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# A Lakota/Nakota/Dakota Model Of Oratory

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**A LAKOTA/NAKOTA/DAKOTA MODEL OF ORATORY**

by

**Cheryl A. Long Feather (*Hunkuotawin*)**  
**Bachelor of Science, University of Mary, 1989**  
**Master of Management, University of Mary, 1999**  
**Master of Business Administration, University of Mary, 2006**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty**

**of the**

**University of North Dakota**

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**for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

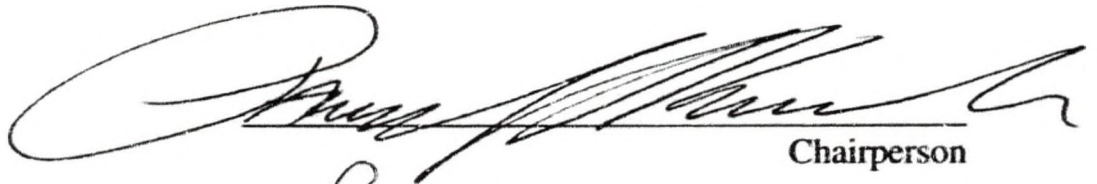
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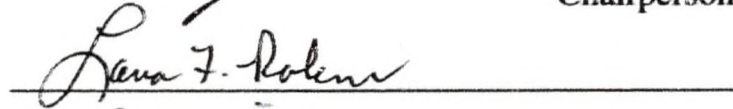
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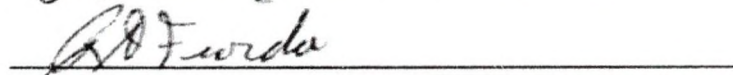


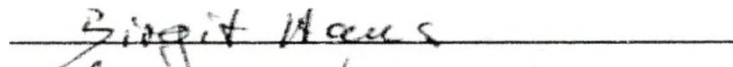
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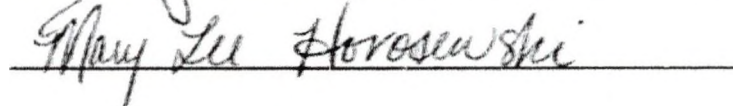
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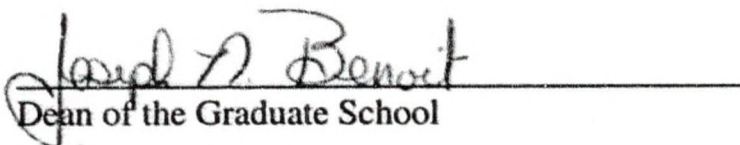
  
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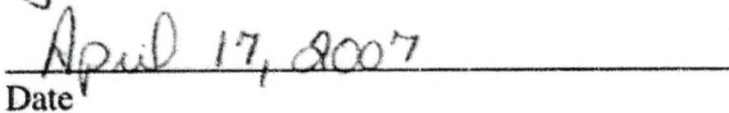
  
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## ABSTRACT

Lakota/Nakota/Dakota people, as well as other Native American tribal groups, did not still with us today. It delineates a model of Lakota/Nakota/Dakota oratory comprised of the traditional practices of formal introduction, acknowledgement of viewpoint, responding indirectly, non-confrontational, utilization of *ikce wicasa* concept, use of humor, use of storytelling or personal narrative, listening as basis for speaking and traditionally use the established, conventional forms of oration to which most in contemporary mainstream society relate. Rather, Native-specific epistemology, ontology and axiology played a central role in forming and supporting the function of communication as well as the speaking conventions that continue to be used today. These culturally-based patterns and structures present both challenges and opportunities that have been only marginally explored in various disciplines such as education, social and behavioral science, and psychology. This body of work exists for the purpose of exploring a traditionally Native understanding of oratory and communication, the impact of the transition to English on oratorical conventions and the culturally embedded communication practices formal conclusion. Research findings suggest that these criteria accurately reflect an on-going, culturally-appropriate model of Lakota/Nakota/Dakota oratory.



## CHAPTER I

### EDITORIAL NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this manuscript, the abbreviation L/N/Dakota will be used to denote the Lakota, Nakota and Dakota bands of what are historically known as the Sioux people. The use of this abbreviation will be used throughout to acknowledge the three separate bands as well as their connection and interrelatedness.

The primary populations to which this research and findings will be generalized are the Lakota, Nakota and Dakota. The L/N/Dakota are common terms used to describe the various bands comprising what was known as the Great Sioux Nation. Traditionally, the Great Sioux Nation was made up of three subdivisions (Western, Middle and Eastern). The Western division was further divided into seven bands known as the *oceti sakowin*, or the seven council fires. These bands were the Sicangu, Oglala, Hunkpapa, Minneconjou, Blackfeet, Sans Arc and Two Kettle. The Middle division was comprised of the Yankton/Yankontai bands and the Eastern division was made up of the Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton and Sisseton. These divisions are based on *cultural* distinctions between the various groups.

The language spoken by the bands was Siouan, and the terms *Lakota*, *Nakota* and *Dakota* more accurately describes the various dialects of the bands. In practice, the Eastern Sioux primarily spoke the Dakota dialect, the Middle Sioux spoke the Nakota dialect and the Western Sioux spoke the Lakota dialect. The primary differences in the dialects were the use of the consonants "l," "d" and "n". For example, the word for

'thank you' would be *pilamaya* in Lakota, *pidamaya* in Dakota, and *pinamaya* in Nakota. While it is generally acknowledged by L/N/Dakota-speaking people that there are more variations (beyond the simple letter and phonetic substitutions) in the various dialects (most especially the Nakota), the language structure and speech patterns have been and remain similar despite the geographic dispersions of the groups. The similarities of the dialects in terms of structure and speech patterns have particular relevance to the subject matter at hand since the inherently cultural patterns will be similar across each of the groups and, thus, application of the findings can be made across all of the various L/N/Dakota bands. In addition, some anthropologists and researchers (Balgooyen, 1968; Kroeber, 1949; Wiget, 1994; Wissler, 1948) have placed many of the Northern Plains tribes – including the Arapaho, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, 'Sioux' (L/N/Dakota) and occasionally Kiowa and Comanche – in the same general category. Because these tribes also shared some linguistic structures and patterns (although they are not all Siouan-based languages) the findings may also be useful for these nations as well.

Today, the descendants of the Great Sioux Nation are primarily located on reservations throughout North and South Dakota, but also reside in many urban and off-reservation areas across the U.S and in Canada. The Great Sioux Nation was divided into various Tribes as treaties were made with the various bands. The result was the current state of affairs in which a sovereign Tribal government was created and the individual land base they retained became the boundaries of their reservation. These treaties, governments and reservations did not necessarily conform to the traditional band structure but rather divided the bands into Tribes somewhat arbitrarily. Thus, the following divisions are based on *political* distinctions between the various groups: the



official "Sioux" Tribes in North Dakota include the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe. In South Dakota, the "Sioux" Tribes are the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (co-located), the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Flandreau Sioux and the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

### The use of other naming terms

The terms Indian, American Indian, Native American, Native, Indigenous and L/N/Dakota are all terms that identify the various populations to which I refer. There are subtle nuances and distinct patterns of origin in the use of each term, which will be described briefly here.

The term *Indian* (according to two different popular versions of the story) is derived from the name Columbus mistakenly applied to the people he encountered when he arrived either because he believed he was in the Indies, the medieval name for Asia, or because he was so impressed with the people he encountered, he described them as "close to God" or "In Dios." This term was used in general to describe the people indigenous to this continent until objections were raised based on what were viewed as historical inaccuracies. Although some object to the term *Indian* because of the misconceptions of Columbus, it is still commonly used in Native and non-Native communities. The term *American Indian* came into general use as a way to make a distinction between this group and the 'Indian' from the country of India. However, some people object to this term as well since *Indian* was still seen as pejorative.

The term *Native American* came into general usage in the 1960s as a result of the U.S. government's Bureau of Indian Affairs decision to use the term to denote the groups

served by them, including American Indians and Alaska Native (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts of Alaska) and, later, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders as well. The objection to this term was that it placed distinct groups into an all-encompassing category that could not be representative of such diversity. The term *Native* is sometimes used as a shortened version of this term and carries the same general broad meaning. The scientific-based term *Indigenous* also found usage in this same time period to denote the many different Native peoples who were displaced by colonization. This term encompassed the indigenous peoples of New Zealand and Australia, for example, and is also criticized as being too all-encompassing, as well as for its scientific connotations.

Many Native people have expressed their preference for using their own distinct tribal names for themselves (e.g. Hopi, Apache, etc.) rather than a broad general term. This usage reflects the acknowledgement of the individual's specific identity and cultural affiliation. However, the criticism of this type of usage is that it is too cumbersome and difficult to determine or identify in many cases. The rule of thumb (APA, 2001) is to identify tribal affiliation when it is known and use a more generic term only when tribal affiliation is not known. In 1995, the U.S. Census Bureau conducted a survey of preferences for racial and ethnic terminology (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau Survey, May 1995). The findings indicated that 49% of Native people preferred being called *American Indian*, 37% preferred *Native American*, 3.6% preferred some other term (e.g. tribal) and 5% had no preference. It has been the general consensus in this debate that terminology is a personal preference. Thus, the various terms will be used interchangeably throughout this manuscript, unless qualifications of L/N/Dakota-specific contexts are intended.



## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION

As a curriculum developer and trainer for many years, I have had the opportunity to travel across the United States and Canada to provide training for Native American, non-Native and mixed audiences in a variety of situations and venues. During one particular training, my co-worker and I began our usual training routine by introducing ourselves to the audience. The audience was made up entirely of Tribal members, many of them middle-aged or older. As I began to introduce myself, I noticed that I significantly changed the way I normally introduced myself to a non-Native audience or to an audience of mixed Tribal and non-Native participants. In this instance, I introduced myself with a traditional welcome, identified my Tribal affiliation and my extended family and gave my traditional Lakota/Dakota name. I watched and reflected on the process as my co-worker did the same. It was an interesting revelation to me and, since my awareness had been raised, I took the opportunity to watch other Native American people in other settings to observe how they introduced themselves. I found the same pattern followed. This informal research coincided with my decision to return to graduate school and provides now the foundation for my area of interest.

I am an enrolled Tribal citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe located in south central North Dakota and north central South Dakota. Culturally, I am a “mixed blood”

of the Hunkpapa and Yanktonai bands of Lakota/Dakota as well as of German descent. I grew up on the Standing Rock Indian reservation but moved to the urban community of Bismarck, North Dakota, where I now reside. My Indian name is *Hunkuotawin*, for which there is no literal translation in English. The closest translation is that of *Many Second-Mothers Woman* or *Many Aunts Woman*. I come from the Many Horses and Two Bears *tiyospaye* (extended family) and the Cannonball District of the reservation. Some of my more notable ancestors include Chief Two Bears and Albert Grass. Although I currently reside off-reservation, I maintain strong connections with my Tribal community through my family, friends and extended relatives. I have always, and continue to, attend cultural and ceremonial events as well as local community gatherings in my home district as well as other districts on my reservation.

Growing up, I had always had an affinity for writing, perhaps because I was incredibly shy as a youth. I have also had a keen interest in learning about culture, especially after my family's move off the reservation where I encountered the phenomenon of culture shock. This experience, more than any other, has led me to be far more cognizant of the ways in which human beings differ as a result of culture and, ultimately, the way in which these differences can be mutually understood in order to create a more peaceful and mature world. As I graduated from college and entered the professional world, I was afforded more opportunities to study the ways in which culture impacts human interactions. I became a more devoted observer of the different ways culture works in culturally-inclusive groups as well as cross-culturally mixed groups. Fortunately, as an actively involved Tribal member and an advocate for American Indian rights, I have had the opportunity to observe a host of speaking occasions as well as



individual speakers who have represented a continuum of cultural awareness from the so-called traditional to the assimilated. These observations were enhanced by the knowledge I gained as an undergraduate student in Communications.

In studying ways of communicating, it became obvious that Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota (L/N/Dakota) people, as well as other Native American Tribal groups, did not traditionally conform to the established, conventional – i.e. “Western” or “mainstream” – forms of communication and oratory. In my own personal experience, even the untrained observer notices a difference in oratorical style when listening to traditional Native American speakers in their own communities. One of the differences commonly noted by others is the reliance of Native speakers on personal narratives – as I did in this introduction, for example – to establish context and relationship. This tendency is often understood to be a result of Native Americans’ historical use of oral tradition and formal storytelling. However, the L/N/Dakota had other preferred structures for communicating as well (e.g. not responding directly, the use of non-verbal communication, the use of silence, and the use of humor, to name but a few) and we continue to use these conventions today.

These distinctive American Indian speaking structures are not as easily explained and present both challenges and opportunities that have been only tentatively explored in various disciplines such as education, social and behavioral science, and psychology. Further examination can determine their origin, merit and contribution to the field of communications studies. However, there may be several reasons this line of inquiry has been historically overlooked.

Much like the physical world in which the province of Native remains has been museums, Native art has been collectors, and Native sacred sites has been national parks, traditional American Indian lifeways have been systematically fragmented. Native customs have been mostly studied by anthropologists, Native behaviors by psychologists, and Native language by linguistics “experts”. As a result of this fragmentation, perhaps, the ways in which American Indian people communicate and orate have been largely ignored. Research and observations addressing culturally-specific speaking conventions were likely overshadowed by the interest in foreign Tribal languages held by researchers with an interest in linguistics.

Another contributing factor in the lack of a cohesive foundation of theory from which to postulate and draw conclusions may be the pervasiveness of communication. Since communications studies is relatively new as a discipline, the paradigm for exploring its nuances was unavailable to researchers and scholars of the time. Although there were some individuals interested in Native American oratorical devices and structures, the absence of a unified banner under which to explore was quite likely a factor in limiting them.

Finally, the eventual appropriation of the English language by Native American people has probably contributed to the lack of cohesive exploration. It may be more difficult to identify cultural differences in the use of language when both groups speak the same (English) language. As Native people were taught the English language, they were also expected to learn, and conform to, Western-based rhetorical speaking conventions. A L/N/Dakota model of oratory challenges this assumption and posits that



American Indian people maintained many culturally-based speaking patterns despite their appropriation of the English language.

The issue of how Native people, especially L/N/Dakota, communicate specifically has been mostly ignored in favor of the less ubiquitous and more colorful aspects of culture. Historically, research was conducted *about* Native Americans rather than *with* them. Thus, the topics worth noting were those of the more exotic practices, such as the sun dance or religious practices, or the more relevant issues of land (dis)possession.

Today, the representation of Native voices in a larger societal dialogue has been limited to opinions expressed about contemporary Native issues, such as the environment, economics, social-behavioral issues or health-related issues, or in providing perspective in personal narratives, short stories or poetry. When dialogue does reference communication and language, the discussions are often focused more on the loss or retaining of Native languages than the use of the English language in a Tribal or cultural way. Little is said about the way communication is used by Natives other than to acknowledge that while we speak in one way to an academic audience, we speak in another way to family, friends and community, and the latter voice is not what usually finds its way into publication (Harjo and Bird, 1997).

While these ways of communicating have widespread and serious implications, especially in the realm of education within the student-teacher relationship or in the world of employment within the co-worker or subordinate-supervisor relationship, the consideration of a uniquely indigenous theory of communication is somewhat anomalous. The challenge, then, is to extrapolate information in order to postulate a theory and subsequent discussion about the understandings of, and contributions to, a theory of

communication by Native people, as well as a specific L/N/Dakota model of oratory.

This will be a difficult task given the hegemonic nature of discourse in the U.S.

The work within this dissertation is guided in many ways by that of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, author of *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999). In her book, she examines the legacy of Western-based research in order to help Indigenous researchers decolonize the process of research. She does this through validating Indigenous frustrations in dealing with various Western paradigms and asserting the need for Indigenous peoples to claim research for our own needs. She names twenty-five different sorts of “projects”, as she calls them, or processes for building Indigenous-based research and theory. These include claiming, testimonies, storytelling, celebrating survival, remembering, Indigenizing, intervening, revitalizing, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratizing, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering, and sharing (p. 143-161). Many of these projects have been an integral part of this work in seeking to elucidate a model and theory related to communication and oratory for L/N/Dakota and, by extension, the larger Native American society.

In the development stages of a Native American theory of communication, as well as the articulation of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory, these tasks play a critical role in decolonization because they *emanate* from a perspective that is uniquely Native American. Rather than starting from a non-Native or Western perspective and merely mimicking, modifying, adapting or relating to established premises, these assertions find their origins in a uniquely Native American experience. Articulated from unique yet shared cultural experiences, these theories and models may help establish understandings



that are relatively free from the filters of colonization while, at the same time, acknowledge the co-cultural influence.

Some of the methods used in this dissertation are quite deliberate in the attempt to decolonize the work. For example, the use of as many Native authors as possible throughout was an intentional attempt to recognize and validate a Native voice (e.g. Tuhiwai Smith's "remembering, Indigenizing, revitalizing, representing"). This was a critical part of giving voice to Native people and validating that voice, although it somewhat limited the work upon which to draw. The references may also be much more diverse in their representation because of the interdisciplinary perspective with regard to Native American communication and oratory. In compiling information on Native-specific public speaking conventions from Native scholars specifically, it was necessary to draw from writing on such interrelated topics as religion/spirituality, Native ontology, personal memoirs, Tribal culture, technology and education.

The use of longer quotes from various authors was also a conscious, Native-based decision to let others "tell their story" rather than editing and/or surmising about meaning (e.g. "testimonies, storytelling, sharing, celebrating survival"). As a Native communicator, it is my responsibility to acknowledge and allow others to speak their perspective. This use of others' stories also conforms to the principles of Native communication in that together we create a community of speakers rather than presenting information from one absolute authority.

Finally, it was a conscious decision to begin with a cultural framework for a Native-specific theory and model and only give secondary and tertiary mention to the relationship of various non-Native communication scholars/theorists to the theory and

model. This is part of the process of centering this project (e.g. “claiming, reframing, restoring, returning”). These strategies, whether recognized by the reader or not, remain an integral part of writing as an Indigenous person and resisting colonization. As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes:

The reach of imperialism into ‘our heads’ challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred, partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity. This analysis of imperialism has been referred to more recently in terms such as ‘post-colonial discourse’, the ‘empire writes back’ and/or ‘writing from the margins.’ (p. 23)

The need for decolonization does not mean, however, that a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge is warranted. Our shared humanity often results in more similarities than differences and more agreement than disagreement. In fact, many post modern and contemporary theorists and scholars who address issues of hegemony, resistance to ideological domination, and discursive power (e.g. Gramsci, hooks, Foucault) have established important groundwork for identifying Native-based model and theories. Rather, decolonization is about centering our [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In other words, the value of positing theory and models from a Native perspective is not exclusivity of ideas but exclusivity of source. Indeed, readers may find nothing patently unfamiliar or foreign in the concepts presented here. The theory and model can be more accurately described as a culturally-centered ordering and claiming process.



One of the primary challenges inherent in this decolonization process, however, is addressing the disparate audience for which we write, i.e. the academe on the one hand and our own Native people or Tribal communities on the other. As indigenous researchers and writers, we run the risk of writing in such a manner as to alienate rather than liberate either audience. Care must be taken to write for one audience to ensure, as bell hooks (1984) cautions, that writing is done in an accessible manner so that theory can help challenge the colonization process and structures of domination. At the same time, writing must also be directed to another audience that ensures sufficient relevance and deliberation. Tuhiwai Smith quotes Asian/Indian activist Gayatri Spivak in describing this challenge in another way:

For me, the question ‘Who should speak?’ is less crucial than ‘Who will listen?’ “I will speak for myself as a Third World person” is an important position for political mobilization today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously; not with that kind of benevolent imperialism.... (p. 71)

While the decolonization process demands that Indigenous Peoples determine our own agenda for that which is important to us, we must do this within the confines of the structure and conventions of the dominant society. Conscious decisions must be made regarding the literature we draw from, the way in which we frame topics, and the disciplines that influence us. Indeed, one of the difficulties in addressing this dissertation topic is the hybrid nature of the format for presenting it.

