar process of shedding colonialist dichotomies. Crystal has a Black birth parent and a Southern Ute birth parent. She faced racism as a brown-skinned girl when she was raised by white adoptive parents in a small town in Alabama. She, like Esther, has spent a lifetime learning to live in her body and to hold on to the connections she has to her tribal family. She says:

My culture is Southern Ute. The rez is an experience of being southern Ute, but every experience I have is a Southern Ute experience because I am Southern Ute. There is no separating me from that because I am an extension of my people. I am an extension of that here or there, and I represent Southern Ute-ness—there is no separating.

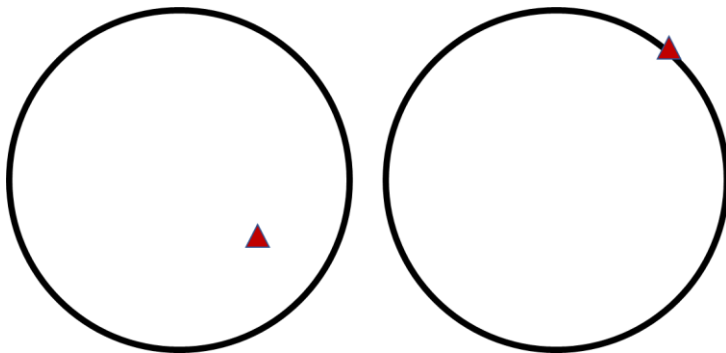
This perspective is a powerful one. Such a declaration would hardly be doubted if an immigrant moved to the US and continued to identify with their nationality, but Indians have become defined by the narrative of extinction and fractional identities where one cannot exist at multiple interlocking intersections.

Urbanness, especially, is one of the holes through which Indianness is thought to leak. Even prominent race scholars who have spent careers working to dispel racial essentialism have reinforced that very same thing in the case of American Indians. In chapter four, I addressed Bonilla-Silva and Embrick's (2006) invisibilization of the racialized experiences of Urban Indians. The racism, poverty, homelessness, trafficking, etc. of Indigenous people in America's cities are overlooked in their model. Storytellers in this project recall their own experiences with racism in the cities, and some of them have been urban for some or all their lives. The implicit



suggestion that racism is only faced by reservation Indians invisibilizes these experiences and normalizes the forces of colonialist dismemberment and dispossession that led over seventy percent of today's Native Americans to cities in the first place, a significant oversight (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012).

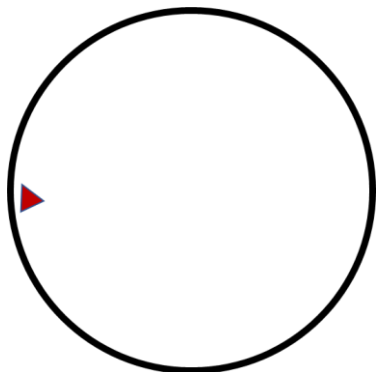
Because urbanness is so commonly framed as counter-Indigenous, today's Urban Indians do struggle with their urban identities (Ramirez, 2007; Lucero N. M., 2014; Jacobs, 2015; Alexie, 2017; Orange, 2018). Annabelle Allison and Lee Blacksmith both felt like outsiders growing up on their reservations for reasons they cannot always explain. Like several others, it was the act of having to move away that gave Annabelle a deeper connection. Today she sees herself as inside the circle. She is not at the center but far closer than she was growing up (consider Figure 41 below).



*Figure 41 Annabelle Allison's social location in the Navajo reservation community. The first circle is her current location and the second is where she was when she was a young adult*

Annabelle insists that leaving gave her an appreciation for culture, family, story, and tradition that she sometimes took for granted as a young person. She now works to serve Native people from inside a federal agency, and it is her culture and upbringing that she calls her “pillar and foundation.” It may be important to note that she has found ways to remain profoundly connected to the happenings back home and has also connected with the few other Native people

who live in Atlanta (hardly a Native Hub, though). Lee Blacksmith admits that she has not ventured to connect with Urban Indians in Minneapolis and struggles to maintain healthy connections to the rez outside of mom and her adoptive parents (see Figure 42 below).



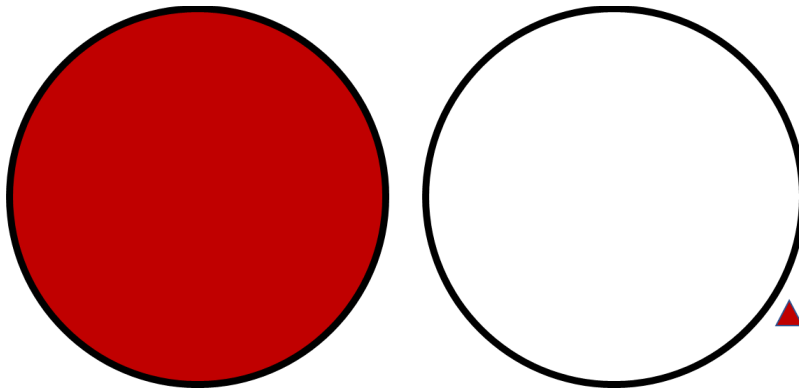
*Figure 42 Lee Blacksmith's social location in the Crow community*

Annabelle has had more time to figure this out, though, as she has lived away from Tohatchi for much longer than Lee has been away from Crow. Also, Lee is twenty-four years old and Annabelle is forty-five. Gaining outside perspective has caused Annabelle to want to (re)member, and she has deepened her commitment to learning from her mom, including learning the language.