When presenting to a L/N/Dakota audience, it is implicitly understood that the speaker (writer, in this case) will begin, progress and end according to their own personal

understandings and insights. The role of the listener (reader, in this case) then is to open themselves up to the sharing of the information and follow along the path on which the speaker takes them. This type of listening/reading is difficult, oftentimes, for those who are used to a more structured approach in which we are taught to “tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you told them”. A patient and self-reflective listening that is required in a Native-based approach is a practice that a fast-paced society often does not permit. In today’s society, listeners/readers expect a speaker/writer to “get to the point”.

As a L/N/Dakota person, however, I am taught that getting to “the point” is impolite and arrogant. I am also taught that the manner in which a speaker proceeds along his or her verbal path tells us just as much (if not more) about a person and his or her life experiences than the actual words reveal. These are critical aspects of a culturally-based Native model of communication. However, although I am attempting to articulate a unique manner of communicating, I must do so in a manner acceptable in the academe. More specifically, while I describe a circular, oral manner of communication, I am using a (hopefully) linear, written method. This divergence has been particularly vexing because, while the format is comfortable for most non-Native audiences, it may not be so for Native audiences. By the same token, many of the cultural concepts described within will be comprehensible for Native audiences while non-Native readers may struggle to understand them. This challenge, however problematic, supports the need for just this type of discussion about the differing ways communicating can be culturally-based and how this difference can lead to confusion and misunderstanding.



CHAPTER III  
THEORIES AND THEORY-BUILDING

Developing Theory

In *Theories of Human Communication* (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005), a theory is defined as “any organized set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience” (p. 17). This broad concept of theory emphasizes the fact that theory is a way of packaging and understanding reality based on abstractions and constructions. The fundamental definition of theory is helpful in illuminating the need for culturally-specific models of communication. Since theories can also be likened to mental maps that help the community at large understand, explain, interpret, judge, and behave, it seems logical that scholars within these culturally-specific communities would have some particular insight into creating such maps. This project is based on just such a premise. However, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) validates the daunting nature of this task and provides some insight into the struggles inherent in this approach:

[W]riting and especially writing theory are very intimidating ideas for many indigenous students. Having been immersed in the Western academy which claims theory as thoroughly Western, which has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been theorized, indigenous voices have been overwhelmingly silenced. The act, let alone the art and science, of theorizing our own existence and realities is not something which many indigenous people assume is possible. (p. 29)

Thus, while the task here is intimidating, it is important that, as a Native person, I make an attempt to create a work that is, as Tuhiwai Smith notes, “grounded in a real sense of, and sensitivity towards, what it means to be an indigenous person” (p. 71). This does not mean that, by positing this theory and model, I become the ultimate authority in such matters. It does mean it is an important contribution to a larger dialogue, made of primarily Native voices, about the nature and meaning of Native American communication.

The ingredients for theory-making are the basic elements of theory. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2005), these include (1) philosophical assumptions, (2) concepts, (3) explanations and (4) principles (p. 18-23). Philosophical assumptions lay the groundwork for the development of theory and include three major types of assumptions. These are the epistemological assumptions, or the assumptions about knowledge and ways of knowing; ontological assumptions, or the assumptions about the nature of being; and, finally, axiological assumptions, the assumptions about the place and meaning of values. In this regard, theory is never neutral; values and worldviews necessarily permeate theory. Especially with regard to Native populations, this means that some theory can be diametrically opposed to traditional Native beliefs and somewhat offensive in its application. As Deloria and Wildcat (2001) criticize:

The assumption of the Western educational system is that the information dispensed by colleges is always correct, and that the beliefs and teachings of the tribe are always wrong. Rarely is this the case. The teachings of the tribe are almost always more complete, but they are oriented toward a far greater understanding of reality than is scientific knowledge. And precise Tribal



knowledge almost always has a better predictability factor than does modern science, which generally operates in sophisticated tautologies that seek only to confirm preexisting identities. (p. 4)

The criticism that Western-based knowledge and theory have little relevance to a Native American understanding of “reality” and “predictability” affirms the value-laden nature of theory. Thus, the task of beginning to develop theory in this manuscript begins with identifying the unique Native American philosophical assumptions that support the concepts, explanations and principles.

The development of concepts is the second ingredient for a theory and is helpful in illuminating what is important in theory. The development of these concepts, or conceptual categories, is derived from the philosophical foundations of theory. In L/N/Dakota models, conceptual categories may be ordered and prioritized much differently from those of other groups. For example, a particularly critical concept for L/N/Dakota people is relationships. Any legitimate theory must therefore account for this conceptual category such as how relationships are strengthened or weakened, how relationships are described, what makes a good versus bad relationship, etc.

The third major ingredient for theory, explanations, provides the connectivity that shapes the philosophical assumptions and the concepts. This aspect of developing theory is critical in that these connections – whether causal or practical – establish the ‘strength’ of the theory. Explanations are also culturally-based and are particularly relevant to the task at hand. Since explanations are rooted in language, the differing uses and understandings of language (even shared English language) may either strengthen or inhibit understanding. Explanations must therefore include an exploration of shared

words that may have various definitions or different connotative meanings based on cultural experiences.

Finally, the principles of a theory provide guidelines for applying and testing theory. These, as well, must be based on strong connections in order to establish validity. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2005), a principle has “three parts: (1) It identifies a situation or event; (2) it includes a set or norms or values; and (3) it asserts a connection between a range of actions and possible consequences” (p. 23). As with the other aspects of theory-making, neither is this ingredient value free. The principles, which are a guide for action, often reveal the spaces and places in which the differing culturally-based philosophical assumptions are made manifest.

Within this framework of understanding the development of theory, this dissertation seeks to begin to define a uniquely Native American theory of communication as a lens through which to understand a L/N/Dakota model of oratory. The theory construction process will be based upon the conceptual framework of inquiry. Inquiry is the “systematic study of experience that leads to understanding, knowledge and theory” (Littlejohn and Foss, p. 6). The three stages of inquiry are depicted in Figure 1.

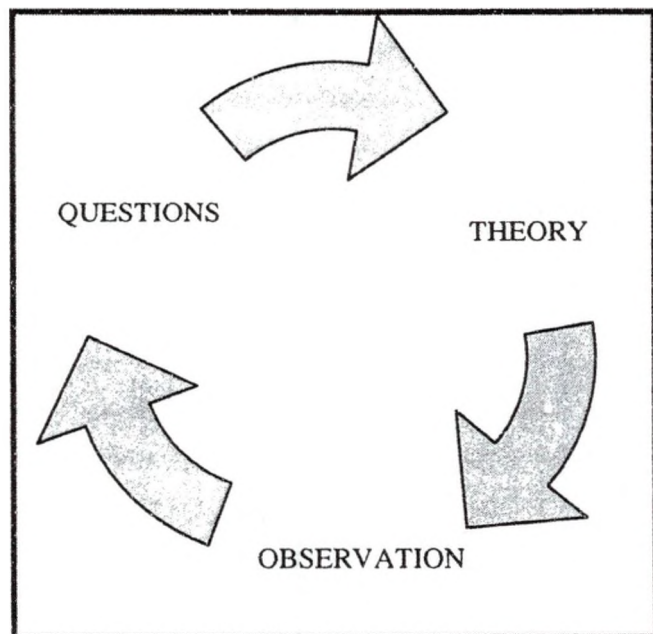


Figure 1. Stages of Inquiry.



As the figure depicts, the stages of inquiry are not static but are in constant motion. The process can begin at any one of the three points but most often starts with an observation, progresses through the development of questions and ends with the development of a specific theory. Thus, this project is also meant to be a dynamic process. The beginnings of the theory are intended to be a foundation upon which further observations and questions should be made. Inquiry should be a constant building process rather than serving as a definitive product. In addition, since Native epistemology is also based on circular processes, utilizing the stages of inquiry process appears a natural way to view the work of developing this theory as a continuous process as opposed to any final word on the matter.

Given the lack of culturally-relevant and culturally-specific theory with regard to the Indigenous peoples of this continent, it is important to offer a starting theory as a basis for critique and development. The development of a specifically Native theory of communication must undergo scrutiny from a wider Tribal audience in order to determine appropriateness or Tribally-congruent principles, since such a theory would be somewhat nebulous for most mainstream audiences. This process can ensure relevance for the diversity of Tribes. However, that is not to say that mainstream scholars would not also have significant contributions to make. As noted previously, many post modern critics have begun a line of inquiry that opens the door for alternative perspectives.

The principles outlined by Littlejohn and Foss (2005) for evaluating communication theory were also a conscious part of the development process of the theory and models herein. These principles include the comprehensiveness or inclusiveness of theoretical scope, the appropriateness of assertions, the heuristic value,

the validity or truth to claims, parsimony and openness. Although a comprehensive evaluation of the theory based on the principles described by Littlejohn and Foss is not made here, the principles are addressed in some ways and could warrant further examination in extended works or dialogue.

It should also be noted that the type of theory this work attempts to postulate is practical theory as opposed to nomothetic theory. As noted by Littlejohn and Foss, nomothetic theory seeks to define universal or general laws while practical theory is “designed to capture the rich differences among situations and to provide a set of understandings that lets you weigh alternative courses of action to achieve goals” (p. 26). Since Native American axiology most closely aligns with the purposes and pragmatic value of practical theory, the work herein represents this orientation. For example, a traditional conception of research for Native peoples has been natural inquiry that leads to community or social improvement. Traditionally, before any action was taken in the Tribal community, all community stakeholders would discuss at length the various implications and possible outcomes. The traditional Native belief that “we are all related” is the basis for the practice of acknowledging and considering all of the implications of a decision. This value of this practice is that it reduces the possibility of the contemporary “black box” syndrome – i.e. a limited view of an outcome based on the specific need for the inquiry – that sometimes complicates Western-based, scientific research practices. It also ensured that anything new was appropriate, congruent with the existing culture, and of value to the whole community. In other words, the relevant question in any inquiry must be “is it good for the People?”



## The Value of Culturally-Based Theories and Models

The value of laying out the standards for a Native American theory of communication and a L/N/Dakota model of oratory is the expansion of knowledge of an alternative point of view, as well as the foundation for reflection and discussion of the merits of such a new perspective. Individuals or groups who share the orientation of the L/N/Dakota people, such as other tribes or other minority groups, may find such a model advantageous for defining effective communication, whether it is written or oral.

Further, L/N/Dakota people themselves may benefit from a return to traditional foundations of examining the role of communication and oratory. The pressure to assimilate into the mainstream culture, although not as overt as in the past, is still very much a part of the Native experience. Most Native youth continue to be educated within the framework of a hegemonic American educational system, even in “Tribal” school systems. Thus, teaching techniques as well as content continue to be based in non-Native values and norms. This creates two types of conflict in the real world.

One example of the type of conflict that is created by not acknowledging a L/N/Dakota-specific model of oratory is that many Native youth are taught traditionally non-Native standards for communication and speech. These youth are then just as bewildered as non-Natives often are by their grandparents’ (or even parents’) traditional forms and patterns of oratory. Various Native education experts (Van Hamme, 1995; St. Germaine, 2000, for example) have cited a surfeit of studies illustrating the incongruence of school and home communication and learning styles many Native youth experience. This mismatch of communication and learning styles represents not only a loss of culture

but also may create situations of rudeness at best and open conflict at worst in Tribal communities and within families.

Another example of conflict that arises is the inner conflict that many Native American students in mainstream colleges and universities experience when participating in speech class (or classes which require speech-making). Many Native American students have limited experiences of formal oratory and, of those, most are with the traditional forms modeled in their own Tribal communities. Hence, in addition to the customary fear of public speaking, these students must also deal with the cultural dissonance created by the unfamiliarity of the hegemonic forms of oratory that are taught in mainstream educational institutions. For example, most conventional classrooms teach an Aristotelian-based model of linear presentation of thoughts and ideas as a basis for orations. For Native youth, however, this linear presentation is unfamiliar and may seem too contrived as, traditionally, Native speakers largely rely on more impromptu-like methods of public speaking.

In addition to providing an alternative view for other Tribal or minority groups, a L/N/Dakota model of oratory and a larger Native theory of communication may be helpful in providing another perspective for mainstream scholars to examine and incorporate into new trends. For example, the concept of a circular pattern of arrangement has not been fully explored and the concept of a “language of respect” may be particularly appealing as our entire society deals with the complex issues of war, technology, and globalization. Whether the benefit is for Tribal communities or non-Native literary and oratory scholars, it is hoped that the explication of this L/N/Dakota theory of communication can provide further understanding, discussion and research.



## CHAPTER IV

### A NATIVE THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

As a L/N/Dakota model of oratory began emerging from my experiences and studies, it became quite evident that any discussion of such a model would need to be predicated on a larger theory. The customary Western-based history and models used by modern rhetoricians and communication scholars (e.g. some Aristotelian concepts, transmission models of communication) had limited relevance to articulating a Native-based model, especially given the parallel task of “decolonizing”. Although, as a result of our shared humanity, these Western-based models and theories contain parallels and helpful insights, there continues to be a need for specific Native-based models and theories that capture the essence of who we are as indigenous peoples and are grounded in our unique histories, experiences and understandings. In addition, as Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes, “The struggle for the validity of indigenous knowledges may no longer be over the *recognition* that indigenous people have ways of viewing the world which are unique, but over proving the authenticity of, and control over, our own forms of knowledge” (p. 104, emphasis in original).

There is an almost extreme paucity of information about Native American (specifically L/N/Dakota) ways of using communication. Information regarding some of the more ‘exotic’ cultural aspects of other Tribal and L/N/Dakota ways of life – including religious beliefs and practices, customs, historical events and ceremonies – have been studied and written about extensively by various anthropologists, historians, linguists,

and other scholars. No such body of work exists for explicating the traditional use of language, the impact of the transition to English on language conventions and the culturally embedded communication practices still with us today. In the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Sloane, 2001), for example, one can find references to African American rhetoric, Chinese rhetoric, (East) Indian rhetoric, Feminist rhetoric and Queer rhetoric, among others. However, American Indian representation is only cursory and is embedded in the “Comparative Rhetoric” (p. 137) section, right after the discussion of *How Monkeys See the World* and other animal communication. Ironically, the authors note that “There is a large amount of scholarship on American Indian rhetoric, some of it by students of speech communication using rhetorical concepts and based on speeches transcribed by explorers or settlers or on surviving Indian practices” (p. 139).

While the presence of a “large amount” of scholarship on American Indian rhetoric is debatable, there is much empirical evidence to support the need for a more deliberate, extensive and Native-based discussion of American Indian/Native American rhetoric. Pulitano (2003), for example, seeks to define a Native American critical theory based on the similar frustration she perceives in her review of contemporary Native authors such as Paula Gunn Allen, Robert Warrior, and Gerald Vizenor:

Aware that the accepted modes of academic discourse cannot sufficiently explicate the arguments of Native American literature written in English, a literature in which a traditional oral rhetoric is still very much apparent, the above-mentioned authors argue for a literary criticism that bring to light Native ways of articulating the world and that uses indigenous rhetorics along with the instruments of Western literary analysis. (p. 3)



As Pulitano notes, the tools of Western rhetoric are often inadequate for communication scholars when dealing with Native Americans (and often other who write from the margins). This hegemonic limitation does not only exist in the academe, however. Indeed, there are many different kinds of communication that occur between Native and non-Native people that are attributed to ‘miscommunication’ rather than culturally-based ways of communicating. Based on my own personal experiences over the years, some of the more prevalent communication acts that are said to be ways in which Native Americans “miscommunicate” include speaking around an issue and/or not getting to the point, using faulty grammar, telling long stories instead of providing evidence, not addressing the audience and not following a linear format. These instances of “miscommunication” may occur in all aspects of contemporary mainstream life, impacting the relationships between doctor-patient, teacher-student, employer-employee, consumer-seller, counselor-client, and other interpersonal relationships. Despite this widespread acknowledgement of differences, however, there is little research to support the specific meanings behind them.

Since many of the aspects of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory employ the English language but use culturally-based understandings of those terms, it is important to clarify terminology and understandings. Thus, the need for articulating a broad-based Native American theory of communication, while not part of the original plan for this dissertation, became a necessary ingredient. It is hoped that it may become helpful not as a complete theory in itself but as the basis for further discussion and development. This fledgling theory is supported by an explication of worldview, a discussion of which follows, that guided its development.

## Worldviews at Work

Appreciating a theory of Native American communication and a L/N/Dakota model of oratory requires some laying of groundwork for understanding the cultural frameworks which support the assertions. For traditional L/N/Dakota people, as well as many other Tribes, a fundamental understanding of the universe is based on the concept of balance and perpetual movement. This is perhaps why so many of our symbols are predicated on circles; this is, in itself, a cultural statement.

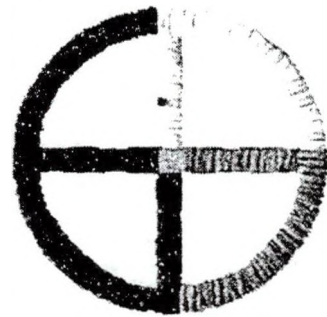


Figure 2. Medicine Wheel

One of the more common symbols recognized and used by Native people is the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel is a circle with two intersecting lines inside (see Figure 2). Perpetual movement (energy) is depicted by the circle. The concept of balance is depicted by the intersecting lines within the circle.

This symbol is often used as a framework for understanding culturally-specific notions because of its simplicity and power. Through the connectedness of the lines (notice there are no open ends), it represents the interrelatedness of all things. The duality of everything in the universe is depicted by the mirror image within itself. And the seven holy directions can be represented by a three-dimensional view of the symbol. The sacred, within each individual, is located at the center of the medicine wheel. Many traditional ceremonies, such as the *inipi* (sweatlodge) and the *wiwanyag wacipi* (sundance), are based on the structure of the medicine wheel.



To the traditional L/N/Dakota person, our ways of knowing, learning and communicating radiate from the center and are encompassed by our universe (the outer circle):

As individuals, all of us sometimes think of ourselves as the center since our personal lives and our own perception is 360 degrees in all directions, but we should remind ourselves to look up and down as well. In this instance, our view has taken on a three-dimensional perspective so that the universe from one's reference point is a sphere instead of a circle. Next, we should contemplate the center of our existence, that is our very being. [T]he seventh direction is the center. It is well being and the balance of life. (Fixico, 2003, p. 173)

Most importantly, the concept of balance is derived from an understanding based on the visual metaphor of the medicine wheel. Balance is achieved when one masters the four aspects of self – the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual – represented by the four quadrants.

St. Clair (2000), in the article “Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge and the New Rhetoric,” offers an insightful analysis of this phenomenon as it relates to the concepts of cultural use of rhetoric in the education system. St. Clair notes that the number four is an important spiritual number to the L/N/Dakota people and is also referred to by Carl Jung as the *quaternity* (Jung, 1969). Jung's conception of the quaternity is very similar to the concepts underlying the medicine wheel. In Jung's theory, the quaternity was the symbol – like the African American-based mandala and the Asian-based yin-yang symbols – of balance that represented the four types of human 'being' – intuition, sensation, thinking, and feeling. As humans develop, Jung asserted,



they mature through the various ways of being until the 'shadow' becomes fully developed and ascends to a state of quintessence, or wholeness.

The medicine wheel also contains four quadrants. Within each of these quadrants are the four aspects of self – mental, emotional, physical and spiritual – that must be balanced within each individual. The conception of the purpose of a L/N/Dakota life is to find and maintain such a balance within oneself and one's place within the ever-expanding circles of the immediate and extended family, the band or community, the tribe, the nation and the universe. Each of these four quadrants or aspects of self comprise a specific way of knowing and learning about the universe. As shown in Appendix A, these four quadrants of being also relate to the way the universe is ordered by the L/N/Dakota people. For example, there are four stages of development in an adult life, four seasons and four times of the day, and four directions, each with its own corresponding meaning and symbolism.