Like Annabelle and Lee, there were times when Christian Weaver felt disconnected, too. He did not grow up on the Shinnecock reservation. Like Claire's mom, Christian's parents did a great job of keeping him grounded in his culture, but he says, "when I was around people that lived on the rez, they treated me as an outsider because I don't live on the rez." He mainly only felt this disconnect when he was a child. When I ask him to describe his social location today at thirty-six years old, he says simply and resolutely, "I am inside the circle." The way that he understands his confident proximity and belonging parallels with declarations made by Crystal and Esther. Christian says,

I am invested and involved with the tribe and I'm culturally aware. Even though I don't live on the reservation, I sit on the Economic Development Committee for the tribe. Actually, I live very far away. I live in Denver so I'm very far from the rez. But I represent the Shinnecock no matter where I am. Historically, we were whalers...so some of our ancestors used to go on whaling expeditions all around the world, but they never ceased to be Shinnecock on these expeditions, so I see myself in that light. I work for the American Indian College Fund during the day and I run a Native home business on the side. Most importantly, I carry myself as Shinnecock man and a Shinnecock warrior no matter where I am on Mother Earth.

I find this a powerful and a perfect demonstration of the theme of this chapter, (re)membering, because Christian explains this common thread, of his right to exist as a transnational Shinnecock beyond colonial borders, by relating it to the whaling history of his people. He is (re)membering their history to restore wholeness to his identity and purpose. Importantly, he sees himself fully inside the circle (see Figure 43 below).



*Figure 43 Christian Weaver's social location in the Shinnecock community. The first circle represents the current moment and most of his life. The second circle represents moments when he was younger when he would interact with people who lived on the reservation*

The whaling analogy is apt, too, because, by working to ensure that his tribe and other Native people have access to resources like college and economic development, he is essentially “whaling” in a modern era. Annabelle says that she is fully aware that she became known as the “city girl” when she left, but, like Christian and others, she pushes back on this because she knows that gaining perspective and being involved in the outside world is essential for the

survival of her people, and that sometimes skills that can be attained while away for education or otherwise can be useful when one returns home to tribal communities. She critiques her community for subtly discouraging their kids from leaving home for higher education.

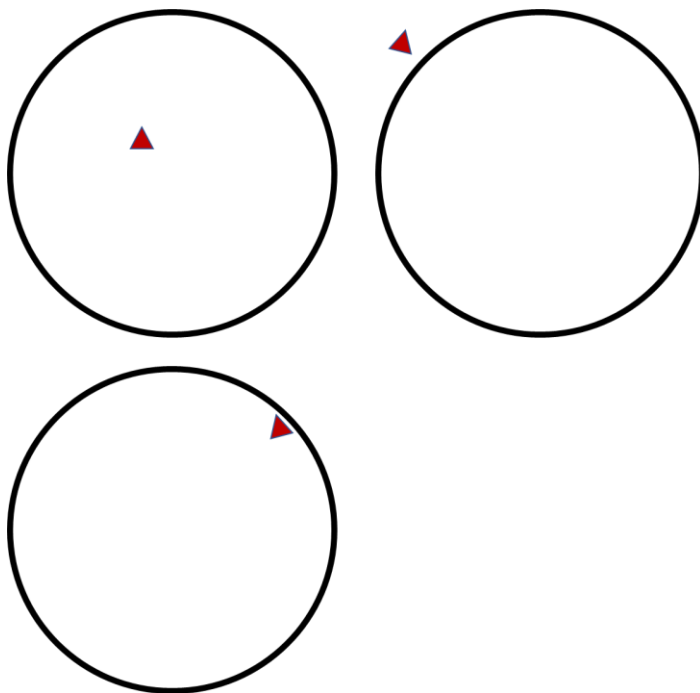
Lakota Harden makes clear that the shrapnel from the colonialist bomb was intentionally scattered and isolated. The idea that you must leave (even if momentarily) to see the bigger picture came up a few times. John Scott Richardson describes himself as “navigating within the twenty percent closest to the center of the circle.” When I ask why he tells me:

My experience is broader than just my community, in a sense, because I’ve lived in other places. I bring that into the circle with me when I come. I have my experience of living in Washington, DC, going to the inner-city schools in Maryland, but also understanding of ceremony and tradition. I’m able to incorporate that into my daily life. Because I didn’t grow up here (North Carolina)—well I can say I grew up some here because actually, I moved back when I graduated high school and lived with my Granny back in the community (Hollister)—but the good thing about being able to see outside of the community but still see inside is to be able to help form relationships with other tribal people and communities...because I don’t see my Nation as different from your Nation. I look at it as all that DNA base of indigenous people... we all need to work together for the betterment of all of us. Even though we have some differences in our creation stories or whatever, we still have those stories and those are still vital to us, so therefore as a whole, we are all important. Being that I didn’t technically grow up there all my life I’ve been able to have these relationships with other communities that I feel are significant. I’m not claiming any special ambassadorship of my own but just because I have been in those places, I feel that sometimes we transcend differences. In this new age, we’re going to have to think larger than our community when it comes to the, not necessarily the prosperity, that’s not the word I’m looking for but basically, the survival of our cultures is going to have to transcend just our own communities alone.

While some who have grown up in their communities or have never left may resent this notion, I do not believe that John nor Annabelle are arguing that people should leave their reservations and villages permanently. Instead, just as Alvin and Annabelle find value in gaining a perspective larger than their rez, John has come to see that communities do have differences but also understands that some of those differences actually create the greatest similarities in their experiences as Indigenous people.

Of course, none of this negates the very real trauma of displacement. Unsurprisingly, it remains palpable in this research. That trauma of becoming disconnected from the rez and from other Navajo families reverberates in Esther's family today. Crystal, too, finds it sometimes painful to visit the Southern Ute reservation knowing it was where she could have grown up.

Esther is not defined by these traumas, though. She plays a vitally important role in one of the nation's most prominent urban Native Hubs. When I interviewed her, she was a leader in the Bay Area Native Hub, and now she serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Seattle Indian Health Board. These Urban Indian organizations act as proxy tribes for the many people like Esther who find themselves displaced by choice or otherwise. Esther may always feel somewhat disconnected from reservation Navajos, but by engaging with her own healing process, she has found a sense of home in the Native Hub where she can be whole and vital (see Figure 44 below).