The first way of knowing and learning recognized by the L/N/Dakota (as well as various other Tribes) is the emotional. Every human being learns through various experiences that have produced feelings of happiness, satisfaction, sadness, fear, pain, and other emotions. These strong emotions cause us to learn or to know the world. An example of an emotional experience is a new mother or father interacting with his or her newborn child. This experience causes feelings of contentment that allow the child and parent to create a strong emotional bond. On the other hand, if a parent does not interact or meet the needs of a child, feelings of loneliness, fear and abandonment create a weak emotional bond. These types of experiences, documented in the discipline of human

psychology, point to the ways in which human being may mature (or not) emotionally. Problems arise for individuals when these ways of knowing are disrupted or stunted.

The second way of learning and knowing is the mental. In the mental mode of learning and knowing, human beings use trial-and-error and mental thought processes to acquire knowledge about the world. This is the classic example of learning. We use our human ability to reason through challenges in order to come to appropriate conclusions. An example of this is a person who learns how to make a persuasive speech by taking a class in high school and then using that skill to become elected as the student body president. The study of human learning and formal education offers many theories to support this understanding and the process of learning that human beings embrace.

The third way of learning and knowing is the spiritual. Although this way has received less study than others, it is also generally acknowledged that spirituality is an important part of being human and plays a large role in our learning and knowing about the world. The spiritual way of knowing and learning encompasses what we believe. Belief is the cornerstone of many of our values, which impact so much of our understanding of the world. An example of this way of learning and knowing is our belief, or our non-belief, in a higher power. This way of knowing is what many call the opposite of science, largely because the existence of a higher power or “God” has not been scientifically proven. However, spiritual ways of knowing do not mean unscientific. For Native Americans in general, the spiritual aspect of self is closely related to communication since it is through the act of communicating that we develop our sense of self, and others, in a spiritual way.



The physical is the fourth and final way of learning and knowing. In this manner, the physical world or, as Searle (1995) noted, what can be called brute facts are taken into consideration. This way of learning and knowing comes from what can be observed or held. This physical way of knowing and learning is generally considered scientific, although it goes beyond mere science as well. Some examples of the physical way of learning or knowing the world is the ability to plant and grow foods for consumption, our knowledge of our own bodies (what will make us sick, for example), or the enjoyment that comes from our communion with nature.

As each individual human being progresses through life, he or she acquires knowledge in each of these four areas. This acquisition of knowledge can be visualized as pieces of a puzzle that an individual puts together within each of these four areas to make up a complete whole. These puzzle pieces develop mass when added to each individual's realm of experiences, knowledge and ways of knowing. When some of these puzzle pieces, or bits of knowledge, are missing in any one particular area or perhaps are overdeveloped in any one area, an individual is said to be out of balance. The goal for a good person then is to acquire knowledge through practical learning in each of the four areas to develop an understanding of life. By practical learning, it is meant that we must learn in the context of community, with other human beings, through the process of "being".

A conflict arises with mainstream society when learning is assumed to be an individual and internal process, with a beginning and an end, facilitated by an 'expert' and conducted in an isolated environment. Thus, children go to a schoolroom for a certain number of hours and a certain number of days, sit in rows focused on a teacher



who often uses rote methods to convey concepts, and attempt to ‘learn’ until such time as they are deemed ‘educated’. These differing conceptions of what constitutes learning – indeed, what constitutes *communicating* – are often at the heart of Native American criticisms of the Western educational system and are assigned culpability for the academic failure of Native American students (see Klug and Whitfield, 2003, for example).

By contrast, the L/N/Dakota model of learning suggests that we are not human “doings” but human “beings”. We learn by being a part of something larger than ourselves, whether that is a family, a community or a universe. In *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, author Etienne Wenger (1998) introduces a theory of learning based on the concept of thinking about learning as a process of social participation. This theory reflects the L/N/Dakota symbol of the medicine wheel and its corollary concept that “we are all related”. Because we learn through the process of being so too do we communicate through the process of being. And, more importantly, rhetoric is not what we do but is what we are. As Etienne points out:

Histories of interpretation create shared points of reference, but they do not impose meaning. Things like words, artifacts, gestures, and routines are useful not only because they are recognizable in their relation to a history of mutual engagement, but also because they can be re-engaged in new situations. ... The fact that actions and artifacts have recognizable histories of interpretation is not exclusively, or even primarily, a constraint on possible meanings, but also a resource to be used in the production of new meanings. (p. 138)

One similarity here, among others, is to the theory of symbolic interactionism. Although protégé Herbert Blumer coined the term, George Herbert Mead (1934) is the founder of the movement. In symbolic interactionism, Mead postulates that communication is a social act made up of three aspects: society, self and mind. This three-part relationship begins with an initial gesture from one individual, advances to a response to that gesture by another, and culminates in a response. The synergy (or perhaps, as we would say, sacred energy) of these three components make meaning. Other constitutive models of communication also describe the importance of relationships in communication. Burke's (1950) notions of identification and alienation, for example, posit that individuals share properties or substances with whatever or whomever they associate in order to become connected or "consubstantial" (Burke, 1950, p. 46).

This reciprocal interaction reflects the revolving "circle of life," another L/N/Dakota concept. In the medicine wheel, the circle represents not only the wholeness of the universe but also the circular nature of the universe. In fact, the traditional L/N/Dakota word for God, as it was conceptualized by them as opposed to non-Native missionaries, was *takuskanskan* – perpetual movement, energy, or that which "moves movement". Thus, the true power of the Creator was in keeping the motion of the universe. The reflection of the Creator was in the circular nature of all human actions, including rhetoric. As one Native scholar notes:

For Native American groups, who are closer to their historic traditions, their sense of logic is related to a circular thinking process. Unlike the linear process of western society, the circular process addresses items as to their relationships within a system of base of knowledge. Basic elementary functions of perceptions,



causality, and reality work in a circular fashion that does not differentiate time and historical events, so that the conscious knowledge becomes a part of the subconscious knowledge. This kind of circular thought and logic thereby influence the logic of Indian people and how they “see” and “understand” the world. (Fixico, 2003, p. 34)

The central purpose and function of communication then is to establish or locate duplicate/similar puzzle pieces, one’s own version of ‘truth’, within self and with other living things (as opposed to just other human beings) in order to facilitate strong relationships. This gathering of mass is facilitated not only through the spoken word, or verbal means, but also through the processes of listening and inner talk. These methods help human beings connect with the spiritual aspect of communication as well. In order for one to establish or locate duplicate puzzle pieces, however, it is necessary to build relationships – with self, others and the Creator – as a foundation for sharing knowledge.

As the field of communication has developed over the years, this emphasis on constitutive models rather than transmission models has become more closely aligned with an American Indian view of communication. In transmission models, “communication is conceptualized as a process in which meanings, packaged in symbolic messages like bananas in crates, are transported from sender to receiver” (Sloane, p. 125). Constitutive models, by contrast, define communication as “an ongoing process that symbolically forms and re-forms our personal identities, our social relations, our common world of meaningful objects and events, our idea and feelings, and our routine ways of expressing these socially constructed realities” (Sloane, p. 125).



As this view of communication evolves, perhaps it will provide a counter-hegemonic impact on the American education system as well. The cultural dissonance experienced by American Indian students in the traditional school system is indicative of the need to provide alternative understandings. The validation of circular ways of communicating and an acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of all learning would be far more culturally-congruent for Native Americans. As Deloria and Wildcat (2001) assert, "Education today trains professionals but it does not produce people" (p. 43). They criticize the Western tendency toward compartmentalization and point to this fragmentation as a source of distress for many American Indian students:

This condition, the separation of knowledge into professional expertise and personal growth, is an insurmountable barrier for many Indian students. It creates severe emotional problems as the students seek to sort out the proper principles from these two isolated parts of human experience. The problem arises because in traditional Indian society there is no separation; there is, in fact, a reversal of the sequence in which non-Indian education occurs: in traditional society the goal is to ensure personal growth and then to develop professional expertise. Even the most severely eroded Indian community today still has a substantial fragment of the old ways left, and these ways are to be found in the Indian family. (p. 43)

Perhaps as we more purposefully examine these disparate ways of viewing education and communication, this dissonance will be alleviated. Such counter-hegemonic efforts open the door to examining new ways of viewing communication, education, and, in general, the world around us.

## Using Terminology

In elucidating a communication theory that is uniquely Native American, as well as a L/N/Dakota model of oratory, it may be helpful to address the basic understandings of the terminology used to describe such a model. Throughout mainstream history, the meanings of such terms as “communication,” “oratory,” and “rhetoric,” as well as other related terms, have evolved in many ways; sometimes gaining connotations, other times losing meaning. This makes it difficult to ascribe a particular meaning without adding other shades of meaning as well.

In addition, each of the terms have certain cultural nuances of meaning for Native American people that may not mirror the meanings intended, or used, by mainstream communication practitioners. As with many words and concepts in Native languages, there are often no literal translations in the English language, and vice versa. This incongruence is rooted in the disparate epistemologies of each group. Thus, it is important to form a foundational understanding of how the terms used herein relate to communicating in practice, how these terms may differ in meaning in Native American epistemology and axiology, and how these terms would relate to an account of a model of L/N/Dakota oratory specifically.

Figure 3 is the framework for terminology germane to this work. It illustrates the relationships, context and ‘place’ of the various terminologies. Using this framework, it may be helpful to (1) discuss the meaning of the structure of the framework, and (2) illuminate some culturally-unique notions of communication, oratory and rhetoric. This is, of course, not an exhaustive list of terms but it does represent some of the major terms germane to this discussion.

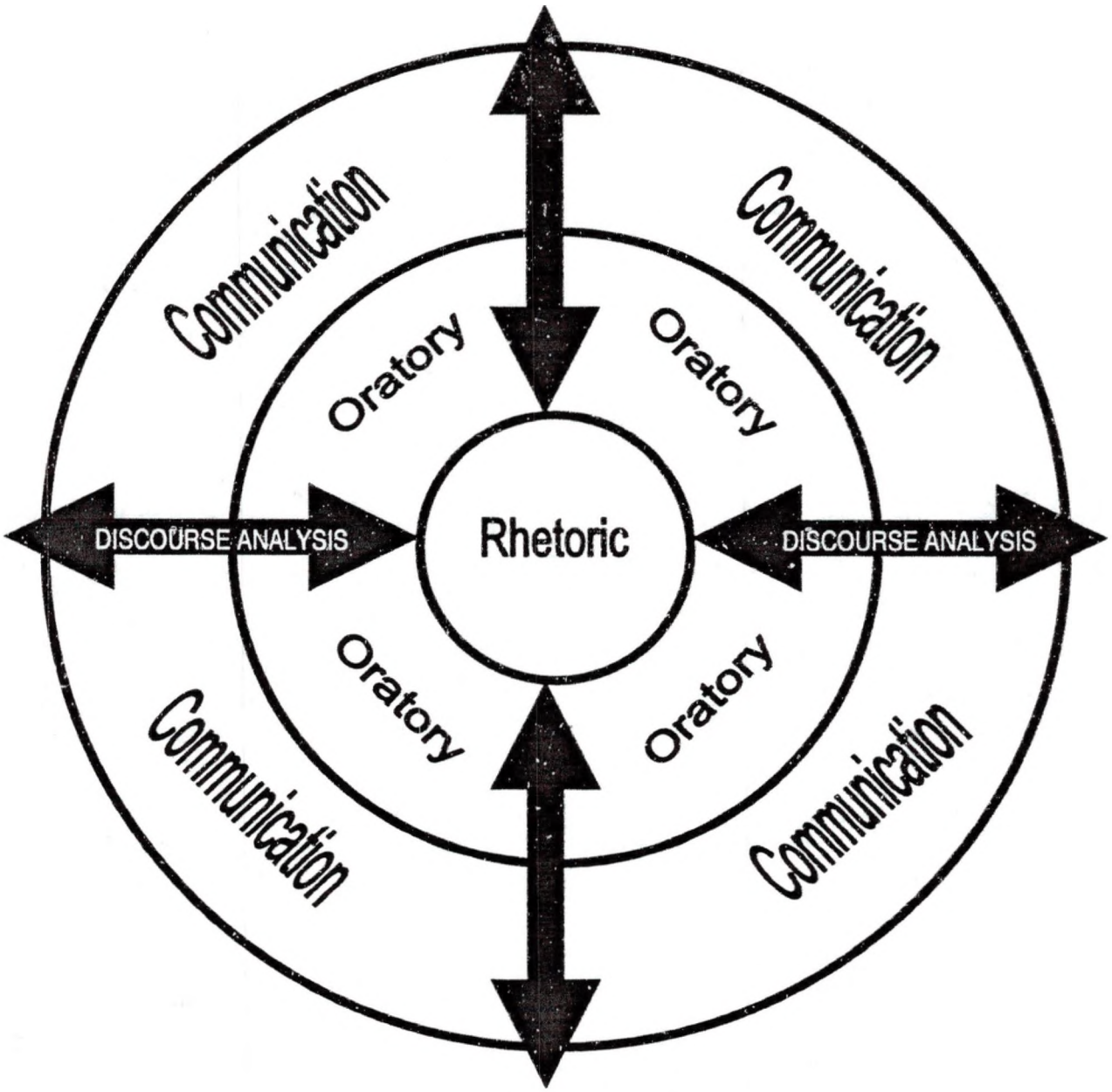


Figure 3. Terminology Framework.



The first characteristic of the framework worth noting is that it is comprised of various circles. This, in itself, is a cultural statement. In this illustration, the circles are used not to denote any type of hierarchy (i.e. outer or inner circles being more important) but the interrelated nature of the terms and the role they play in L/N/Dakota life. It should be noted that this framework is an attempt to reconcile the various Native and non-Native understandings of the various terms, as well as their respective connotative and denotative meanings rather than representing a pure Native American model or interpretation of meanings. This approach was taken in order to provide a theoretical “bridge” for understanding terminology in a culturally-based way. The illustration attempts to explain the shades of difference that occur in terms because of cultural influences.

For the purposes herein, *communication* is the term used to describe the overall area of exploration, as well as the broad act of *connecting to, or becoming-as-relative-with, others*. For Native peoples, the constitutive models of communication, which focus on making meaning, are more relevant than the transmission models of communication and their focus on relaying information. Communication, as understood by most Native American people, encompasses a great many factors that are occasionally, but not always, considered in mainstream examinations of the term (e.g. silence, communication with animals, song, smoke and spirituality). Thus, communication makes up the outer and widest circle in Figure 3. As depicted by the outer circle, the conception of communication goes beyond humans making meaning with other humans. The use of the pipe, for example, is based on the belief that exhaling smoke is a form of communicative prayer. The smoke itself is a manifestation of our sacred breath.

The next inner circle illustrates the role of oratory. The term *oratory* commonly refers to “the art of eloquent speech” or, in archaic usage, a semi-public place of worship in the Roman Catholic Church ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). In ancient Greece and Rome, oratory – along with rhetoric – comprised an important component of a quality education. Although the term *rhetoric*, it can be argued, replaced the term *oratory* in general use, oratory is preferred in this model because of the connotations ascribed to both terms. For example, rhetoric has generally been defined as the art or technique of persuasion but has sometimes been used in the pejorative sense in contemporary usage, meaning propaganda, empty words, “fluff”, “spin” or misleading information. Although it is occasionally acknowledged that classical philosophers believed the use of rhetoric was a tool for discovering and speaking truth, the negative connotations remain and the underlying L/N/Dakota values of speaking truthfully thus render the term oratory more appealing.

By the same token, the spiritual elements of the alternative and archaic use of the word – a place of worship – have a relevance to the model because of the L/N/Dakota view that spirituality is inherent in all communication. In fact, in my own personal experience, many individual Native orators believe that one must pray for spiritual guidance before speaking publicly and almost every occasion that features public speaking begins with prayer. Oratory comprises the next inner circle of Figure 3 because, although it is a form of communication, oratory as it is used herein is limited to the practice of human speech, or public speaking, within the larger context of all forms of communicating.



The innermost circle depicts the more limited function of L/N/Dakota oratory as a rhetorical device. Although the concept of rhetoric has evolved considerably during its 2500-year history, it can be argued that it has largely retained its meaning as persuasive discourse. Rhetoric, in an Aristotelian sense, concerned itself with persuasive argumentation in public, political and legal settings. For the most part, the historical instances in which orations by Native Americans were documented were concerned with just such argumentation. However, while these documented instances make up the majority of the examples we have of historical Native American orations, they are not reflective of most instances of Native public speaking but rather reflect the citation of what non-Native historians viewed as important. Rhetoric inhabits the innermost circle because, although Native Americans were historically noted for eloquently persuasive speech, the use of public speaking for such purposes was limited. This understanding comes from oral tradition, personal narratives and stories of various Native individuals.

Some communications scholars (Bahr, 1994; Clements, 1996; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, 1986:1990; Kan, 1983; Lister, 1985, for example) have attempted to describe a model of oratory based on the documented orations recorded by treaty officials, but have recognized their own limitations and have conducted no more than cursory examinations of structure. A L/N/Dakota model of oratory cannot be limited to the examination of these documented speeches addressed to councils or commissions, treaty negotiations, grievances regarding broken treaties or remonstrations against the behaviors of settlers. This is largely because these instances of oratory, though helpful, only play a minor role in (re)constructing a unique model of oratory. Other scholars (most notably Balgooyen, 1968) have documented the host of other occasions for oration



that constitute Native life including community ceremonies, such as namings and feasts; formalized spiritual ceremonies, such as blessings; discussions of major community decisions, such as camp moves; recognition ceremonies; and others. These occasions also called for orations that were not necessarily persuasive in nature. These occasions, had they been recorded, may have provided a wealth of material from which to support a model.

Another dilemma that should also be considered at this point is the differing notions of the term *persuasion*. Most Native American conceptions of what constitutes persuasion are very different from what is typically considered to be persuasive discourse. Many historians have noted that traditional Native American leaders did not have the same formal power structures within their societies – e.g. formal laws, police, lawyers, courts, etc. – that mainstream society had for forcing or coercing others to one’s will. As Burke (1950) might explain the matter, traditional Native American leaders utilized consubstantiality and identification since “you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (p. 55). Thus, persuasion was central to communication in the sense that it helped make connections that ultimately led to agreement, but it did not operate in a coercive manner. As will be discussed in more detail later, this notion of persuasion was firmly rooted in the epistemology of Native peoples.

The role of discourse analysis is also depicted in Figure 3. Discourse analysis is “the study of the rules governing appropriate language use in communicative situations” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2006) and focuses on the analysis of written, spoken or signed language and their interrelationship with society. In Figure 3, discourse

analysis cuts across each of the circles comprising the framework and extends outward-and-inward in each of the four directions. The depiction of discourse analysis in this manner illustrates the culturally-specific approach used to discuss the concepts related to a L/N/Dakota model of oratory.

In the mainstream use of the term discourse analysis, an element of judgment pervades the definition. In other words, analysis implies categorization and conclusions. As in the development of theory, values and worldviews are an inherent aspect of this process. However, for most Native American tribes, discourse analysis would not focus on a judgment as to “rightness” or “wrongness” of various texts, on form or structure of communication, nor on style. The axiological assumption underlying this belief is that individuals cannot make determinations for others but that it is up to the individual to determine the appropriateness of his or her way of communication. A Native-based conception of discourse analysis would focus on the function of such as it pertains to supporting the overall intent of communication. For example, Vine Deloria, Jr., has stated that the question “Do animals communicate?” put forth by non-Native scientists was crude and superfluous. Similar to the notion of research in Native communities, the notion of discourse analysis would focus on whether or not the particular communication was good for the People as a whole and demonstrated the language of respect.

## The First Circle: Communication

Relationship-building and knowledge-sharing are critical aspects of a culturally-specific (L/N/Dakota) understanding of the term “communication”. To help illuminate this concept, it is necessary to discuss the impact and implications of culture. One of the current trends in discussing, researching and theorizing about communication is the impact of culture (Craig, 2000). Literate cultures have long dominated the various worldviews in the academic world. This was often viewed as the natural or normal way of things as opposed to a cultural bias. However, as the world contracts and expands through technology and oral cultures gain voice (ironically through the written word), the increasing need to understand the pervasive role of culture in communication is evident.

As one author notes:

Much traditional communication theory and research has been implicitly ethnocentric and patriarchal. “We” studied the communication behavior of males, and occasionally of females in comparison with a male standard, and seldom questioned whether such categories might be defined differently except in “other” cultures. This approach is no longer intellectually or politically acceptable.

Every branch of communication studies is now challenged to address the cultural dimensions of communication and to recognize its own constitutive role in the production of culture. (Craig, 2000)

Virtually absent from the theoretical metadiscourse is the voice of the Indigenous communicators of this continent. This absence of voice had resulted in a plethora of scholarly works that can be described as decidedly ethnocentric (Pond, 1908:1986; Diedrich, 1989; Hassrick, 1964, for example). This ethnocentrism has, as discussed



previously, simultaneously limited perspectives and reinforced paradigms. One such paradigm is the belief that oral cultures are primitive. This cultural paradigm has limited the contributions of Native people to ethnographic remembrances.

In fact, Western assumptions that literate cultures are superior have long excluded Native Americans in the development of communication theory and this has limited theory. The absence of a written language, in the Western view, amounts to the absence of legitimate knowledge. Whatever the many gifts of literacy to society, however, Socrates himself warned that:

...discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves... You give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.  
(Plato, 1868, as cited in Cooper, 1998)

It is this philosophy that has perpetuated the ancient oral traditions of most Native American nations. As Deloria (2001) notes, the traditional Native American reliance on internal memory satisfies the paradox of complex individual communication and the quintessential search for a fundamental theory of communication. While the division of external and internal realities is a distinctly Western tradition based in the Platonic division of the world into otherworldly and this-worldly realms, Native American philosophy is predicated on the belief in one, indivisible reality. Thus, Native Americans believe breath is manifestation of the sacred while the Western bias of the written word

places our sacred breath of communication outside ourselves and thus relieves individuals of personal responsibility to meaning and truth. Prolific Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday (1987) says:

One who has only an oral tradition thinks of language in this way: my words exist at the level of my voice. If I do not speak with care, my words are wasted. If I do not listen with care, words are lost. If I do not remember carefully, the very purpose of words is frustrated. This respect for words suggests an inherent morality in man's understanding and use of language. ... [T]he written tradition tends to encourage an indifference to language. ... We take liberties with words; we become blind to their sacred aspect.

Clements (1996) affirms that among cultures who practice oral traditions – or “primary oral cultures,” as Ong (1982) describes them – “verbal artistic expression becomes manifest as an event rather than as object” (p. 6). This critical distinction addresses the primary difference in worldview of the purpose and meaning of communication and describes the difficulty in assessing quintessentially Native American speech “texts”.

Classical Western theories of communication are said to have originated in the fifth century B.C. Traditional Native American people, however, assert their own theories of communication began with the First Man as evidenced in most traditional Tribal Creation stories. In these Creation stories, language was not merely external sounds that developed over time and represented various symbols. Many traditional Tribal origin stories feature language as universal, a sacred breath emanating from all living things, including animals and ‘inanimate objects’ of nature such as rocks and trees.

Language was more than a vehicle for expressing symbols; it was an inherently spiritual process that involved the use of self (breath) for creation.

A well-known Taos/Warm Springs storyteller, Dr. Terry Tafoya, often says that, when a person tells a story, he or she “breathes life into it” (Tafoya, personal communication). He or she is not merely sharing symbols, creating metaphors or using words. He or she is actually sharing a part of his or her spirit with another. This ability to see human beings as a sacred part of the communication process is what is missing in most contemporary theories of communication and meaning. In this spirit, most Native expression was not simply “communication”, a word that has no equivalent in most ancient Native languages (Cooper, 1998). All ways of communicating – words, prayer, song, smoke, silence – had power because of the spirit within them, not because of any external reality.

In describing the importance of oral tradition, Lakota elder Severt Young Bear (Young Bear and Theisz, 1994) relates a story of his youth when he asked his father to record a song for him. His father refused to do so, telling him that by recording it, he would lose it. Young Bear says of this lesson:

In the oral tradition, then – whether it’s a story, a song, a joke about your brother-in-law, a prayer or a speech – it’s me telling it to you – or in public to sometimes lots of people – for your ears and mind to catch and keep. ... In stories, songs, speeches, jokes, whatever, we take ideas and give them a shape, a body through the human voice. Through lively and creative language we give life and color to ideas. Through that language we make those ideas walk and fly and shine; we share our feelings and our knowledge and our memories. Our stories and songs,



we should remember, also teach us lessons. Sure, dates and facts are often missing, sometimes they're not accurate in the way historians and anthropologists like it, but our oral tradition tells the truth and the heart of the meaning stays alive from mouth to ear. (p. 16)

Because of these unique and alternative views, it may be helpful to suggest a conceptual model that displays the perspective of this Native American philosophy. However, it is also important to make the caveat that while this model does represent a generally shared Native American perspective, I have a responsibility – in the tradition I am describing – to acknowledge that this is a model based on my own understandings and that I cannot claim this knowledge as being the same for all Tribes or all Tribal peoples.

Figure 4 illustrates a pictorial illustration of an understanding of communication from a Native American [L/N/Dakota] perspective. This illustration represents the 'world' of communication. A profound and quintessentially Native American adage states *what is above is also below*. In other words, everything in our human world consists of ever-

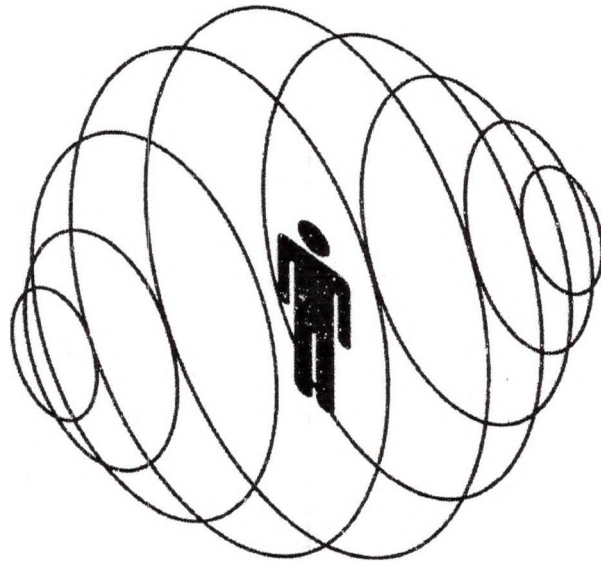


Figure 4. Native American Theory of Communication Conceptual Model

expanding and ever-contracting circles that mimic the structure of the entire universe. This conception underscores the reason most uniquely Native American models –

whether they be related to communication, social structure, mental health, mathematics or any other subject – are circular. It also perhaps explains the Native reliance on visual metaphor, since Native epistemology is based on simplicity and relationship. Since most natural phenomena in our world mimic each other, we do not have to reiterate the fundamental understandings of each concept. For example, just as we as individuals constitute the center of the circle of our families, extended families and our nation (in expanding, concentric circles), so too does our earth represent the center of the circle of our universe.

In Figure 4, the communicator is at the center of the circle, which is four-dimensional. Similar to Gilbert Austin's chironomia sphere (Austin, 1966), the circle surrounding the communicator is his or her 'world' of communication. Unlike Austin's system of notation, however, the sphere is not for artifice or effect nor is it limited in scope. In addition, the figure is figurative rather than literal. In Figure 4, the sphere represents the mass of all of an individual's prior life experiences, sensations, knowledge and understandings. These are the puzzle pieces that he or she has added through verbal acts, the written word, and spiritual connectivity.

The outer boundaries of this circle – the range of communication for the communicator – represent the degree to which he or she can extend his or her 'sacred breath' (e.g. the sound of his or her voice). Of course, for this facet of the model, communications technology offers some complex and sometimes problematical implications. These implications and challenges will be discussed further in a later section. However, the model is predicated on human-to-human interaction through the spoken word and is thus limited in this way for these purposes.



The purpose of communication, then, is for individuals to make connections within their world or sphere. These interconnections – or sharing of puzzle pieces – are made when individuals share ‘life’ or ‘sacred breath’ with each other. Thus, much of what constitutes communication for Native American peoples necessarily involves a sharing of self, a placing of self into context (e.g. a commitment to place), a seeking of common ground and the essential search for kinship. This is slightly different from the emphasis in the Western notion of communication, which focuses on either transmissive models of communication – i.e. messages transported from sender to receiver – or constitutive models – i.e. a shared process of symbolically making or shaping meaning. Perhaps this Native-based notion might be called a positional model, in which communication positions us as human beings in relation to the rest of the physical and metaphysical world.

While the exterior boundaries of the model are (for the most part) finite, that is not to say that the model is limited. The life-long acquisition of knowledge and experience is represented by mass. The communicator’s world can and does continuously gather mass (wisdom). This mass is gathered in each of the various quadrants, or ways of knowing – mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. Thus, some individuals may have more of a spiritual orientation for communicating than others or some individuals may have a more mental orientation for communicating with others. This orientation is manifested in the way in which we use communication. For example, a person who has gathered spiritual mass may use prayer or a self-reflective spiritual speaking and listening process as their primary modes of communication and ways of



acquiring wisdom. This person might be called a holy man or holy woman, a medicine man or medicine woman, a pipe carrier, a healer or some other appropriate term.

The wisdom gathered through the process of being is then used to facilitate the additional sharing of “puzzle pieces,” as described earlier, in order to further connect and establish relationships (the purpose and function of communication) within self – including the spiritual (e.g. Creator, God) – and with all other living things. Our traditional Native elders speak of making connections as a basis for learning. Wildcat and Deloria (2001) express it this way:

It is singularly instructive to move away from Western educational values and theories and survey the educational practices of the old Indians. Not only does one get a sense of emotional stability, which indeed might be simply the impact of nostalgia, but viewing the way the old people educated themselves and their young gives a person a sense that education is more than the process of imparting and receiving information. Indeed, that it is the very purpose of human society, and human societies cannot really flower until they understand the parameters of possibilities that the human personality contains. (p. 44)

The conception of communication described here is the foundation for all types and manifestations of communication. This is why the term communication (in Figure 3) surrounds all of the different ways in which we use voice to make connections. This understanding sustains all of our formal and informal speaking structures from everyday informal dialogue, to self-talk, to prayer, to song, to formal orations. This includes some of the unconventional and Native-based modes of communication that are not often considered by mainstream practitioners (e.g. “chanting”, silence) and the more so-called

mystic ways of communicating in which we, as Native people believe (e.g. sending our spirit through stones, speaking in dreams and communicating with deceased relatives or other loved ones).

It should be noted that the general conception of communication described here is consistent with those socio-linguistic theories (e.g. Sapir, 1951; Whorf, 1956; Hymes, 1972; Ong, 1973; Bauman, 1975; Slobin, 1991) that place communication patterns as critical characteristics of a culture that shape reality. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, for example, can be accounted for by the notion of two fundamentally different communication spheres surrounding individuals who come from completely different environments. Linguistic relativity implies that these two individuals would have extreme difficulty sharing two puzzle pieces if they inhabit different conceptual universes shaped by their language. A good example from the L/N/Dakota experience is the common translation for God as *Tunkasila* or *Wakantanka*. Native translators used the terms *Tunkasila* (Grandfather) and *Wakantanka* (Great Mystery/Big Holy) to describe the personification of the Christian deity but there is no direct translation or word for a concept (e.g. personification of Creator) that does not exist in the L/N/Dakota cultural worldview. In other words, the conceptual universes inhabited by early Native people and missionaries inhibited a functional sharing of puzzle pieces.

## The Second Circle: Oratory

BE CAREFUL WHEN SPEAKING; YOU CREATE THE WORLD AROUND YOU WITH YOUR WORDS.  
-Diné saying-

Communication for Native people then, as asserted here, is not the mere exchange of facts or messages. For Native people, communication involves primarily relationship building. The purpose of oratory, then, is to use the spoken language to connect with other human beings who share the human ability to “speak”. Thus, a conception of oratory is based on – and includes aspects of – such notions as building relationships (including kinship), storytelling and oral tradition, the recognition of silence as communication, humility, spirituality, and development of wisdom.

The term ‘oratory’ can be likened to the L/N/Dakota term *ho wasté* or good voice. The term *ho wasté* is similar to the Quintilian concept of a “good man speaking well”. Our voice (*ho*) is our sacred breath and *wasté* is all that all humans have collectively agreed was a standard to which we want to aspire. Because oratory comes from our sacred spirit, it is not merely an external process of making messages. Figure 5 illustrates these dichotomous concepts:

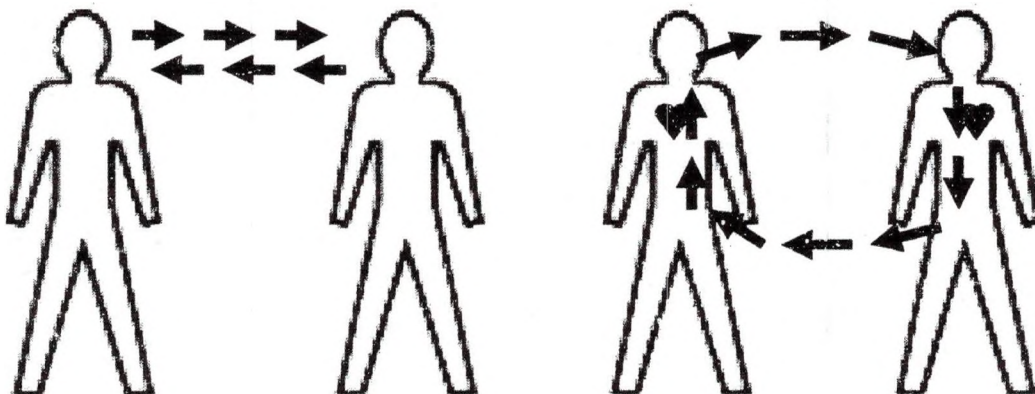


Figure 5. Oratory as External vs. Internal Process



Although simplistic, Figure 5 goes beyond merely illustrating the internal versus external process of communicating. It also illustrates the connectedness that is integral to the purpose of communicating. The process of communication must necessarily connect mind and heart of both communicators or the intent and purpose of communication has not been met. In other words, the message may have been transmitted and received but, unless the listener/receiver internalized the message into heart and mind, the connection was not made. 'Talking heads' is a common term for the lack of connection and it can be argued that much of our communication in the modern world follows this pattern. Figure 5 illustrates the importance of connecting through relationship-building and that this connection must be made before communication can be considered successful or complete. What this means in practical terms is that much of what contemporary society calls communication is not communication at all but a mere use of words.

The process of building relationships is facilitated by the use of kinship terms. One of the functions of oratory is to establish a relationship with another living thing. Thus, when L/N/Dakota elders spoke, they would use terms such as "Grandfather," "cousin," or "friend" (as opposed to actual names) during the course of orations. This included not only human beings but other living things as well, for example, "Mother Earth". The use of kinship terms was a constant reminder to orators of the function and purpose of oratory. Irving (1971) notes that many of the historical orators she records in her work use the words "Grandfather", "Father", or "Brother" throughout their orations but these references are often omitted from the recorded texts. The usage of these particular relationship terms were likely dismissed as mere stylistic devices when, in

reality, they were meant to serve an important role as the orators' attempts to establish relationship with the listener.

Another critical aspect of *ho wasté* is the use of storytelling and personal narrative influenced by oral tradition. One of the frustrations that many non-Native people commonly express about talking with Native Americans is their "inability to get to the point". Pond's (1986) ethnographic description of Native oratory, for example, describes the frustration thusly: "When making set speeches on ordinary occasions, the speaker often commenced in a rambling manner, passing from topic to topic, with much circumlocution slowly approaching the main subject of discourse" (p. 80). This perception is rooted in the Native practice of telling one's story or sharing one's perspective as opposed to telling one a "fact".

Today, many non-Natives continue to express frustration when talking to L/N/Dakota people (especially elders) because, when they (non-Natives) ask a direct question, the L/N/Dakota person does not answer directly but, rather, may relate a personal story or talk about something that appears to be completely unrelated. However, this oratorical style reflects the value that an effective L/N/Dakota speaker will show respectful deference to another by responding indirectly rather than with a direct refutation or impeding that individual's own learning process. In other words, it was considered disrespectful to *tell someone how to think* (i.e. answer a question directly) rather than just provide one's own perspective and allow the other individual to *come to his or her own conclusion* (i.e. not answer the question). Telling someone how to think led to argumentation while providing one's perspective and allowing another to come to a conclusion led to respectful dialogue. This practice is also rooted in the fact that, in a



language of respect, communication was not separate from individual human beings (until the advent of the written word) and, thus, any direct refutation was seen as personal attack and ran contrary to norms of respect. Fixico (2003) expands on this point as well:

It is a noticeable characteristic of Tribal elders (traditionalists) who frequently have a tendency to generalize rather than supplying a direct answer or specific detail. This indirectness means that they communicate in a more abstract way so as not to decrease the opportunity for further information that might cause confrontation or rejection of what they said, for example, suggestions or advice. (p. 14)

In addition, this indirectness decreased the perception that one was arguing or being confrontational. An effective L/N/Dakota speaker did not respond to another viewpoint, as in debate, with a point-by-point refutation. This was considered impolite and arrogant. Rather, an effective speaker would simply respond by trying to provide another perspective, at the worst gently admonishing another if he or she should suggest that his or her way is the only way to think about the matter.

For the L/N/Dakota person, communication is based on the assumption that every person has the ability to decipher his or her own meaning from a set of facts. This relates to the positional nature of communication. One positions himself and herself as having a particular experience but does not presume to say that this way is the right way, a wrong way or the only way. This position just is. Thus, as part of any meaningful communication interaction, two puzzle pieces must first be shared in order for the listener to understand the speaker's position. The "inability to get to the point" is actually the sharing of puzzle pieces and the establishment of position for the speaker. It is the



reluctance of the speaker to answer a question directly and therefore impede another individual's learning process. Joseph M. Marshall III, in his book *The Lakota Way*, demonstrates this traditional practice of using communication for the sharing of knowledge:

A grandmother, for example, watches a child about to play with the fire, as all children do from time to time. As curiosity draws the child closer and closer to the fire, the grandmother moves closer to ensure that no harm occurs but as yet has not issued a warning of danger. Then the inevitable occurs. The child pokes a finger in the flames and yanks it back, away from the pain of the heat. Then the grandmother says, "Grandson, the fire is hot, it can hurt you". Her words affirm a fact that is indelibly etched in the boy's awareness. He will at least think twice before poking a finger in the flames again, and there is a high probability that he will never again deliberately touch fire. If she had spoken the words before the occurrence, they would have held no meaning for the child, and they would not have prevented him from touching the flames. Her knowledge of the situation came from her own childhood, when she did the same. After a lifetime of acquiring knowledge and experience, she knew the most effective moment to affirm the truth. Wisdom also told her that, in this case, it was better to demonstrate the truth rather than simply explain it. (Marshall, 2000, p. 203)

This notion of allowing others to come to their own conclusions and understandings – to find their own puzzle pieces – is often seen as antithetical to the common Western conceptualization of oratory as fact-sharing, teaching and persuading. Persuasion, for Native people, however, means allowing an individual or audience to

come to their own conclusions by providing personal narrative (sharing puzzle pieces), establishing relationship, and suppressing your own wants, needs and influence in the matter. Thus, persuasion does not have the same coercive connotations for Native people.