*Figure 44 The top row represents Esther Lucero's social location in the urban Indian community--first when she is working and helping, and second when she is learning. The bottom row represents her location in the Navajo community*

Esther only sees herself near the center of the Urban Indian community when she can help others (something she does a lot of as CEO of the Health Board), and as she approaches Elderhood she understands that she will move even closer to the center. She has also spent time learning from her Elders, and her cultural teachings tell her that we step away from the center when we need to sit and learn from someone else. Her story is one of several times that storytellers in this project apply traditional teachings to explain their social locations and relationships to their broader circles. Esther is working toward gaining wholeness for herself and her Urban Indian relatives.

Since I've defined (re)membering as finding healing through a balanced return to cultural teachings, some may argue that feeling in the circle in an (Urban) Native Hub more than one's homeland provides little evidence to support my thesis. Upon deeper analysis, though, another finding is emerging. Some, like Sabine Talaugon, Claire Norwood, and Esther Lucero feel at home and close to the centers of the urban Native Hubs that they call home. There is contention and disagreement in Indian Country over how to interpret the meaning of such a belonging. There are plenty who would definitively argue that to move toward a city is to move away from Indigenous culture. In fact, this seems to be a notion that has prevailed in Indian Country for some time. From Isaiah Brokenleg's (Rosebud Lakota) perspective, Urban Indians pick up strands of pan-Indian culture and appropriate them in curious ways to feel or appear authentic.

He tells me this story:

Sometimes I think the Urban Indians have this real fear of loss of their culture, and I think on the reservation people are losing their culture and language, too, but they just don't see it because they're in it, they don't always recognize how that loss is occurring. But in the city, I think they have this fear of it, and so they overcompensate in really weird ways. An example would be like if we're planning something and I say, "why don't we have a youth say the prayer?" It's like, "Oh no! It has to be an Elder! It has to be an Elder!" People freak out. The word Elder didn't come about until maybe the 70s. Both my grandparents and my uncle have said they never heard that word come up until fairly recently and now it's this magical status that people have, and we're supposed to respect our Elders and blah blah blah. What I was told is that Elders... yes, you're supposed to

respect them, and yes, they were typically old people, but it's really anybody who had special knowledge about some unique thing. The reason why we gave old people Elder Status is because back in the day the life expectancy was like 40 so if you lived past that they assumed that you have special knowledge because you were able to live so long. It wasn't just because you're magically old. It's not that I don't like Elders, or I think they're bad or anything, I just think we've sort of lost the functional meaning of a lot of things in Indian country because they have changed over the years. I think that may be a better way to put it.

It can fairly and safely be said that establishing and navigating cultural norms in any diverse and multicultural space is a challenge. This frustration that Isaiah feels here is real and has been expressed by Natives from reservations and tribal communities since the first Natives ever left their original communities for cities or elsewhere. The stereotype of the "wise Indian Elder" has also been perpetuated by whites (Bird, 1999). With all that said, though, arguments over authentic protocol are had *among* and *between* different reservations and tribal communities as well. There have always been and will always be arguments over protocols because Native cultures are incredibly diverse and dynamic. Even within families in the same clan and same tribe there may be these disagreements. Regardless, Urban Indians are working to collectively define and negotiate traditional protocols (Straus & Valentino, 1998; Ramirez, 2007). What this means at the Seattle Indian Health Board is that there is agreement that sweats should be held, for example, but the specific protocol employed depends on the tribe of the community-based cultural practitioner running the sweat.

Esther describes the Urban Indian community as hives. Each bee has a role and function to make the hive work. What she is describing is a tribalist collectivism. This, to me, points out one of the incredible things about these hubs which is that they become proxy tribes. The unique mix of Natives from various tribes who come into any Native Hub influences the culture of the hive and the roles to be filled within it. For now, since she is not an Elder (she said it, not me), Esther sees herself as a worker bee, working specifically to ensure that the resources necessary

for the hive to function are being provided. In Tommy Orange's 2018 novel *There, There*, he explores the urban Indian experience in raw and gripping detail. It is an experience that induces severe Native imposter syndrome laced with the reality that choosing cultural engagement, "Indianing" as he calls it, is a choice (Orange, 2018; p. 118). Perfectly executed or not, Natives in cities like Oakland **choose** to be a part of the hive because one could just as easily melt into a cosmopolitan lifestyle. That feeling of not knowing exactly how to do things "right," or fear of being less Indian than the next, is a hole-ness felt by Natives in reservations, villages, cities, and anywhere the participants in this study may have found themselves now or at some point in their lives. Joane Nagel (1997) explains that we tend to apply problematic metrics to the evaluation of authenticity that make it difficult to achieve, such as the idea that authentic means something must be "unaltered," when we know that "living culture" is not static but evolving (p. 62). She says these evaluations are made both within the communities and from white anthropologists, making identity a site rife with contestation for Natives—rural *and* urban. We also need to be conscious of how racism and essentialism impact the judgment place on Native people. bell hooks explains that the dispossession experienced by Native people has been felt (even more so) by African Americans, the entirety of which were dispossessed of the African continent but additionally dispossessed of land and place upon the mass exodus of Black families from the agricultural south (hooks, 2009). Yet and still, urban Black culture is viewed as authentically Black.