The process of locating and sharing experiences and knowledge, however, is exacerbated by the limitations of language. The complexity, depth and breadth of the English language is an illuminating example of the attempt to substitute words (symbols) for ways of knowing and learning (puzzle pieces). Go to any thesaurus and you will find a myriad of words to describe a plethora of meanings (such as myriad and plethora). I.A. Richards (1936) labeled this the “proper meaning superstition”, in other words, the mistaken belief that any given word has a precise and shared definition. Together with his colleague, C.K. Ogden, Richards (1946) created the “semantic triangle” to show the indirect relationship between symbols and their supposed referents. These concepts parallel the Native-based understandings of sharing through story-telling. Only when two individuals share experiences through ways of knowing can they share the same meanings. Thus, the function of language for the Western world is to help clarify externally what is inherently internal.

In most non-Native societies, language has two specific functions. One function is expression. This is the province of song and poetry, metaphor and symbolism. The other function of language is communication. This is the exchange of information with a focus on accuracy and efficiency. Once again, however, the division of these functions is one that does not exist in most Native American belief systems, and more specifically, among the L/N/Dakota. In L/N/Dakota philosophy, the way of expressing is just as vital as the information presented. In fact, the means of expression is often linked directly to



the information. For example, a prayer to greet the day often takes the form of a song while a prayer for help often takes the form of smoking a pipe. This dualism is also why silence is seen as a functional and expressive form of communication in the L/N/Dakota society whereas in non-Native society silence is more often viewed as an absence of communication.

The use of silence as a form of communication is also a central concept in a L/N/Dakota theory of oratory. Long ago, Native children were taught the importance of remaining silent in order to become good listeners (to others, to themselves, to nature and to the Creator). They were taught to use their organs of smell, to look where there was apparently nothing to see, and to listen intently when all seemingly was quiet (Standing Bear, 1975). This training taught children the importance of using all their senses, including those of the spiritual self. Silence was not the absence of sound, nor was it a form; it was a seamless external and internal presence with many possible purposes: expressing respect, reverence, outer listening, inner listening, communion with nature, perceiving shifts in weather, worship (Cooper, 1998).

The notion of silence and listening also calls the role of the audience into being. While most mainstream American conceptions of audience seem to imply passivity (e.g. audience “members” rather than audience “participants”), the L/N/Dakota conception of audience is based on relational participation and/or contribution. For the L/N/Dakota person, the audience plays a much more vital role in the oratorical process. The audience is essential for the story to live on as a part of the circular time continuum (Fixico, 2003). In this regard, the audience is not a separate entity to the orator but is an integral part of



any oration. The listener had just as vital a role in the communication process as the speaker.

Another aspect of L/N/Dakota oratory includes the acquisition of wisdom. The conception of wisdom in this context means the development of self-control over the four aspects of self. Thus, wisdom was not the same as knowledge. Wisdom came from a lifetime of direct experiences and profound self-awareness. This is why elders have sometimes been acknowledged as being more respected in Native American Tribal communities than in mainstream communities. The acquisition of wisdom comes with age and life experience. In other words, gaining wisdom meant finding your own puzzle pieces through experience and ensuring you had a balance of each. In concrete terms, this means understanding the world in a mental sense, a spiritual sense, an emotional sense and a physical sense. Traditionally for Native people, elders and older adults were the primary speakers in our communities because of this respect for wisdom. The hallmark of a good speaker was having a range of life experiences upon which to draw for advising, suggesting and counseling. This culturally-based worldview is still evident today in speaking practices. For example, when asked to speak at large gatherings that may include elders and older adults, many culturally-grounded youth or young adults will apologize to the elders or older adults in an audience before speaking. This apology acknowledges that age and wisdom sanction public speaking.

Wisdom was also acknowledged in elders and older adults who knew when to speak and when not to speak, and who knew when to question and when not to question. The sense of balance that comes from these experiential and intuitive understandings has been largely undermined in contemporary American society by our reliance on science,

rationality and logic. This emphasis has come to greatly outweigh our reliance on the spiritual because of our larger societal orientations toward the secular. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) address this concern:

There are many instances in the oral traditions of the tribe in which, after reviewing everything that is known about a certain thing, the storyteller simply states that what he or she has said was passed down by elders or that he or she marveled at the phenomenon and was unable to explain it further. It is permissible within the Indian context to admit that something mysterious remains after all is said and done. Western science seems incapable of admitting that anything mysterious can exist or that any kind of behavior or experience can remain outside its ability to explain. (p. 127)

Finally, the aspects of humility and spirituality must permeate any L/N/Dakota notion of oratory. As stated previously, oratory is not a vehicle of direct persuasion for Native people. Because of this, humility plays a key role in the understanding of oratory. A speaker did not speak for the purpose of bending others to his or her will. A speaker spoke his/her 'truth' and encouraged others to share in the wisdom of his/her conclusions. Traditional Native speakers, even today, often include a disclaimer when speaking that they are "not experts", they are "just a common (wo)man" or "aren't trying to tell anyone how to do anything". This acknowledges the cultural value of respect and true democratic freedom. In this manner, all orations are also profoundly spiritual in that oratory provides a basic medium for exhibiting respect for others.

### The Third Circle: Rhetoric

The third and final circle in Figure 3 depicts the understanding of the term “rhetoric”. As certain scholars (Clements, 2002; Cooper, 1998) have noted, indigenous terminology doesn’t always correspond exactly to the same Western notions of communication. In this case, the term rhetoric is a good example. There is no specific word that equates to “rhetoric” in the L/N/Dakota language. That is not to say that persuasive discourse does not exist. Rhetoric (as it is classically understood) does play a vital role in L/N/Dakota society, as it does in any democratic society. However, as noted, the art of persuasion does not necessarily carry the same negative connotations it has come to acquire, especially among American Indian communities, of telling others how to think, bending others to one’s will or declaring that one’s way is the right way.

In the *Dictionary of Native American Literature* (Wiget, 1994), Bahr notes the distinction between oratory as it is commonly viewed by non-Natives in the U.S. and the use of oration by Native Americans historically. Bahr asserts that an oration is a speech that “argues a position on what is good for the community” (p. 107). Thus, his use of the term oration can be more appropriately termed rhetoric. The critical aspect of his notion is that an argument must be made using the “engine of persuasion with equivalents for such English expressions as ‘therefore,’ ‘I think,’ ‘it is false that,’ etc...” (p. 108). To Bahr’s way of thinking, this places argumentation at the heart of oratory. He asserts that oratory to European colonists was then primarily associated with politics, most especially parliamentary politics.

However, Bahr also identifies a flaw in applying this perspective of oratory to American Indians by noting that “Indians were not or did not think that they were citizens



or subjects of the states to whose representatives they were orating” (p. 108). Thus, most of the instances of American Indian oration were in situations of diplomacy, not parliament. While Bahr provides examples of both diplomatic and parliamentary styles of oratory used in each of these circumstances by Native leaders of the time period, he also concludes that European invaders “did draw Indians into its oratory” and, as a result, tended to view Native oratory through the lens of rhetoric and leaves the question of the existence of “separate and diverse oratorical traditions” largely ignored.

Other scholars have noted that rhetorical ability was central to a democratic society. Pond (1986) notes that the influence of a leader “depended almost entirely on his abilities as a speaker, for no force was used to compel obedience to his commands” (p. 78). Thus, rhetoric as persuasive discourse had a definite role in traditional L/N/Dakota society. However, as noted, the notion of persuasion also had a somewhat different meaning.

St. Clair (2000) provides a refreshing paradigmatic shift in thinking regarding the traditional concept of rhetoric in his article “Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge and the New Rhetoric”. This new way of viewing rhetoric may have some implications to this framework of understanding terminology in that such a definition may be more congruent with a Native American worldview. St. Clair points to the movement in connotation away from rhetoric-as-persuasion and toward rhetoric-as-practical-reasoning as having roots in the work of such scholars as Toulmin, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. By divesting themselves of the “culture boundness of thinking”, these scholars have found that “non-Western systems of rhetoric tend to use visual instead of verbal metaphors” and that the new rhetoric is, rather, “epistemic knowledge-seeking” (p. 85).

In a new understanding of rhetoric, it is important to delineate the difference between print cultures and oral cultures. Print cultures tend to use the verbal metaphor and an analytical mode of cognition in which verbal information is processed sequentially, logically and rationally. In oral cultures, the use of visual metaphor is prevalent and the relational mode of cognition prevails. Thus, contemporary students of oratory find it necessary to be aware of, and competent in, both ways of understanding rhetoric. They must learn how to reconstruct the social reality of the host culture and also be able to shift from one system or form of legitimization to the other (St. Clair, 2000). In other words, a rhetor from an oral culture must learn to synthesize both the rhetorical style based on the writings of Aristotle or the essays of Cicero, as well as the rhetorical style based on the concepts of balance and perpetual energy based on the visual metaphor of the medicine wheel. A “new rhetoric” seeks to resolve the tension between these two information processing modes.

Table 1. Information Processing Modes of Print vs. Oral Cultures.

	PRINT CULTURE	ORAL CULTURE
Cognition	Analytical Mode: Look for the details and not the whole.	Synthesizing Mode: Look for the overall meaning and how the details fit together.
Processing	Sequential: Go from left to right.	Simultaneous: View everything at once just as one would view a painting.
Thought	Relational, Logical: Reason logically and use syllogisms. Put people into categories. Do not rely on emotions.	Affective, Emotive: Feelings are important. Use emotions to understand others.
Predilections	Mathematics, Science	Art, Music, Dance
Legitimization	Verbal Metaphor: Use metaphors based on language.	Visual Metaphor: Use metaphors based on the reorganization of visual spaces
Literacy	Print, Technology	Orality, the Arts



St. Clair (2000) provides a useful compare-and-contrast table (p. 90) to illustrate these differing information processing modes (see Table 1) as well as another illuminating factor as to why print culture and oral culture conceptions of rhetoric may be so disparate:

Within the Western tradition of rhetoric, one divides an essay into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The parallels here with the Aristotelian causes are obvious. Growth begins with primary matter, it undergoes a series of changes, and terminates with the final cause. Similarly, an essay begins with an introduction and expands the concept discussed into various forms of evidence, logical reasoning, and persuasive thinking. These various forms are known as the body of the essay. Finally, the essay is concluded just as growth also has its terminus. The path of growth from the introduction to the conclusion is connected by means of a thesis statement, a basic theme. It is the Aristotelian equivalent of a motor cause, an underlying reason for the process of growth. (p. 94)

But the definition of “growth,” as conceptualized by Aristotle and primary print cultures, is also culture-bound. The analogy is based on a scientific model of growth as being a finite and sequential process. For example, this view sees growth as a human being progressing through the stages of infancy, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Thus, the structure of oration should follow this same sequential path.

For primary oral cultures, however, “growth” is not necessarily sequential. For example, there are many children who are mature and wise far beyond their years, as well as adults who are immature in their actions and reasoning. In this view, human growth is



viewed as a purposeful journey but one that is different for each person and does not always follow a direct path. Growth is an emotive path determined by any given individual's experiences and trials.

This tension between cultures becomes conflict when a judgment factor becomes involved. In those instances in which a student writing an essay is graded by a teacher, an individual giving a speech is assessed by an audience, or an employee leading a group or committee is evaluated by his or her supervisor, the format more than likely to be employed will be the traditional Aristotelian conception of "sequential growth". An individual with a primary oral culture orientation might then be misjudged according to the framework by which he or she understands rhetoric.

This conjecture is probably what accounts for the poverty-of-language theory that was popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and sparked considerable debate about the nature of American Indian oratory. Historical commentators and scholars most often mentioned the use of metaphor and other tropes of language as a characteristic of Native American speech. These commentators, whether friend or foe, frequently noted that such abstractions as "truth", "beauty", and "justice" were absent from most of the published texts of Native American orations. Thus, the common (mis)perception was that the concrete language that reflected the natural and cultural worlds of the speakers were the extent of thought. In fact, as Clements (2002) notes, "the association between metaphorical speech and Indianness became so ensconced in American iconography that one of the markers of 'playing Indian' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was speaking in metaphors" (p. 80).

During this time period, there were two ways of explaining the extensive use of metaphors in Native languages. On the one hand, sympathetic commentators viewed the use of figurative speech as an indication of the essential humanity of Native Americans. The use of metaphoric language was seen as the ability to artistically manipulate the spoken word in such a way that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* labeled "genius". On the other hand, however, critics of Native American ontology cited the use of metaphor as evidence of the poverty of language theory.

The poverty of language theory asserted that Native Americans had not yet achieved the level of abstract thought of European and English societies. In this view, strongly supported by written observations of missionaries and ethnographers, Native Americans did not have words to describe complex matters and so relied on common figurative tropes to convey meaning. In *Oratory in Native North America*, Clements (2000) notes that American Indian speech was indeed marked by the use of figurative tropes in public discourse but begs the question: Was it because they could not communicate abstractly, or was it part of a set of linguistic strategies that tropes have been reported as serving in many language contexts? Clements (2002) provides his own analysis of the varied reason for American Indians using metaphor:

I will argue the latter and suggest that the use of figurative language in Native American oratory served several fundamental purposes: to make clear otherwise nebulous concepts (which may seem to support the poverty-of-language hypothesis); to create memorable impressions not only of the conveyed message but also of the speaker him- or herself; to cloak ideas, sometimes unpleasant or inflammatory, in as pleasant a format as possible (that is, to achieve indirection);



to ground what is said in the authority of tradition; to move referents through quality space with as much subtlety as possible (thus serving the ends of persuasion); and to integrate the diverse phenomena of the experienced environment into a satisfying whole. (p. 86)

Clements' ethnocentric epistemology, however, does not account for the fundamental differences between oral and print cultures as elucidated by St. Clair. By recognizing that differing cultural worldviews could account for the extensive use of metaphor by Native Americans, St. Clair provides an alternative to the poverty of language theory that Clements had not even considered.

More (1998) also lends support to the Native reliance on use of visual metaphor as an epistemological phenomenon. He provides a literature review and analysis of research conducted with various Native American student groups that capture the quintessential differences in Native learning styles. Two of these fundamental differences are the use of visual/perceptual/spatial information and the use of coded imagery. Many Native American students, given the choice, prefer to process information visually, perceptually and spatially rather than verbally. This process was also found to be more effective for Native American students in retaining concepts.

Native American students also frequently and effectively use coding with imagery to remember and understand words and concepts. Rather than using specific verbal word associations, they preferred to use mental images to remember or understand. This suggests that use of metaphors, images or symbols probably has to do with the predisposition of Native students and how they are inherently drawn to these visual methods of learning and communicating. But while visual metaphors have proven



helpful to many Native Indian students in learning difficult concepts, it should also be noted that this does not lead to the poverty-of-language conclusion. The images used are not necessarily simple. On the contrary, they may be very complex and abstract. Hence, the use of coding by imagery does not imply that the students are inferior intellectually; it simply recognizes that they have a strength in that area that many non-Indian students do not (More, 1998). In fact, More notes that the use of imagery is a common feature of many gifted programs and is used to explain some of the most abstract scientific concepts (e.g. the theory of relativity).

It is hoped that a L/N/Dakota model of oratory will offer even more empirical evidence of viable alternatives to the traditional Aristotelian growth structure of orations and an alternative to using this primary lens with which to judge all rhetoric.

## CHAPTER V

### MÖBELS AND MÖBEL-BUILDING

#### What a Model of L/N/Dakota Oratory is Not

In addition to coming to an understanding of definitions, another useful endeavor in seeking to explicate a model of oratory is to define the limitations of such a model. In addition to identifying the aspects of a model which may be present, it is also helpful to identify what such a model is not. Some of the concepts relating to this specific model of oratory, but not necessarily integrated, are code-switching, vernacular, and poetic style.

Code-switching is a term in linguistics referring to the practice of alternating between two or more languages, dialects, or language registers in any given discourse between people who have more than one language in common. Other words used to describe code-switching are “broken English” or language-specific hybrid terms, such as “Spanglish” and “Franglais”. Code-switching is often used by bilingual individuals because (1) they either lack or cannot find an appropriate translation of a word, expression or concept, or (2) they seek to retain a sense of cultural identity through the use of culture-specific language. In addition, the blended use of the two familiar languages may allow a speaker to explain him or herself more sufficiently. Although L/N/Dakota orators may practice code-switching in some circumstances for the reasons as described above, a L/N/Dakota model of oratory does not describe this practice.

A model of L/N/Dakota oratory is also dissimilar to the unique vernacular developed with different minority group communities as they have historically encountered the English language. Such developments – e.g. Black English and American Indian English – are resistant responses to the assimilation or “melting pot” process experienced by minority groups and other populations of color in the United States. These language developments are valid and pervasive methods of communication that are often denounced as mere slang.

In *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (2000), the authors use the term Spoken Soul as another term for Ebonics, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and Black English, and assert that Black English is a bona fide vernacular despite the criticism:

The fact is that most African Americans do talk differently from whites and Americans of other ethnic groups, or at least most us can when we want to. And the fact is that most Americans, black and white, know this to be true. (p. 15)

The authors provide solid evidence of the use of spoken soul in a variety of venues, such as written literature, by preachers in prayers, by comedians and actors, and in song. They also delineate the various facets and functions of spoken soul, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to explain why the vernacular plays such a critical role for African Americans:

The reasons for the persistence and vitality of Spoken Soul are manifold: it marks black identity; it is the symbol of a culture and a life-style that have had and continue to have a profound impact on American popular life; it retains the associations of warmth and closeness for the many blacks who first learn it from



their mothers and fathers and other family members; it expresses camaraderie and solidarity among friends; it establishes rapport among blacks; and it serves as a creative and expressive instrument in the present and as a vibrant link with this nation's past. (p. 23)

For these same reasons, American Indian English is also a cultural communication phenomenon that has been identified as existing in American Indian Tribal communities. In *American Indian English* (1993), author William Leap provides an extensive examination of the diversity of English use in American Indian speech communities. Like Black English, the use of American Indian English by Tribal populations is predicated on the need for preservation of cultural identity, affiliation with in-groups, and channels for creative expression. These types of sociolinguistic speech patterns – e.g. Black English and “Red” English – are manifestations of the bilateral development of language in unique speech communities. Thus, they represent an amalgamation of two distinct cultural influences within language specifically while a L/N/Dakota model of oratory rather seeks to explicate a uniquely American Indian cultural speaking process as it has survived intact.

A L/N/Dakota model of oratory also does not describe the poetic literary style often ascribed to American Indian orators. These poetic delivery styles parallel the Noble Savage or Child of Nature stereotypes prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the most poignant speeches offered by Tribal leaders were examples of this poetic style; for example, the Surrender Speech of Chief Joseph and Chief Seattle's oft-quoted Change of Worlds speech. A L/N/Dakota model of oratory more accurately describes the structure of traditional orations rather than the specific words and

phrases used by speakers. Although a L/N/Dakota model of oratory does not describe a poetic literary style, it is nevertheless present in many examples of American Indian oratory and continues to be used as a specific rhetorical device.

It is important to note that the model is based on the use of the English language within traditional L/N/Dakota cultural speechmaking patterns. Making this caveat is necessary because of the contemporary and widespread use of the English language by L/N/Dakota (as well as other Tribal) peoples. While there has never been a truly comprehensive and systematic national assessment of the language skills of Native American adults in the U.S., it is safe to postulate that most American Indian adults – including L/N/Dakota – in the U.S. are English-speaking or, at the very least, bi-lingual. Limited studies also show us the future use of the English language by Native peoples.

According to the *Comprehensive Indian Bilingual-Bicultural Education Needs Assessment* (Roberts, et al., 1981), one of the most detailed analyses to date of the language skills of American Indian (and Alaska Native) students, 57.9% of students live in communities in which English is the predominant language, 51.4% of these students are monolingual English speakers or are highly dominant in English, and only 48.6% are speakers of their ancestral language. Overall, 98% of students within this dataset speak English and only 2% are speakers of their ancestral language(s) exclusively. These data indicate the influence of the English language and the continued role the use of the English language will play in the daily life of American Indian people.

Historically, the taking up of the English language was largely forced through the process of formal schooling. As early as 1868, there were prominent advocates of requiring American Indians to learn and use the English language. In an 1887 Report of



the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, then-Commissioner J.D.C. Atkins cites a Peace Commission report that states:

Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought; customs and habits are moulded [sic] and assimilated in the same way, and thus in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradually obliterated. (Atkins, 1887)

Commissioner Atkins himself advocated that all instruction given in schools, whether government-funded or mission schools, be English-only. Consequently, while Native language prohibitions were not necessarily legislative in nature, the impact was the same. The sort of advocacy demonstrated by Atkins and others resulted in the subsequent educational policies influencing schools, and the English language became more prominent in use in American Indian communities during the 1870s through the 1950s. Because so many Indian children attended boarding schools during this era, their young-life experiences provided little opportunity for learning their own languages and, consequently, they often raised children who learned only English (Utter, 1993).

The English-only policies were not the only influence throughout the development of formalized education. Boarding schools, mission schools and government-funded schools utilized curriculum and textbooks designed and written for non-Native students by non-Native authors. Thus, the principles taught to generations of American Indian youth were not reflective of their own particular cultures. This created situations of discontinuity by which American Indian students were taught one way through formalized education but were taught sometimes incongruent ways back in their homes and communities.



## Challenges in Model-Building

Although the knowledge and use of the traditional Native language is pertinent to a L/N/Dakota model of oratory, it is not a requisite basis for such a model. Indeed, the model is premised on the amalgamation of the English language and traditional L/N/Dakota speech structures. The model, by necessity, rather seeks to define the traditional public speaking conventions that have survived despite the widespread appropriation of the English language. In fact, it may be nearly impossible to attempt to identify and examine a truly traditional or historic cultural model of oratory because of a multitude of factors: (1) since the L/N/Dakota are a society steeped in oral tradition, there is a lack of written documentation of traditional forms of oration; (2) the most meticulously recorded speeches of American Indians by non-Natives were primarily those which occurred only in circumstances of treaty-negotiating, petitions for temperance and equity, or admonishment for broken promises; (3) most speeches were recorded only in translated (e.g. English) form; and (4) the influence of interpreters on translations is somewhat controversial.

Bahr (1994) addresses some of the same challenges in understanding Native American oratory and posits the implication for understanding [a] uniquely Native American model(s) of oratory:

This is one meaning of Native American oratory: speeches addressed to Euroamericans in defense of Indian life, property, and liberty. One naturally supposes that Indian used oratory or something like it on other occasions; and one wishes to know how such speeches compared with those given Europeans. Was

there a single Native oratory or were there many, which varied according to language, culture, and setting? (p. 107)

Other researchers have also speculated as to the role and function of oratory in Native society outside of the occasions which called for reproach, bargaining or diplomacy with U.S. government officials. Pond (1986), for example, asserts that the “best addresses of Indian orators must have been made under circumstances that few white men were likely to hear them or hear of them” and the “poorest speeches were made when they were transacting business with the officers of our government” largely because of his somewhat ethnocentric view of the practice of soliciting gifts and thus, “their begging spoiled the speeches” (p. 80).

Diedrich (1989), on the other hand, makes the assumption that, because the Indians “wanted to be accurately and eloquently represented by their orators”, it stands to reason the “mass of unrecorded speeches made among the Indians themselves” would necessarily have the “same general tenor” as those made among government officials and other non-Native audiences (p. 8).

Despite the need for speculation as to the traditional forms of Native oration, there can be no doubt that a [or some] models of Native American oratory existed. In the preface to *Oratory in Native North America*, author William M. Clements (2002) notes “No matter what attributes of Western civilization might be found lacking in Indian cultures, excellence in oratory remained a constant in the writings of virtually everyone from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries except for the most extreme Indian haters” (p. x). Clements goes on to examine the historical fascination with Native American oratory and discusses some of the more plausible explanations as to why

Native American oratorical abilities were so readily lauded, even by those who were the most ardent critics of them. One particularly intriguing reason cited by Clements for the willingness to acknowledge these skills is that the “Indian-as-orator” idea was rooted in two diametrically opposed views toward “artful discourse”:

On one hand was the Aristotelian perspective, which held that oratory and its sister, rhetoric, represented the height of human achievement, that the pursuit of eloquence was one of the chief aims of mankind. On the other was the Cartesian viewpoint, which held that rhetoric was a device by which the sly concealed the truth, that the pursuit of eloquence was antirational, that plain speaking and action were what men and women should aspire to. American Indian oratory, as reported by early commentators, could provide support for either perspective....  
(p. 8)

Similarly, Murray (1991) observes that the fascination and appreciation of Indian oratory was more often about the non-Native audience than it was about the American Indians themselves. He notes “What Indians say in private, or to each other, is seen as less expressive of their true selves than what they say in public to whites” (p. 42). The praise for Indian oratory was not based on its unique oratorical merits but rather on the fact that the poignant, affecting, and romantic melancholia engendered in the texts reinforced the Vanishing Indian stereotype. It revealed Indians as facing their fated and appropriate displacement by Euro-American civilization with a sense of noble doom (Murray, 1991), accepting the fate of Manifest Destiny and thereby relieving Euro-American settlers of any guilt for displacing Indians.



While the fascination with Indian oratory may have been extensive, the documentation of it was not. Occasions for recording Native oratory were limited by the adversarial nature of relationships between Native American and European settlers. The task of reconstructing a model of oratory, then, is limited by the lack of historical documentation of the myriad of speaking occasions that were informal, internal, and otherwise non-confrontational.

This is not to say they did not exist. For Native Americans, societies which valued consensus-rule and egalitarian government, the significance of oratorical abilities was profound. In such societies, the ability to speak eloquently was a great attribute. Many historians have noted the eloquent, almost lyrical, nature of the words and phrases used by Native American orators. Indeed, historian Frederick Turner (1977) believes that Native American oratory and songs are precursors to modern poetry, including those of Eliott, Stein and Pound. He asserts that modern poems are an imitation of Native styles and techniques in traditional songs, poetry and other forms of oratory (Turner, 1977). Turner's assertion supports the notion that a model of oratory did exist and was, indeed, extremely influential.

American Indian orators, despite the difficulties inherent in translations, were noted for their eloquence, presentation and ability to affect an audience. Prominent American Indian leaders – such as Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, Black Hawk of the Sauk and Sitting Bull of the Lakota – who traveled extensively and advocated on behalf of their people's rights and claims to land were especially lauded as effective public speakers. The occasions for these orations, however, oftentimes necessarily called for press coverage and/or official recordings. These are the speaking occasions that have

been documented and, unfortunately, there is little written record of any other internal occasions for, differing types of, or any gender-specific rhetorical abilities.

Despite this lack of written documentation, there are some clues that point to the extensive use of oration at all levels of society. Reports of early American explorers indicate that public speaking was one of the requirements for leadership among the Western Indians (Balgooyen, p. 23). Thus, every individual within the Tribal society was taught – either formally or informally – the nuances of public speaking. Balgooyen (1968) conducted an early study that examined the variety of public speaking roles found in the “typical Plains Indian tribe” during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He noted in his introduction to this study the importance of public speaking as practice for the American Indian:

The lack of written communication has stimulated a wide variety of oral communication behavior patterns in all primitive cultures, but ethnographic studies reveal no primitive culture that makes more spectacular use of public speaking than the American Plains Indians of the nineteenth century. In Plains Indian Tribal life the public speaker was synonymous with the good citizen. (p. 15)

Within the Plains tribes he includes in his studies (e.g. Arapaho, Gros Ventre, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Assiniboin, Teton Dakota [L/Dakota] Kiowa and Comanche), Balgooyen asserted that every Tribal member was cognizant of the vital role of public speaking. He detailed the various public speaking occasions that individual Tribal members engaged in, including child naming ceremonies, speeches honoring children, lodge dedication ceremonies, war ceremonies, religious and educational ceremonies, as well as the role of women as speakers. He distinguished these

'Everyman' public speaking occasions from the more formal occasions for public speaking reserved for Tribal leaders. In this regard, Balgooyen made the distinction between the public speaking roles and functions of principal chiefs, war and peace chiefs, medicine men and "special officers". He was also one of the very few researchers to have addressed (albeit in a limited and ethnocentric fashion) the role of women as orators.

Another obstacle in the endeavor to identify and define a truly traditional Native model of oratory is the limitations of translating. The three primary limitations in translations were (1) dissimilarities between the English and Native languages, (2) the capability and influence of the interpreter, and (3) the limited need for translating and transcribing speeches in their entirety.

In *Dakota Oratory: Great Moments in the Recorded Speeches of the Eastern Sioux*, Diedrich notes that one of the main problems in articulating a view of Native American oratory is the translating of Indian speeches from Native languages to English and back again:

Many of the interpreters for the Dakotas were people of mixed-blood, who spoke Dakota fluently, but yet had minimal education in the English language. Due to this handicap, they often reported only the substance of the Indian speeches... On the other hand, interpreters often had to convey English spoken by highly educated whites to the Dakotas. Even if they fully understood all that was spoken to them, they also faced the problem that the English language had more words than the Dakota. (p. 8)



The dissimilarities of the L/N/Dakota language and the English language created a variety of difficulties for interpreters. Many concepts in both languages were difficult to translate because of their complexity and their roots in cultural values and understandings. The concept of individual land ownership, for example, was a concept that confounded many traditional American Indian leaders, whose own cultural worldview held that land – like air and water – could not be “owned” by individuals but was for the benefit of all people. Many of the recorded speeches of Native leaders, for example, include rebukes to government officials that various treaties were not translated well:

When you first sent for us, there were two or three chiefs here, and we wanted to wait till the rest would come, so that we all might be in council together, so we might know what was done, and understand the papers we were signing. When we signed the treaty, the traders threw blankets over our faces and darkened our eyes, and got us to sign papers we did not understand, which were not read or explained to us. (p. 49, *the words of Red Iron, leader in the Traverse de Sioux Sissetons in a November 1852 council*)

In many of the various treaties extended to American Indian leaders, foreign concepts – such as individual land ownership, claims, annuities, and others – may have been translated in a variety of ways depending upon the speaker or interpreter. Thus, the substance, structure and context of the recorded orations of these Native leaders may have been substantively altered. It was so difficult to give a literal rendering of their speeches in English that the interpreters seldom attempted to give anything more than the

substance of them, and if the Dakotas had understood English they would hardly have recognized their own speeches (Pond, 1986).

Because of these difficulties, a heavy burden was laid to rest on the shoulders of the various interpreters. Throughout history, these shoulders have also had to bear great criticism. Historian W.P. Clark (1952) asserted the “lack of honest and efficient interpreters has been one of the causes of all our troubles with the Indians” while other interpreters, most notably Touissant Charbonneau and his young wife, Sacajawea, have been immortalized because of their role as competent interpreters.

Diedrich (1989) notes that the various speeches he utilizes in his work were recorded by an array of individuals including Indian agents, missionaries, treaty recorders, travelers, explorers, reporters for newspapers, interpreters and even (though rarely) Indian individuals themselves. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain what has been lost or misinterpreted in the writing down of Indian speeches. Since most of the recorded orations were transcribed in English alone, the original constructs of Native American orators are lost evermore. In addition, as Diedrich’s own work demonstrates, the choice of which orations were preserved was entirely in the hands of non-Native historians and may not necessarily have been the orations that Native people themselves would have considered noteworthy.

Bahr (1994) also notes the detrimental effect of the lack of “Indian-language versions of any of the famous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century orations” (p. 111). He uses the controversial speech of Chief Seattle of the Suquamish/Duwamish Indians of the Puget Sound to illustrate dubious translations:

The speech was made in 1853 and was first published in a newspaper article dated 1887. The published text was based on notes taken in 1853 by a white man, Dr. Henry Smith. [Rudolph] Kaiser, who encountered a version in Germany, has retraced the history of the speech. He points out that the 1887 text accepts the then current U.S. doctrine of Manifest Destiny, while the 1970s version warns of impending white-caused ecological doom. Since there are details in the 1887 version of things that Seattle probably did not know in 1853 (references to slaughtered buffalo on the plains and to transcontinental railroads), it is not known how much to credit Seattle or Smith for this version. And since the 1970s ecology oration was based on the 1887 Manifest Destiny oration, the ecology emphasis is secondary elaboration: not a forgery, but an editing. (p. 111)

What were Chief Seattle's true words? Is the translation a true rendering of his intended meaning? Or did the filters of translator, transcriber and differing cultural worldviews distort the oration beyond recognition?

Murray (1991) perhaps provides the most thorough look at this issue of the (mis)representation of Native American speech and writing by non-Natives. In his work, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, he asserts that the non-Native belief in the inferiority of the Indigenous tribes of the North American continent have significant impact on the types and manner of representation of Native 'voice' documented throughout history. He refutes a tacitly implied spectrum of communication used to place groups of people on a continuum between "primitive and civilized, simple and complex, concrete and abstract". This spectrum runs from (1) silence to (2) gestures/sign to (3) the spoken word to (4)



pictographic writing to (5) syllabic writing to (6) phonetic writing. As Murray notes, however, the spectrum is full of contradictions illustrated by the conventions of Native American speakers and texts. For example, the universality of sign language speaks to a sophisticated form of communication that could not be replicated by non-Indigenous groups (e.g. the “Tower of Babel” problem).

Murray’s primary problem with documented instances of Native American oratory (and other texts) is the non-Native spectral presence in every instance. From the influence in Native-to-English translations to the influence of worldview in autobiographical “collaborations,” Murray posits that the role of scientific observer has never been pure and makes it difficult to rely on historical documents as accurate.

Finally, it is difficult to reconstruct a traditional model of American Indian oratory because of another type of ‘editing’ process that occurred in many circumstances in which orations were transcribed. To the non-Native transcribers’ way of thinking, there was a limited need for translating and transcribing speeches in their entirety. Knowing what Indians were saying had practical, political import, but the artistic potential of such discourse was seldom acknowledged (Clements, 1996). Most official recorders did not see the American Indian orator’s speaking convention – formal introductions or conclusions, for example – as germane to the tasks at hand. In these situations, the substance of what the speakers were saying was deemed more critical than the way in which it was said. The purpose of the translations and recordings were more for documenting official treaty and/or peace agreements than for posterity. Thus, much of the format and structure of traditional orations was not noted. In her work, Armstrong notes:

We must accept a kind of second- or third-handedness about the speeches, since most of them are available to us only in translation, the quality of which surely varied considerably. Furthermore, speeches have not always been recorded or retained in their entirety. For instance, formula phrases and ritual gift-giving references, common to so much of Indian oratory, have often not been preserved in the versions which have come down to us – e.g. opening remarks of proffered friendship, the “Father” or “Brothers” used to begin each paragraph, the “I have spoken” ending.... (p. xxii)

While these speaking conventions were not deemed necessary for the purposes of the day, they would have been helpful in documenting a Native model of oratory. In the absence of such work, it is necessary to attempt to reconstruct a model based on limited written documentation, oral tradition and the remnants of oratory that have survived the onslaught of assimilation.

#### Attempts to Define Native Oratory

Clements (1996) provides some insight into two possible reasons for the paucity of work acknowledging Native America verbal art. One such reason is the non-Native view of Indigenous peoples as “savages”. He notes that, despite some sympathetic opinions of Native Americans during that time period, “they were consistently defined in terms of what they lacked” (p. 4). In other words, Native people were not acknowledged as being sophisticated enough to engage oratorical devices or structure. When esthetic features of American Indian verbal expression did receive attention, it was often only to note how Indians had to rely on figurative tropes in order to compensate for the absence of abstraction in their languages (Clements, 1996).

Another related reason as to the lack of consideration of Native American oratory cited by Clements is the belief held by most Euroamericans that “Native American discourse at best amounted to a pre-literature” (p. 4). The lack of written texts amounted to a lack of intellect and sophistication. The juxtaposition of “oral” with “literature” simply had not occurred to a sufficient number of Euroamericans to encourage attention to esthetic qualities in Native American discourse (Clements, 1996).

While extremely limited, there have been some instances in which non-Native historians, ethnographers and social science researchers have sought to explicate a Native model of oratory. In most cases, these attempts have been limited by the same restrictions described previously – lack of documented examples of Native orations outside of political/diplomatic records or limited examples of oratory from which to draw – but have also suffered from the limits of ethnocentric perspectives and the inability to stray from Classical paradigms.

In *Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature*, author John Bierhorst (1974) argues that each of the four works he cites – from the Iroquois, Navajo, Aztec and Mayan traditions – can be categorized as one of four specific “styles” which he defines as oratorical, incantatory, bardic and prophetic. The primary flaw in Bierhorst’s assertions, however complete and scholarly his analyses, is that he attempts to define one model of oratory for an extremely diverse sample of Indigenous tribes. In any given situation, a one-size-fits-all approach to defining Native Americans has generally proven unsuccessful. Note also that Bierhorst uses classically European categorizations for his assertions.



Other studies, while confining their approach to addressing Tribally-specific methods of oratory, also restrict their analyses to a specific type of oration. For example, research conducted by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer (1986, 1990) and Sergei Kan (1983) among the Tlingit Indians center on speaking instances that deal with funerals and death memorials. Bahr (1971) studied Pima-Papago ritual oratory based on the theme of a hero's journey. This Homer-esque analysis, while interesting and helpful in many ways, is also limited in scope and does not provide much support for a specific model or models of oratory.

Lister (1985), in examining the significance of Native oratory as a "basic cultural process employed during moments of heightened historical and social awareness and change," utilized several examples of Native orations to attempt to define some "structures and themes". Within this context, however, Lister focused on fitting a right foot (Native oratory) into a left shoe ("basic structural units of traditional European rhetoric"). In regard to this task, Lister is more successful at forcing the shoe on the foot than in explicating any type of model. The "structural consistencies," as she defines them, include:

1. Opening invocation of or reference to the Great Spirit or the Great White Father of the United States, depending upon subject and context;
2. Statement of the problem or specific occasion which has led to the present public gathering and the oration;
3. Narration of the historical or the mythological antecedents to the present occasion and causes of the present difficulties;

4. Arrival at some kind of climactic or core statement regarding the problem under consideration;
5. Summing up of the Native position with regard to the problem and the rejection or modification of the alternative considered;
6. Final words to the visitors or implied outsiders whose alternative has been rejected. (p. 184)

Bahr (1994), in the *Dictionary of Native American Literature*, was more determined in this attempt to describe a model (of sorts) of Native oratory. In his chapter, "Oratory", he defines Native oratory as persuasive and dialogical and attempts to illustrate the ways in which various Native speeches conform to the Aristotelian paradigm. However, while he does attempt to address the culture-specific implications of the term "oratory", he falls short by applying the same ethnocentric perspective to his analysis and fails to note, as Clements does, that "a too exclusive definition [of oratory] may result in distinctions that are not apparent either to the outsider or to the verbal artist and his or her audience".

Perhaps an even greater barrier in the preceding attempts to define a unique model of Native oratory is that the models are posited by members of an out-group. That is not to say that only Native Americans can write about Native Americans. However, being a member of the in-group, in this case, can provide valuable first-hand experience and context that members of an out-group may not be able to access.

There have been few, if any, examples of American Indian scholars (or others) who have attempted to define a model of Native American, or other Tribally-specific, oratory. For the most part, Native oratory has been mostly unexamined as a cultural

practice. When it has been considered by Native Americans, it has only received perfunctory attention within a larger context or discussion. This is not to say that it is not important; the myriad of other areas of scholarly examination may merely be more accessible or within the realm of interest.