It seems to me that belonging in one of these urban proxy tribes may come with a set of different protocols than any single land-based tribal community, but these protocols are guided by the collective negotiation of a diverse array of cultural teachings. My hunch is that the pre-



colonial Indians gathering in ancient cities like Cahokia,<sup>45</sup> or who were forced to migrate away from a territory because of an earthquake, wildfire, war, loss of fish or game, etc. would have also faced a similar collective bargaining and underwent a process of redefining norms, traditions, ceremonies, and roles to fit their new lands, rivers, and neighboring tribes. I imagine complicated and nuanced disagreements about loss and authenticity, dismissal of “radical” leaders, and disputes about naming and claiming that shook those contexts as well. In fact, upon reading the thoughts of Black Elk as the Lakota people were bombarded with rapid cultural change before and during the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one can hear and feel the great leader confronting the inevitability of adaptation, and, importantly, his understanding that traditional cultural values should be carefully applied to guide those changes (Black Elk, 2014). So, then, in this modern world, Natives insist on finding ways to be Native and maintain cultural distinctiveness even in terrains that seem ill-fitted to tradition.

Ramirez (2007) notes that the results of the reinstatement of tribal protocols and traditions (like sweats) by the previous generation(s) are paying off because young Native people raised in cities are growing up with those traditions. I think about Annabelle’s insistence on finding ways to pray to the East even if it meant getting a balcony dozens of feet above the earth that overlooked concrete to do it. I, myself, have grown traditional tobacco in a raised bed garden in the city and turned a shoe closet in an urban condo into an imperfect yet sufficient place to cure the tobacco. What I see in these examples is a refusal to be erased. I see (re)membering in the unlikeliest of places. I see cultures evolving to ensure that Native traditional values live amid the concrete and the noise, and in the places where Tommy Orange says Natives “know the sound of

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<sup>45</sup> “America’s first city,” described in detail on the basis of archeological evidence in William Iseminger’s book, *Cahokia Mounds* (2010)

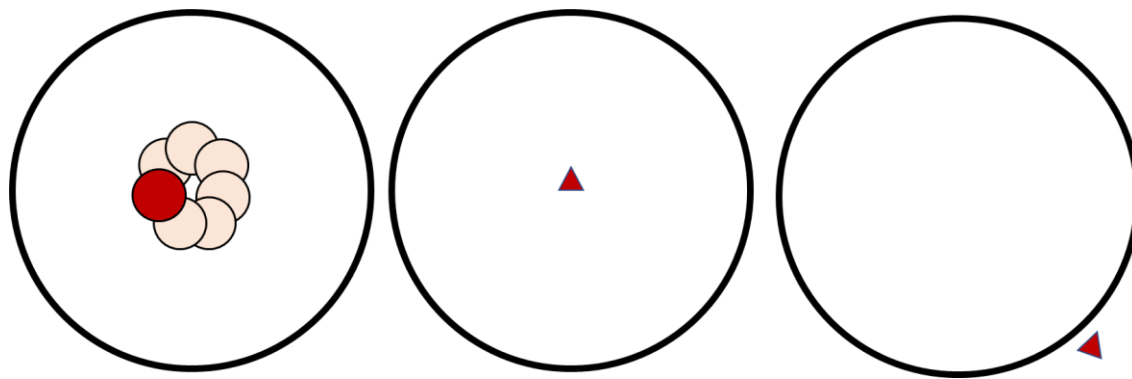
the freeways better than we do rivers” (p. 11). The hope and power of the eighth generation are being demonstrated and realized in urban Native hubs and reservations alike.

The Native organizations that help to hold together the social fabric of urban Native Hubs, like the Seattle Indian Health Board, the Chief Seattle Club, or the Bay’s Intertribal Friendship House (to name a few) have also been actively engaged in the restoration of tradition-backed systems. While urban Indians may have been criticized for their perceived disconnection to tribal ways of being based on cynical judgments about “city Indians” (like those that Annabelle Allison (Navajo) bring up), many of the youth of the eighth generation are growing up in cities and are tackling the issue of culture loss and reconnection and doing so in incredibly impressive ways given the difficulties created by distance, tribal diversity, accumulated trauma, etc. I have personally seen how Urban Indian organizations and tribes have come to rely on one another’s programming and services in mutually beneficial ways and witnessed Urban Indian organizations partner with tribes—a pathway little discussed in assimilationist or extinctionist narratives describing Urban Indians.

It is objectively true that Urban Native hubs are sites of survival, but many portrayed those as analogous to frybread—making the best with what you have but doing so in a way that is ultimately destructive to Indian cultures. In many ways, white mainstream narratives used to describe reservations make a similar argument—that reservations allowed Indians to survive but that drinking, gambling, etc. were their only coping mechanisms (Duran, 1996). Within both contexts (urban Hubs and Indian reservations) the people who call it home know a lesser-discussed narrative—cultural resiliency. Native people don’t simply use what is given by the colonial master to decide the fate of the whole. Indians are unimaginably inventive. In every tribal community, you find social and cultural genius and resistance to colonialism that

demonstrates the will to persist. Each example demonstrates the ability to (re)member tradition and to reclaim an ancient, sovereign existence. Among the many ways this occurs, I choose to focus here on efforts to (re)member belonging in ways that defy racial and cultural hegemony. At the Seattle Indian Health Board, leadership has decided to reorganize around principles of Traditional Indian Medicine and to prioritize the knowledge and expertise of community-based cultural practitioners and spiritual leaders, eventually integrating them onto their coordinated care teams—resilient (re)membering.

Natives who interact with Hubs are complex and multidimensional, like the organizations they participate in and shape. Lakota Harden has lived in the Bay for half of her life, yet she revolves in ceremonies and in spirit around the center of Lakota life, the social Tlingit life of Sitka, and the urban Native Hub in Oakland. The complexities of this contradict over-simplified models about assimilation, Nativeness, race, and Urban Indians. The reality is that like Lakota, many Indigenous people move around between the Native Hubs, tribal communities, villages, and reservations. Their transnational existences are hybrid and fluid (Ramirez, 2007; Orange, 2018). Whether among Lakotas in South Dakota, Tlingits in Alaska, or Natives in the Bay, Lakota has the familiar feeling that the Natives around her are ‘her people’ (see Figure 45 below).