One of the few examples able to be located was a brief analysis by Lakota elder Severt Young Bear in his book *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. In this work (1994), he describes his conception of effective Lakota public speaking:

There are four parts to a good speaker's skills. First is the ability to speak with a strong voice and change his volume at each given point to suit the point he wants to get across. The next is the ability to blend humor in so he can have a little smile or nod of the head back from the people in the audience which, in our way, means they agree. The third is to have the knowledge of different areas or different topics that he talks about. For example, does he really know the history of treaties and federal policy, or is he really familiar with ceremonies and spiritual issues, or can he really explain why a particular song should be sung for a fallen warrior or when a horse is given away during a celebration? The fourth area is what I would call his public image. Many of our gifted speakers can really use their body language. They might have a special way of getting up to speak. Sometimes they might go way out in the center and talk; other times they just stand or walk along the side and talk. Some use their hands for emphasis and others walk or stand with their hands in their pockets. These good speakers are also known for their ability to use language, both in Lakota and English. They



have a way of demanding our attention by the way they use words. Sometimes, they serve as *eyanpahas* (announcers). (pp. 33-34)

Unfortunately, while Young Bear addresses public speaking in various other ways throughout his work, he does not provide a cohesive or conceptual analysis. This limitation is likely due to the lack of specific attention generally paid to the topic as opposed to any lack of knowledge or lack of viewpoint on his part. Since traditional Native languages are so intimately tied to Native epistemology, the more prominent concern for many Native authors and commentators has been the loss of Native languages. It may be helpful, however, given the burgeoning number of Native American young people who cannot speak their Native languages, to examine how American Indian people can retain culture within the confines of the English language.

The lack of Native American analysis of specific forms of oratory and the lack of development of specific communication theory is perhaps not so surprising given some of the Native epistemology and axiology described here. Communication is such a pervasive and fundamental way of being that it is often not examined until called into being. We do not question our understandings of how we use language but rather relegate these instances to “misunderstandings”.

As Native American people have more widely appropriated the use of the English language, these instances of miscommunication and misunderstandings have appeared to decrease. By sharing a universal language, we are forced to believe the fallacy that sameness of language means sameness of thought. This could not be further from the truth, however. Native people continue to struggle with issues of miscommunication and misunderstanding in areas of education, business, health care, government, social

services, and other critical arenas of life. Only now, as more Native scholars are finding ways to articulate their own worldviews using the Native language, have we been able to truly differentiate, rather than merely mimic, our own ways of conceptualizing the role and function of communication in our lives.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NEED FOR A L/N/DAKOTA MODEL

As postulated herein, the cultural worldview of many Native Americans creates incongruent ways of communicating. The development of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory may alleviate some of the cultural dissonance created by these disparate views. As a mixed-blood Native person, I have often reflected on this cultural dissonance and its practical import. I have had many opportunities to observe the phenomenon described here and discuss the issue with others in the field of communication. These experiences have led me to believe that we tend to misidentify these unique, culturally-based speaking conventions and structures as miscommunication. While I believe these instances of misunderstanding may be fairly labeled “miscommunication” in an explicit way (i.e. *we are not understanding each other*), our implicit understanding of the term miscommunication implies that the lack of understanding is based on our choice of wording, use of language, or ability to comprehend. On the contrary, this work is based on the premise that our lack of understanding – miscommunication – can be sometimes attributed rather to our cultural use of language.

The preponderance of work related to the recognition of these so-called problems of miscommunication comes primarily from the field of education. It is perhaps in this arena of the student-teacher relationship that the conflict between Western and Tribal ways of knowing is most evident. As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes:



For many indigenous peoples the major agency for imposing this positional superiority over knowledge, language and culture was colonial education.

Colonial education came in two basic forms: missionary or religious schooling (which was often residential) followed later by public and secular schooling.

Numerous accounts across nations now attest to the critical role played by schools in assimilating colonized peoples, and in the systematic, frequently brutal, forms of denial of indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures. (p. 64)

Some of the scholars in this discipline have asserted that difficulties of Native American students can be attributed to disparate learning styles (More 1998), teaching and assessment bias (Fox, 2000), or the need for culturally responsive teaching (Van Hamme, 1995; Cajete, 2000). Others, however, have addressed communication styles specifically. Goin (2002), for example, builds on research regarding “left-brained” and “right-brained” learning styles to assert that there are two types of discourse patterns, linear and circular. She posits that Native American students more often use the circular style and notes:

Problems in communication arise when the speaker and the listener are communicating in different discourse patterns. One is speaking in a linear fashion, the other is speaking and/or listening in a circular fashion. Obviously this can result in miscommunication and a great deal of confusion and frustration. (p. 7)

This circular nature of speaking is often confusing to the many individuals educated in the Western worldview. St. Clair (2000) and others (Cooley, 1981; Cooley and Ballenger, 1981) address this tension as it is manifested in the student-teacher

classroom relationship. Teachers of the Western ways employed to teach composition on Indian reservations seem to comment endlessly on the difficulty their students are having with the basic tripartite system of Aristotelian rhetoric (Cooley, 1981; Cooley and Ballenger, 1981). Students, they assert, cannot seem to conform to the typical pattern of introduction, body and conclusion. St. Clair explains that teachers report that typical Indian students

...strike out in a certain direction to explore some ideas, feelings, sensations and moods. After a while the essay suddenly turns into another direction without any connection, without a central theme, and without coherence markers. The whole paper is cyclical. It is, they argue, in the form of the spokes of a wheel. They always come to the center before striking out into another direction. [They] constantly return to the central hub before embarking on another trip to the rim of discussion. (p. 95)

He also observes, however, that the limitation placed on Native American students is firmly ensconced in the cultural difference between print and oral cultures:

These students, it should be noted, do not use the syllogistic reasoning of Aristotle because it was not part of their cultural knowledge, nor do they use the forms of logic that underlie the classical tradition of rhetoric. By being different from the print culture and its school system, these students have been severely criticized by their composition teachers. They are often accused of not having any structure to their writing. The fact that they do have a structure and that it is based on the visual metaphor of the medicine wheel goes unnoticed. (p. 97)

As previously noted, St. Clair's thought-provoking analysis of the visual metaphor and its role in illuminating the differing information processing modes of print and oral cultures also provides clarification germane to this model of oratory.

These criticisms of Native American students' essay writing abilities are similar to the criticisms that Native orators have often encountered. These include a "lack of structure", "rambling", "lack of evidence for assertions", "talking in circles", "not making a point", "not answering questions", "just telling stories", "getting too personal", and "failing to establish expertise".

Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of different communication styles, however, occurred in 1979, when several papers were presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Southwest Area Languages and Linguistics Workshop at Arizona State University (Cooley and Lujan; Siler and Labadie-Wondergem; Scafe and Kontas; Dauphinais). These papers dealt primarily with the issues of different types of communication conflicts that occur in the classroom when Native American students present formal speeches. They provide a glimpse into some of the common misperceptions that occur and some possible reasons for the incongruence.

Siler and Labadie-Wondergem (1979), for example, discuss the likely impact of culturally distinct speaking patterns learned from traditional elders in Native communities and conclude that differences in speaking should not be evaluated by teachers as deficiencies in knowledge but rather as examples of entirely different speaking styles. They note that "just as Anglo speakers have reasons for organizing their speeches a certain way and for using particular rhetorical strategies, so might Native American speakers have reasons for structuring their speeches as they do" (p. 72).



Three areas of 'miscommunication' that Siler and Labadie-Wondergem specifically mark are topical organization, cohesion and credibility. Topical organization, they note, is one of the primary points of deviation for Native American speakers. They point to research conducted by Cooley and Lujan (1979) that illustrates that most Native American speeches tended to be comprised of three to five topics related to the subject of the speech but were woven together without explicitly stated relationships or topic change points. In speeches that follow traditional Western speech structure, "the transitional phrase of statement acts as a signpost to the listener, telling him where the speaker has been, where he is now and where he is going" (Siler and Labadie-Wondergem, 1979, p. 75). In Native American orations, however, the norms "merely require that the speaker provide information to the listener" (p. 75) and it is then the listener's responsibility to determine the importance and/or relevance of the information. As noted previously, this uniquely Native American technique requires the listener to assume an active role in oratory. The authors note that this technique also provides insight into the differential view of "persuasion" for Native Americans. Persuasion, they note, is different in Indian culture because the listener "appears to have more freedom to decide if and how he will be persuaded" (p. 75).

Cohesion is another aspect of Native American public speaking convention that is far different from Western norms. Native speakers tended to use cohesive devices, such as the use of pronouns or other words standing in place of the original referent noun, to mark co-referential relationships. This consistent use of terms such as "they" was again in contrast to Western tradition, in which a speaker is expected to lead a listener through the speech by marking transitions and summaries.

Finally, the authors cite the assertions made by a Creek elder of the criteria important for judging Native American speaking ability. These include (1) general knowledge (e.g. "A good speaker must be knowledgeable about himself and the people he grew up with"), (2) structure of speech (e.g. "A good speech should contain visual analogies, illustrations and personification to create a picture in the minds of the listeners") and (3) formulaic statements and disclaimers to indicate the speaker's unworthiness to speak (e.g. "...some statements which give the impression that the speaker is not worthy of speaking on his own behalf but is speaking only to fulfill an obligation to others"). They note that these conventions are in direct contrast to the Western norms and expectations of specialized topics, linear structure and citation of expertise. Interestingly, the authors also note that a uniquely Native American rhetorical model would most resemble a wheel with spokes and a hub:

The spokes-on-the-wheel model seems to capture the essence of the structure of Native American speeches; including the different responsibilities of both speakers and listeners. To paraphrase one of the speakers in Cooley and Lujan's data, the speaker supplies the pieces in the puzzle, it is up to the audience to make a picture out of them. (Siler and Labadie-Wondergem, 1979)

In this same series, Scafe and Kontas (1979) provide further insight into the areas in which Native styles of communicating and uniquely Native oratory may come into conflict with Western notions of rhetoric. Although they apply the principles to the classroom, one could expand their assertions to state that effective communication, in general, is dependent on (1) listener awareness of his/her own expectations as being culturally-based, (2) the expansion of communication criteria to adapt to speakers of



different cultures and (3) the explicit affirmation that either alternative is situationally valid.

The value of Scafe and Kontas' contributions, however, is in that they articulate clearly what is often noted and evaluated as deficient in Native American public speaking as merely different from Western rhetorical traditions. They assert that the dominant culture tends to expect informative and persuasive speeches to be: (1) linear in progression of topic (which relates to a noted "problem" in earlier research of the need for Native American students to have more organizational skills); (2) compact units of thought (which relates to another noted "problem" of the need for idea development); and (3) an interpretation of the available data (which relates to the "problem" of the need for better research techniques).

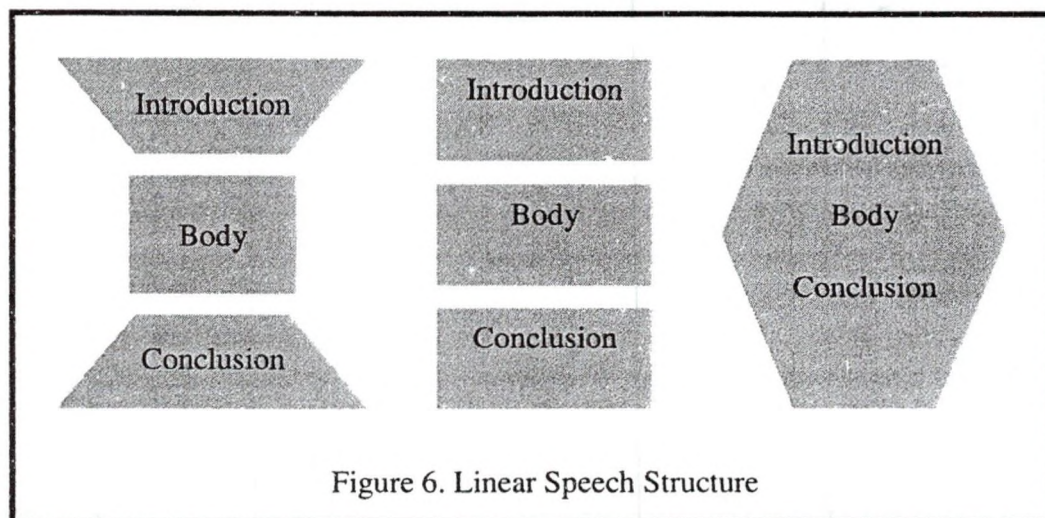
The cultural dissonance experienced by American Indian students as noted by these practitioners has also been validated by present-day conversations with other professionals. Two non-Native educators teaching in an interTribally-mixed Tribal college (United Tribes Technical College located in Bismarck, North Dakota) have expressed the primary problem they perceive with Native students as a lack of preparation and not being used to an organized outline. As one individual stated, the Native American students "tend to do a lot of repeating or circling around the subject" (Huber, personal communication). Another educator noted, "As a speech instructor, I don't like to hear people ramble on and on but I'm culturally competent enough to know it's not ignorance. It's that they have a sense of speech that is different from what we teach" (Palecek, personal communication). These contemporary observations reiterate



the findings of Scafe and Kontas and point to the difficulties that Native American students, in particular, appear to have with basic speech courses and speech-making.

Scafe and Kontas also conducted a survey of fourteen different basic public speaking and introductory speech communication texts and found that the expectation was for public speeches to be organized on the two levels of macrostructure and microstructure. Macrostructure denotes the adherence to the three basic components of introduction, body and conclusion. Microstructure is characterized by subpoints under major topic headings, amplification of major points and style.

In Western conceptualizations of oratory, both macrostructure and microstructure support a linear progression of thoughts and other speaking conventions that are often at odds with Native American views of oratory. Figure 6 shows a sample of graphic illustrations that denote this structure:



In the macrostructure, an evaluation of the introduction looks for devices such as personal reference, narrative, references to the audience, reference to the occasion, anecdotes, startling statements, quotations, statistics or other 'attention-getting' devices.

Native American speakers, however, as Scafe and Kontas note, “tend to persuade by not referring to themselves as experts but as humble offerers of an opinion” (p. 80) and begin speeches with this in mind rather than making a “strong” introduction.

Another critical area of incongruence in the macrostructure is in speech structure. The organizational structures most often noted in classroom texts were “temporal or time order sequence, spatial or geographical order sequence, topical-classification order, increasing difficulty order, cause-and-effect, ascending-descending order, problem-solution sequence, inductive/deductive reasoning, hierarchical order, comparison-contrast, structure-function relationship, and a sequence determined by man’s anticipated order of reasoning”. Scafe and Kontas note that Native American organization “is more of an implicit collage of topics rather than a very explicit listing of one major premise and three to five subordinate minor premises” that are the norm for Aristotelian public speaking conventions. Thus, Native American orations are often evaluated as “rambling” as opposed to being recognized as an alternative structural style. Goin (2000) defends this tendency as an inherently Native speaking convention:

Circular communication is creative. The speaker speaks around the subject and allows the listener to come to their own conclusion. At times this means that what the speaker is saying and what the listener believes as a result of the conversation may be different. Circular communication is a Tribal form of communication. It follows the belief that each person can have a different perspective on the same incident or conversation. (p. 7)

Prolific Native American writer Leslie Silko describes this structure in a slightly different way in her work (1981) based on her experiences as Laguna Pueblo. She points out that:



For those of you accustomed to a structure that moves from point A to point B to point C, this presentation may be somewhat difficult to follow because the structure of Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider's web – with many little threads radiating from a center, crisscrossing each other. As with the web, the structure will emerge as it is made, and you must simply listen and trust, as the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made. (p. 54)

Within microstructure, Scafe and Kontas (1979) point to the absence of verbal topic change devices in Native American speech as a basis for demerit. Typical verbal topic change devices such as “in the first place”, “the second point is”, “in contrast”, and “keeping these things in mind” are often omitted because of the non-linear progression of Native American thought and, subsequently, verbal expression. This absence of verbal markers also tends to give the impression of illogic, lack of coherence or other deficit.

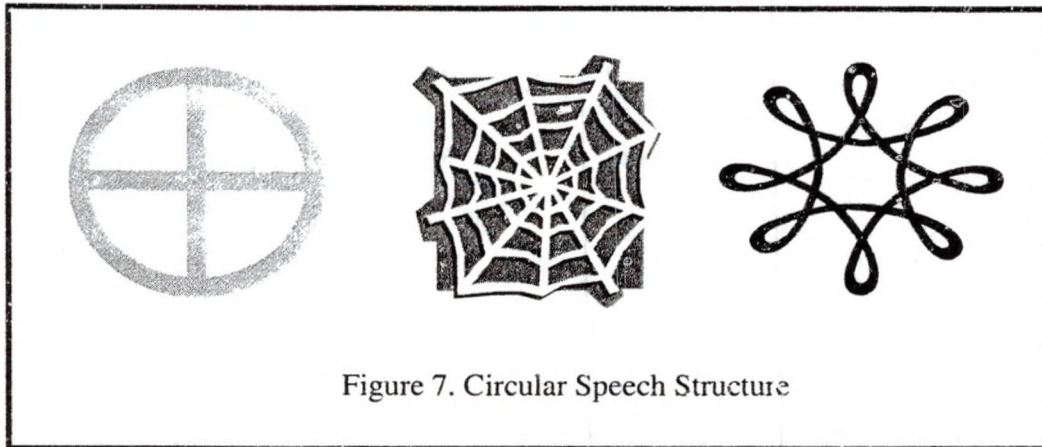
Finally, Scafe and Kontas also observe that Native American structures do not necessarily conform to conventions for establishing proof in Western rhetorical traditions such as using formal definitions to make the meaning of a word more clear, using statistics or numerical data, or use of quotations from research, studies or experts. The authors did note, however, that conventions for proof that were acceptable to both styles were comparison-and-contrast (including figurative and literal analogies), descriptions and restatement. This difference was supported by the Native American cultural viewpoint that sharing of experience (through comparison-and-contrast, descriptions or restatement) is more respectful of the listener than explicit ‘proof’ of viewpoint.

As these avenues of inquiry have illustrated, a new model of oratory would necessarily be based on a circular pattern of arrangement. The most commonly observed



metaphor for Native American speeches has been circular, spiral, spokes-on-a-wheel or spider's web. Each of these metaphors describe the unique characteristics of Native American oratory as being (1) centered, (2) fluid, (3) evolutionary, and (4) relational.

Figure 7 denotes the various graphic illustrations that might describe this pattern:



A glimpse of the space for such an arrangement pattern in mainstream teaching can be found in a fairly obscure basic speech supplement (Buchanan, et al., 2003):

In the circular pattern of arrangement, the speaker develops one idea, which leads to another, which leads to a third, and so forth, until he or she arrives back at the speech thesis. This type of organization can be useful when you want listeners to follow a particular line of reasoning, especially when your main goal is persuasion. (p. 190)

Although this is the only reference I could locate for a circular pattern of arrangement, the presence of such a remark suggests that it has been considered. It is interesting to note that this type of pattern is associated with persuasion. This seems to provide further support for the notion that the circular pattern of speaking was appropriate for Native American speakers, who would view following a particular line of reasoning as the basis

for persuasion as opposed to more overt approaches. However, despite the presence of this particular reference to a circular pattern of arrangement, this explanation does not correspond to the strategy or purpose of the L/N/Dakota model of oratory postulated here. While the explanation of the circular pattern acknowledged that the speaker moves from topic to topic, this particular circular pattern continues to be somewhat linear. If we think graphically, it continues to be linear in that the circular movement proceeds around the outer rim of the circle from topic to topic but does not “wander” elsewhere. It still merely follows a line (albeit circular) in “leading” a listener from a particular introduction to a particular conclusion.

The L/N/Dakota model of oratory, on the other hand, presents a more dynamic model of motion. For those who are trained in the linear methods (and most of us are), it may be difficult at first to see how the pattern emerges. A practical example with a graphic illustration may be helpful here. For these purposes, an analysis follows of an oration by Mr. Thomas “Tommy” Christian, a Northern Men’s Traditional Dancer and Assiniboine/Sioux from the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northern Montana (see Appendix B). Figure 8 is a corresponding graphic illustrating the circular pattern used in his oration.