*Figure 45 Lakota Harden's social location--first in the Lakota community, second in both the Bay social network as well as Sitka, and third in the cultural Native community broadly*

There are spiritual and social connections to the people, the land, the waters, the ceremonies, and the histories that have unfolded in each of the places where Lakota has lived. The times that she feels furthest from the circle is when the circle itself moves. She has seen a huge shift and echoes some of the anxiety that Isaiah Brokenleg feels—that Native culture is changing fast and in curious ways. She feels furthest from the center when Native culture is simplified and romanticized by Native people and when she and her knowledge are commodified and commercialized. As a person who was raised traditionally Lakota, she is sought after by less knowledgeable Natives to learn about tradition, but she claims they want the glamor without the full understanding of trauma that her generation and those before experienced. She feels empathy for their hunger, but it does not make this reality easier.

Even still, Lakota's life exemplifies the connections between wholeness and tradition because, when she is on her spiritual homeland, in ceremony, with her people (wherever they may be) or with Natives who are operating from a place of tradition in the way she knows it, she feels herself to be, in the center. Her life of activism in the Oakland Native Hub, and her family's activism through the hybrid rural-urban American Indian Movement, demonstrate the long-fought battle to keep Native people connected to tradition and to heal and (re)member

wholeness. It demonstrates the frustration over just “making frybread” and the strong determination Native people have used to survive. Belonging is wholeness and is the connection to realized humanity. The ability to find this belonging in diverse contexts is a demonstration of resiliency.

Tribal communities, too, have grown tired of just “making frybread.” The Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation on the Pine Ridge reservation in Porcupine, South Dakota, where Jennifer Irving works, is a profound demonstration of (re)membering and ingenuity. On their website, they explain:

We are a Lakota ran grassroots Community Development Corporation that is building a community as a catalyst to create systemic change on the Pine Ridge Reservation. We are focused on building power for our community to create sustainable change and end poverty on the reservation. We do this through a multifaceted approach that ultimately creates vibrant and healthy communities. We are focused on the 34-acre development as a means to create systemic change (Thunder Valley CDC, 2018, para. 1).

This multi-faceted approach includes cultural programming and education, community-owned businesses and entrepreneurship, food cultivation, sustainable housing, and energy-independent homes, Lakota language revitalization, regional and national advocacy, workforce development, fostering of youth leadership and more (Thunder Valley CDC, 2018). According to Jennifer, they even brought back the winter count last year, an ancient Lakota tradition that teaches lessons about Indigenous science, sustainability, relationship to the other living relatives, and gratitude.<sup>46</sup> The Yurok Tribe of California (one of Claire’s tribes) has engaged in the extensive restoration of rivers and riparian zones along with work to restore and protect Indigenous plant species and habitat (Hiner, Silloway, Antonetti, & Beesley, 2011). Many tribes have taken active roles in the protection of their natural resources—like salmon, drawing on treaties to protect their way of life

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<sup>46</sup> For information about the Lakota/Dakota winter count, see Russel Thornton’s (2002) article, “A Rosebud Reservation winter count, circa 1751-1752 to 1886-1887.”

(Wilson, 2001). When an off-shore nursery net pen holding 300,000 diseased Atlantic salmon broke off the coast of Washington state in 2017, it was tribes like the Lummi (Autumn's tribe) that sprang into action to catch the invasive fish that threatened Indigenous salmon species integral to the region's tribes; Lummi fishermen brought in over 200,000 pounds of the fish (Mesec, 2017).

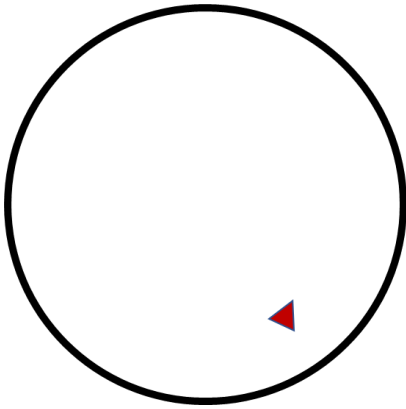
These are examples of political, ecological and economic resistance, and (re)membering. There are also quite a few efforts led by tribal communities and their citizenry to (re)member sovereign identities and to decolonize ways of knowing and being. In 2015, I published an article detailing efforts by the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation to resist erasure and to protect and restore identity at the levels of the tribe and individual families (sovereignty of self). The Meherrin are a great example of the ways in which that work can confront systemic racism. Another noteworthy example comes from the Lumbee Nation (of which Beth and Virgil are citizens). Ashley Minner (Lumbee) is a grassroots artist and activist who is challenging the hollowness that Indians are forced to feel. She turned her art studio into a site to challenge the dismemberment, she explains the project here:

Those who agreed to visit the photography studio were encouraged to wear what they liked best. We did several sessions with different groups of people. Each time, the entire group would stand behind the camera along with the photographer to encourage and coach the person whose portrait was being taken. Each person was given the opportunity to choose the photograph they felt best represented them. Text incorporated into the portraits, written by us, gives viewers a glimpse into our hopes for one other and the depths of ourselves. "The Exquisite Lumbee" book exists to demonstrate that, although we as a people run the gamut of skin colors, hair colors and hair textures, we do have a distinctive quality, character, and style. We recognize each other. We are exquisite (Minner, 2010, para. 1)

These photographs have since been on display in Lumbee Country and all over the state of North Carolina (perhaps elsewhere, as well), providing strong empowering counter-messages to Natives who may be struggling to (re)member their Indigenous belonging.

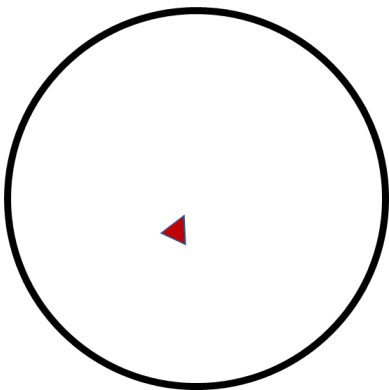
As the unprecedented gathering of over three hundred Indian Nations at Standing Rock would suggest, Native people all over Turtle Island are growing tired of being externally defined and denied sovereignty (in its many forms). Again, this is not new; Native people resisted foreign militias led by settlers, formed the Ghost Dance religion, and led the groundbreaking activism of the American Indian Movement and Women of All Red Nations in the era of Civil Rights. Warriors like Lakota Harden, her aunty Madonna Thunder Hawk (Oglala Lakota), and her late uncle Russell Means (Oglala Lakota) have devoted lifetimes to ensuring there is a future for Native children to inherit. Native people from all walks of life and intersections—reservation, rural, identifiable, white-seeming, black-seeming, highly educated, federally-recognized, state-recognized, young and old (to name a few), are rethinking what it means to be Indigenous. They are thinking beyond the confines and limitations of the popular settler imagination.

This is clearly evidenced by the unexpected and brilliant ways that some of the storytellers respond to the request to explain their location in relation to their tribal circle. I recall Lakota Harden describing a circle rotating around the center, representing the spiritual and ceremonial life only South Dakota can embody. It is through cultural ceremony and the land that she is home. Belinda Rudicil (Meherrin), Esther Lucero, John Scott Richardson, and Ras K'Dee name Eldership and the traditional learning process throughout the stages of life as having an impact on where they are located now and where they are headed in the future. Similarly, Belinda sees herself as close to the edge, not because of a state of hole-ness but because of the cultural life stage where she finds herself, an embodiment of her Meherrin traditions (see figure 46 below).



*Figure 46 Belinda Rudicil's social location in the Meherrin community*

She explains, “I place myself inside the circle but also on the bottom because I’m still learning from my aunts and uncles and my grandmother about where I am and how I fit into this story of our culture.” John Scott, too, was able to move closer to the middle after not having grown up in Hollister because he did spend the time to learn cultural teachings from his Elders. Today as well, he is stepping up to work more with the youth and is working toward leadership, something he never chose, rather it chose him (see Figure 47 below).



*Figure 47 John Scott Richardson's social location in the Haliwa community*

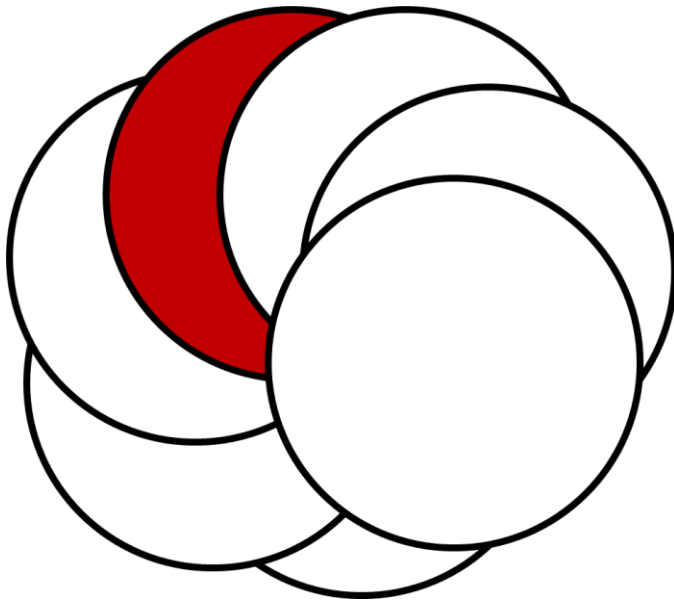
For each, healing is (re)membering, and each has a purpose and a place.

Jude Killspenty Cruz draws upon his traditional teachings to describe his relationship to the circle as well. He says,



From my teachings, I'm taught that I, myself, represent a circle. Everybody I come into contact with maintains a circle, as well. ... I don't know if you ever played a game at a fair or something when you were younger where they asked you to use circles to cover another circle, but I see myself as being in the center of that circle, with overlapping circles all around me that I connect with. That's kind of how I see it, community-wise. I think with Native communities everybody is connected to one another. In a Native community and across Native communities it's hard to run into somebody that you don't know or that you're not related to in some way. That relation can be family, it can be teachings, it can be ceremonial practice, things like that. Instead of being a part of the circle, you complete the circle, I guess. That includes all the area and the circumference. It's the connections. As you go through life, people will enter your circle and leave but the connection remains. Whether it's something that you learned, from your community, something that you can pass on to other circles as you travel...as you go on your journey, you're able to share those same things with the next people you come into contact with. If there's anything I've kind of learned, it's that the circle is never ending. It's not finite, it's ever-evolving, ever-changing, ever-inclusive, and like I said, people enter and leave at the same time but things that you learn from those experiences will always stay there and they'll become a part of you for you to do with what you want afterward.

See Jude's representation in Figure 48 below.



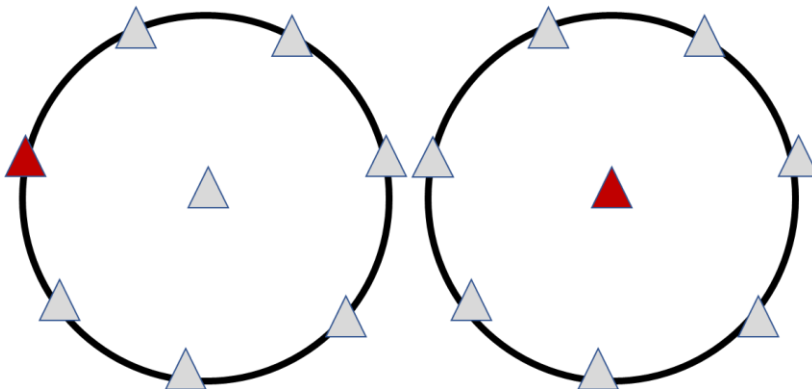
*Figure 48 Jude Killsplenty Cruz' visualization of his social location as a circle among overlapping circles in the Native community*

The implications of Jude's cultural interpretation bear important relevance to the thesis of this chapter and the project, overall. The (re)membering and shift toward healing from

colonialism and systemic racism is not something that makes the latest generation of Natives necessarily more remarkable than the last. Instead, their dreams and motivations are the continuations of all who have come before, of collective wisdom manifesting to create a better future. Jude's understanding is also similar to stories that Vivette Jeffries-Logan and Christy Bieber share as well. Vivette says, "as a community, we are only as strong as our least well member; it is our job to surround them and lift up the community." Jude's understanding of his integration in the circle, as an inseparable part of its area and circumference, embodies this idea. Christy Bieber's explanation sounds amazing similar. She explains:

The first thing that comes to my mind is, circles being a huge part of culture in my Native community, I would say I'm mostly on the edge. I say most everyone's on the edge because of how we gather in circles, how we have talking circles, how we dance in circles at powwows, different things like that. Another teaching I've received is about the idea of a sacred bundle, or a community being a circle wrapping around someone in need. I see myself as a part of a dynamic circle. Sometimes I might be in the center and I might be really needing the support of all those around my community circle, and then other times I'll be on the edge wrapping around someone else, doing all those things collectively. That's what I thought of first when you said circles, but I know that's a little bit different.

See Christy's representation of the circle in Figure 49 below.



*Figure 49 Christy Bieber's location in the Native community. The first circle represents now, and the second is when she needs support.*

Colonialism is designed to destroy the exact things that Christy describes—tradition, resiliency, and collective culture. If this can be given life in the urban metropolis, it can live anywhere.

The stories in this project suggest that Native people, at least those in the sample, are collectivist and resilient. Even Lee Blacksmith, who self-identifies as an introvert, a loner, and someone who is not easily offended, takes it upon herself to interrupt toxic narratives when she hears them. According to her, it is not usually because she is personally bothered; she interrupts because she doesn't want them to say the same thing to the next Native person they encounter. Old to young, this study's storytellers flip the scripts—from the ninety-two-year old Creek Elder Lucinda Tiger, who has spent a lifetime leading by example and going into the trenches of Oklahoma classrooms to engage neglected Native students, to the youngest of the study's storytellers like Lee Blacksmith, Michael King, and Sabine Talaugon who interrupt and challenge these tired narratives from a variety of locations—the family, the public, the classroom, and even the media.

American Indians occupy numerous social and cultural intersections. These intersections shape the ways in which each are subjected to systemic racism. In the case of Indigenous people, each of its manifestations is inextricably linked to the settler motivation to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands, as Moore (2008) suggests. However, the resulting dispossession goes far beyond the relationship between tribes and their lands or political sovereignty. Native people are ultimately dispossessed of personhood and the sovereignty of self, body, mind, and spirit. They are dismembered through physical, spiritual, psychological, and cultural strategies by a pervasive settler culture. As Lakota Harden explains, colonization is like a bomb and Indians are the

shrapnel. Race is one vehicle through which this dispossession is achieved, but Native people also experience the effects of colonialism beyond the confines of racial identity due to the uniqueness of the political and inherent meanings of Indigeneity in a settler state.

If the bomb created shrapnel of the Turtle's back, her *ati*, and created holes in those remaining pieces (shrapnel) that can be felt in the self- and community-appraisals internalized by Native people themselves, then the concluding chapter of this project is a weaving together of stories of Native people from all over Turtle Island who are picking up those pieces and reassembling them into a mosaic of strength and resiliency. It is a story of Indigenous people seeking to heal from the traumas of systemic racism and colonialist dispossession and dismemberment in the ways that they (re)member how to do, drawing on the brilliance of Indigenous wisdom and tradition. While there are many traditional stories and creation stories from many tribes that explain why the turtle's *ati* appears broken and reassembled, yet one more reason could be the Creator knew that Native people would pick up these pieces and put it back together again—a prophetic symbol of the (re)membering of Turtle Island. This is a story of Indigenous Americans seeking to thrive, to be *whole*.

*In the bombing of Turtle Island, the largest genocide in human history, millions of lives were lost. Tribal Nations were removed from existence, but the spirits of their ancestors remain here forever.*

*Our feet touch the ground*

*A pour of water on rocks*

*Memory circles*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Supplementary Materials

Table I. Percentage Frequency of Perceived Losses

	Never	Yearly or special times	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Several times a Day
Loss of our land	25.2	32.7	13.8	10.1	10.7	7.5
Loss of our language	11.9	21.3	15.0	15.6	27.5	8.8
Losing our traditional spiritual ways	11.3	18.9	15.1	21.4	25.2	8.2
The loss of our family ties because of boarding schools	44.3	26.6	11.4	5.1	8.2	4.4
The loss of families from the reservation to government relocation	52.2	23.3	8.8	6.3	5.7	3.8
The loss of self respect from poor treatment by government officials	29.1	22.2	19.6	7.0	14.6	7.6
The loss of trust in whites from broken treaties	28.7	28.7	12.1	7.6	15.3	7.6
Losing our culture	10.6	20.0	21.3	14.4	25.6	8.1
The losses from the effects of alcoholism on our people	7.5	13.2	15.7	17.6	30.2	15.7
Loss of respect by our children and grandchildren for elders	8.8	10.0	16.3	27.5	28.1	9.4
Loss of our people through early death	9.4	15.6	20.6	21.3	24.4	8.8
Loss of respect by our children for traditional ways	11.9	18.2	17.0	17.6	25.8	9.4

Supplement 1 Table demonstrates the frequencies in which Natives reflect on loses and historical trauma from Whitbeck et al. (2004) p. 124

Non-Indian	1/16	1/8	3/16	1/4	5/16	3/8	7/16	1/2	9/16	5/8	11/16	3/4	13/16	7/8	15/16	4/4	
1/16	1/32	1/16	3/32	1/8	5/32	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32
1/8	1/16	3/32	1/8	5/32	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16
3/16	3/32	1/8	5/32	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32
1/4	1/8	5/32	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8
5/16	5/32	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32
3/8	3/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16
7/16	7/32	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32
1/2	1/4	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4
9/16	9/32	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32
5/8	5/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16
11/16	11/32	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32
3/4	3/8	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32	7/8
13/16	13/32	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32	7/8	29/32
7/8	7/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32	7/8	29/32	15/16
15/16	15/32	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32	7/8	29/32	15/16	31/32
4/4	1/2	17/32	9/16	19/32	5/8	21/32	11/16	23/32	3/4	25/32	13/16	27/32	7/8	29/32	15/16	31/32	4/4
1/32	1/64	3/64	5/64	7/64	9/64	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64
3/32	3/64	5/64	7/64	9/64	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64
5/32	5/64	7/64	9/64	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64
7/32	7/64	9/64	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64
9/32	9/64	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64
11/32	11/64	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64
13/32	13/64	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64
15/32	15/64	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64
17/32	17/64	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64
19/32	19/64	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64
21/32	21/64	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64
23/32	23/64	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64	55/64
25/32	25/64	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64	55/64	57/64
27/32	27/64	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64	55/64	57/64	59/64
29/32	29/64	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64	55/64	57/64	59/64	61/64
31/32	31/64	33/64	35/64	37/64	39/64	41/64	43/64	45/64	47/64	49/64	51/64	53/64	55/64	57/64	59/64	61/64	63/64

SOURCE: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribal Enrollment, app. H.

## Appendix B- Data Collection Materials

### *Appendix B.1- Study Volunteer Eligibility Survey*

Are you Indigenous to the continental US? y/n

If so, please list your tribal affiliation(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Are you connected to at least one Indigenous Nation, community, or urban organization?

If so, please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

If not, were you at some point in your life? y/n

Are you tribally enrolled? y/n

Why/why not (optional):

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you or any of your family members speak your tribal language(s)? y/n

In what part(s) of the country did you grow up?

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you currently reside?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you/have you lived in or frequently visited family on/in an Indian reservation, Native pueblo, land-base held communally by an Indigenous Nation, an Indian urban center, or any other Indigenous community center (rural or otherwise)? y/n

If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as multiracial? y/n

If yes, did you grow up in a household with at least one Indigenous parent present? y/n

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently employed? y/n

If yes, what is your occupation?

---

What is your highest achieved level of education?

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From whom did you hear about this study?

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*Appendix B.2-Tentative Open-Ended Interview Guide*

[Review survey responses]

[Ask respondent to state their name for the record]

- Tell me about your family and where you grew up.
  - How did your parents identify? (broad)
  - Is either of your parents tribally enrolled? Why/why not?
- How do you identify? (broad)
  - [Probe race, tribe, culture, etc.]
- Are you tribally enrolled? Why/why not?
  - [Differences between parents' enrollment and their own? Probe]
- If you imagine your tribal community as a circle, would you place yourself in the center of that circle, near the edge, or outside of the circle?
  - [Probe- what factors influence this for you? Are there times that you would have answered differently? If so, why?]
- Are you a part of other communities and/or community organizations? If so, tell me a little about those.
- When you think of your own process of developing a racial identity, are there certain events that stand out in your memory? If so, tell me about those.
- Does your skin color influence the way that others perceive you?
  - Based on that, are there differences in the way you are perceived by Indians and non-Indians, or by whites and other people of color?
- Does the history of your people (tribe) influence the way you think about yourself? Why/why not?

- Does it influence the way that others see you? Why/why not?
- Do you speak your tribal language? Why/why not?
  - If not, do members of your family?
  - How does speaking/not-speaking the language impact your identity and sense of belonging?
- How do you identify spiritually and culturally?
  - Is there a difference between the two?
  - Does this identification affect other aspects of your identity? Race?

**[For Rez/Indian Community Respondents Only]**

- When you are at home (community sense), does everyone know you?
  - If yes, describe to me how you are known and what role you play in the community.
  - If no, how do you think you are racially perceived by those who don't know you?
    - What indicators cause you to know this?
- Do you ever interact with members of other tribes?
  - How do they perceive you?
    - What indicators cause you to know this?
- When at home (community sense), do you ever interact with non-Indians?
  - If so, how do you think they perceive you? Why?
- When you are away from [fill in community], how do you think non-Indian people perceive you? Why?

- Do you notice a difference in the way you are perceived by whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians, or other groups?

**[For urban/non-Indian community respondents only]**

- Do you interact with other Indian people?
  - If no, why not?
  - If yes, how do you think they perceive you racially? Why?
- How do you think non-Indians perceive you racially? Why?
  - Do you notice a difference in the way you are perceived by whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians, or other groups?

**[BOTH GROUPS]**

- Does the way you are perceived both by Indians and non-Indians change depending on circumstance?
  - If so, give me some examples of how it changes.
- When you introduce yourself to strangers that may or may not know anything about you, do you reveal to them that you are [fill in tribal identity]?
  - If no, why?
  - If yes, why?
  - If yes, how is this usually met?
    - Does this vary depending on who the person is/people are? How?
    - If you are met with skepticism, why do you think this is?
    - If you are met with excitement, why do you think this is?



- How do you feel about the way this disclosure is met?
  - [any others that come up, probe]
- Do you believe you have ever been a victim of racism?
  - If no, why?
  - If yes, describe your experiences to me.
- Does the way Indians are portrayed in our society affect you personally? Why/why not?
- Can you remind me of your age?
  - Has/how has your racial identity changed over time? Why?
  - Has the way you are perceived by others changed over time? Why?
- Is there anything that I missed that you think I should know or that you wanted to share?