In this oration, the main topic of the presentation is to promote a unique theatrical presentation called “The Encounter”, a blend of classical ballet and Native American pow-wow dancing. Based on the circular model, the main topic is at the heart of the presentation. Thus, “The Encounter” is located in the center of the circle in Figure 8. As noted in the transcription of the oration (Appendix B), the references to “The Encounter” occur fairly regularly throughout the oration. These references are noted numerically in



the center circle along with the main topic sentence, corresponding to the numbered lines in the transcribed oration in Appendix B.

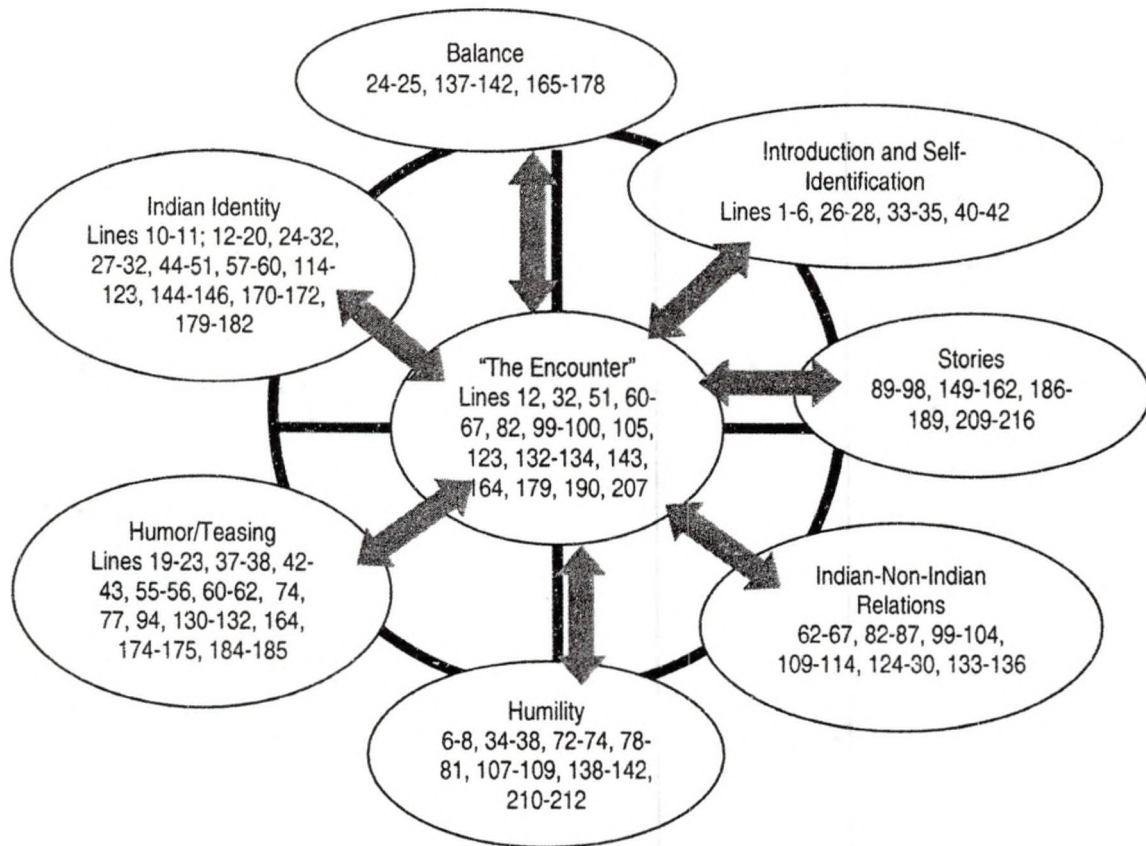


Figure 8. Example of Circular Speech Structure

Around the perimeter of the circle are the various other related themes the speaker presented throughout the oration. These themes were identified as (1) introduction and self-identification, (2) stories, (3) Indian-Non-Indian relations, (4) humility, (5) humor/teasing, (6) Indian identity and (7) balance for purposes of demonstrating the model. Each of these related themes was discussed briefly before the speaker returned to the main topic at the center. Within each of the sub-topic or sub-theme circles on the outer rim, the references made to the various themes are noted numerically as they



correspond to the numbered lines in the transcribed oration in Appendix B. In this manner, we can see that the speaker traveled on a circuitous path throughout his presentation, briefly discussing one theme before moving to the inner circle and then returning to the outer circle once again to address another theme or sub-topic. In the specific L/N/Dakota model of oratory, there are nine components identified that would make up the structure of the speech. These were not used in this model as it was intended to provide only a brief overview of the circular structure. These components and their application, however, will be discussed in more detail later.

Finally, the arrows depict the going-to-the-outer-rim-and-returning type of pattern mentioned earlier. They represent the path traveled by the speaker throughout the oration. They do not follow any prescribed path but proceed as the speaker and his audience dictates. Thus, the arrows only show inward and outward movement, rather than any prescribed path through the various themes or sub-topics.

In utilizing this example of the structure of a circular pattern of oratory, it is important to note that – just as with Western or mainstream critique – this is somewhat subjective. Another individual may have identified different themes or a different number of themes. Another individual may have identified different lines that reflected these themes. However, the point of the example is that the overall structure representing the circular movement can be clearly identified. This example can be helpful in providing some context for the development of the specific L/N/Dakota model of oratory and the research utilized to test the model.

## CHAPTER VII

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, one of the more powerful assertions made by Tuhiwai Smith (1999) is that Indigenous researchers and scholars often take the perspective of having to *rewrite* and *reright* our position in and within history. A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as Indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). What has been considered important and unimportant has been determined *for* us rather than *by* us. She notes that while writing, history and theory “are the key sites in which Western research of the Indigenous have come together” (p. 29), the degree to which Indigenous peoples have controlled an accurate representation has been limited.

This particular line of inquiry, a Native communication theory and a L/N/Dakota model of oratory, provides a good example of just this occurrence. In reviewing the literature and various historical accounts that applied to culturally-specific forms of oratory and public speaking, I was unable to find any materials written specifically by a Native American on this topic. Most literature in this regard was written by non-Native historians, anthropologists or other types of scholars. This created difficulties in determining the validity of cultural interpretations, especially when these interpretations were incongruent with Tribally-based teachings (e.g. women in public speaking roles).

I found myself in an uncomfortable position, as a young L/Dakota woman, of using – yet criticizing at the same time – work by older, White males. I had to continually remind myself that I had a valid position from which to criticize and acknowledge that, while I might consider their *interpretations* ethnocentric, their contributions to my work of *righting* and *rewriting* that which is pertinent to my own people was extremely valuable because of its mere existence.

Calling upon historical knowledge to *rewrite* and *right* a theory of communication and a model of oratory that are firmly rooted in a Native perspective presented some additional challenges for me as a researcher and writer. This particular challenge has also been mentioned by Tuhiwai Smith (1999):

Many of the issues raised by indigenous researchers are addressed in the research literature in relation to both insider and outsider research. Most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene. This is related to positivism and notions of objectivity and neutrality. (p. 137)

Most methodological debates within Tribal communities concern themselves with the broader political implications and strategic goals of “outside” research as opposed to the methods and strategies employed. Similarly, literature that deals with culturally-sensitive research or cross-cultural research tends to make the assumption that the researcher will be an outsider and from the dominant group. Thus, while there is quite a bit of literature about the need for more American Indian researchers (Faircloth and Tippeconic, 2004; Deyle and Swisher, 1997; Lomawaima and McCarty, 2002, for example), there is surprisingly little guidance specifically for culturally-grounded



researchers who are researching in their own populations. How do I test my assumptions about my understandings of Tribal worldview? Must I? Is it possible to “go Native” if you are already Native? These questions would obviously be a valuable part of a larger discussion of methodology in Native communities as the number of culturally-grounded, Tribal member researchers grows. Native researchers who research in their own Tribal communities or among their own cultural group are not quite so much of a rarity as to preclude a collective dialogue on the issue. However, the lack of such work means that I was left with a sense of being set adrift in an ocean of issues. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) does, however, provide some brief insight into the principles that intuitively guide Native-based researchers:

Insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflective and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. (p. 139)

Indeed, while this research has been guided by some of the literature regarding working with Native American populations (Crazy Bull, 1997; Mihesuah, 1998; Holkup, et.al, 2004, for example), it has also been guided by an intuitive knowledge of the Native community by virtue of being a member of that community. Arguably, of course, the use of limited secondary data would have limited a non-Native researcher in accessing the same type of data and analysis as a culturally-based researcher. The use of statements as questions in field interviews with elders, for example, may have come more from a uniquely Native intuition as opposed to any alternative research protocol. As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes:

Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers, which continues to be within the academy, and the parameters and common sense understanding of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities. (p. 143)

But this research has also been guided by a sense of obligation and responsibility to the relationships in those communities and the well-being of the community itself. And it has been guided by the vested interest of the researcher in the needs of Indian Country. As a Native person, I am interested in the line of inquiry because of my own personal experiences as a Native speaker, communicator and communications scholar. While this has created some quandaries, it has also created a culturally-reflective work that opens up a space for more Native voices.

Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). For Native peoples, methodological issues are critical because the negative experiences of Tribal communities with research have left indelible marks of mistrust, hurt and resentment. It is thus necessary to thoroughly examine the methods used as they relate to the larger context of the research. As some of the researchers mentioned have noted, research methodology that is community-based and participatory are more congruent with American Indian community values:

Community-based participatory research (CBPR), with its emphasis on partnering with communities, provides an alternative to traditional research approaches that assume a phenomenon may be separated from its context for purposes of study.



Such approaches, arising from a positivist philosophical framework, lie at the base of separating research from practice (Holkup, et al., 2004).

Thus, research that is community-based and participatory – research that asks the question “Is it good for the People?” – has roots in Native epistemology. I would argue that this research – although certainly not conducted as CBPR, participatory action research, or action research in any form – was, in a sense, community-based and participatory. For example, the conscious decision to use as many L/N/Dakota or other culturally-grounded Tribal people throughout has created a “community” surrounding this particular topic that have participated in its development. In addition, the findings of this particular research are intended to be used in a practical way for the “good of the People”; for example, providing an alternative, strengths-based view of a circular structure of American Indian oration, as opposed to a deficit-based view of unstructured and rambling speech.

Another unique challenge in examining methodology is reclaiming what has largely been lost through the colonization process. Most of the elders interviewed, while grounded in their traditional L/N/Dakota culture, were educated in the Western-based school system. Thus, the challenge has been to extrapolate traditional behaviors that were evident prior to this education or cultural behaviors that remained in spite of this formal education. Many of the interviewees could articulate the criterion for a good L/N/Dakota speaker but many pointed out that these practices were not used very much in modern society.

Related to this challenge in developing this model has been the concern regarding the dwindling numbers of elders and traditionalists who can articulate the culturally-



based reasons for behavior. The original research plan, for example, included field interviews with two prominent L/N/Dakota scholars and traditionalists, Dr. Vine Deloria, Jr. and Dr. Beatrice Medicine, both of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. These individuals could have adequately articulated the comparison and contrast between traditional Native and the Western-based views regarding communication and oratory. Unfortunately, these two respected pioneers in Indian Country passed away shortly before the project began. As elders who have a connection with life prior to Westernized educational systems, their wisdom is critical to this project. Thus, additional opportunities to access this collective memory are limited and must be actively sought before it is too late.

In gathering speech acts to be critiqued for this project, these limitations also became evident. It was very difficult to find instances and examples of speech acts that would fit the criteria of culturally-grounded speakers engaged in public oratory that did not conform to Western-based speech practices. For example, there were many instances of culturally-grounded speakers who provided stirring graduation speeches; however, these occasions often seemed to call for prepared speeches that were written to conform to Western-based speech practices. The opportunities to observe traditional L/N/Dakota oratory (impromptu-like speaking) are limited, especially if one requires these to be video-recorded or transcribed in any way for review.

Another specific quandary of the project is walking the fine line between the two disparate epistemologies expressed herein. The processes used to frame, prepare for, and conduct scholarly research is not necessarily a comfortable frame for a scholar who is not essentially oriented to that way of thinking and must continually be conscious of it. For

example, the process of developing the questions used for the qualitative field interviewing was not quite as empirically-based as perhaps the academic world would prefer. Some of the questions were based more on 'gut instinct' as to what types of questions would elicit good information rather than on any specific methodology or theory. Likewise, one quandary of the researcher was to maintain the integrity of the research by keeping to standardized questions while the oratory style of many of the speakers followed the circular, "wandering" path. Yet Swisher (1998) provides some support for the Native researcher in this position:

Methodology using Tribal histories and other information about historical and cultural processes not found in primary and secondary source materials will avoid perpetuation of stereotypes. ... Measures such as these will ultimately introduce more accurate depictions of Indian experience and lifestyle.... (p. 192)

For the particular topic at hand, this result is especially relevant. As discussed earlier, some non-Native historians and scholars have attempted to address a Native model of oratory but have been limited either by their own worldview or ethnocentrism. What is missing from these attempts, as Swisher notes about most research about Native people, "is the passion from within and the authority to ask new and different questions based on histories and experiences as indigenous people. It is more than different ways of knowing; it is knowing that what we think is grounded in principles of sovereignty and self-determination, and that it has credibility" (p. 193). Thus, while I may have much self-conscious insecurity about my work, I know that it is derived from a place of passion and good will for the People.



One of the more incongruent practices in the research process was that of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form process. This process was very uncomfortable to utilize when dealing with traditional Tribal elders. The process of asking traditional Tribal elders to read a somewhat technically complicated written form was extremely uncomfortable for the researcher and the elders. Many of them asked the researcher to read it for them and explain it “in plain English”. Others just offered to sign as a sign of trust of the researcher without perhaps fully understanding the implications.

As stated earlier, another dilemma was that the original research plan was not adhered to because of the cultural inappropriateness of the research tool (Appendix E). Although a survey instrument was developed by the researcher, who is a Tribal member, the reality of administering the survey was not realized until the possibility of administering it arose. It was only then that the researcher realized how culturally inappropriate the survey instrument would have been. The difficulty was rooted in the fact that asking an elder to self-assess their level of cultural understanding would (1) be offensive and (2) get skewed results based on the conflict with the traditional value of humility. Thus, this aspect of the research process as envisioned was not utilized.

In addition to articulating a specific model of oratory, this project has been a lesson in helping define an inherently L/N/Dakota research process. The modern conventions which are used are sometimes uncomfortable in actual Tribal communities and must be examined with care. The fact that this research was conducted by a Tribal member alleviated some of the anxiety in the process for the subjects. However, there was also anxiety on the part of the researcher in conducting various aspects of the research. Thus, this research reveals other areas for further possible research.



## CHAPTER VIII

### RESEARCH METHODS

Since the overall goal of the research was to develop and test a possible model of L/N/Dakota oratory, it was necessary to engage in both qualitative and quantitative research. The need for qualitative research was evident because of the dearth of literature regarding a definitive Native American (let alone L/N/Dakota) model of oratory and communication. The void created by this lack of information pointed to the need to first identify and categorize some pertinent aspects of such a model, and then to test these categories for cultural accuracy. The need for quantitative research was to test the validity of the assertions based on the model developed. The quantitative research became the method for verifying the claims made by the researcher and the informants in the field interviews. This was a critical aspect of the research given the insider-researcher dilemma as discussed earlier.

#### Qualitative Methods

The colonization process and the determined efforts at assimilation of Native American tribes have left a scarcity of traditional knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the nuances of customary speaking practices. Thus, it was necessary to utilize the qualitative research process to extract that knowledge from the vestiges of sources available. This was accomplished through two separate methods. The primary qualitative research method was researcher examination of distinctive patterns in historic

works, utilizing an appropriate cultural framework, and extrapolating the cultural communicative conventions that continue to exist. This process could not be described as a conventional qualitative research method but is rather related to the notion of organic inquiry (Curry & Wells, 2006), a transpersonal/feminist methodology that incorporates the sacred and the personal. Organic inquiry makes room for spiritual, experiential and cultural ways of knowing that cannot be accounted for with traditional methods.

This was perhaps the most difficult aspect of the research because identifying these patterns called upon not only a critical analysis of the available literature but also a critical analysis of contemporary Native (and especially L/N/Dakota) culture and my own understanding of it. It raised painful awareness of the extent of knowledge and traditions that have been 'colonized' out of our communities. Technically, it required that the researcher postulate a model and the components of that model based on personal and historical experience, with only limited guidance from the literature review. This aspect of the research could be labeled an intuitive approach, as Tuhiwai Smith discusses, that illustrates the need for Native researchers to develop new tools of inquiry.

This intuitive research method also required an extensive examination of the philosophical assumptions, concepts, explanations and principles (the ingredients of theory) that sustain the model. It was necessary to understand these aspects of theory in order to postulate valid components of such a model. Thus, through this reflective process, as well as a more conventional review and comparison of historic and contemporary speaking structures, there were eight (8), culturally-specific components identified in the model:

- (1) Formal introduction
- (2) Acknowledgement of viewpoint
- (3) Responding indirectly
- (4) Non-confrontational delivery
- (5) Utilization of *ikce wicasa*
- (6) Use of humor
- (7) Use of storytelling or personal narrative
- (8) Formal conclusion

The secondary qualitative method used to develop a model of L/N/Dakota oratory was the more conventional method of field interviews. The field interviews were conducted primarily in order to authenticate the proposed components of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) identified six objectives the field interview process could facilitate:

- (1) Learn about events and interactions that cannot be directly observed.
- (2) Gain an understanding of a communication event or process from the participant's perspective.
- (3) Develop a relationship with the participant to infer communication properties and processes.
- (4) Verify or validate data obtained from other sources.
- (5) Uncover the distinctive language and communication style used by participants in their natural communication environments.
- (6) Inquire about occurrences in the past.



Each of these objectives describes the task of obtaining information fitting the needs of this project. As noted, the information to be gathered in the development of theory and models is information that is not readily available. Most of the time, cultural practices have not been recorded as written texts. Thus, the process of developing such theory and models does not conform to the traditional research process of conducting literature reviews and testing hypotheses. This is especially true for the practice of communication, which is viewed as either so fundamental or so different (because of foreign languages), that it is often not mentioned. Cultural knowledge is also hard to retrieve because this information has been cautiously guarded as a direct result of the historic abuses of the knowledge shared through research; for example, scholars who misinterpret practices and apply pejorative meanings, ethnographers or historians who write a book but do not provide any benefit for the community from which the knowledge was drawn, and individuals who seek to appropriate this knowledge for fun and profit (e.g. plastic shamans, hobbyists).

Using Lindlof and Taylor's framework, field interviewing was used (1) to help learn about events and interactions that cannot be directly observed. The traditional speaking practices often cannot be directly observed by one scholar in a realistic time frame. Although opportunities may arise to directly observe L/N/Dakota speakers to gather information and observe speaking performances, it is not ideal to gathering extensive data. The opportunities to observe traditionally-grounded speaking performances that are not expected to conform to mainstream standards are extremely limited.

Lindlof and Taylor also note that field interviewing is used to (2) gain an understanding of a communication event or process from the participants' perspective. In this case, the field interviewing technique allowed the researcher to access the participants' perspectives regarding traditional L/N/Dakota speaking practices, review historic practices and infer the remainders of these practices. This is critical given the loss of traditional knowledge and the effects of the assimilation process. The researcher accessed a purposive sample of participants who are knowledgeable about history as well as culture, and who have reputations as skilled orators. The interviewees included both genders and a span of generations (e.g. ages 55-80).

Lindlof and Taylor's framework also illustrates the important part of this particular process, that of (3) developing a relationship with the participant to infer communication properties and processes and (5) uncovering the distinctive language and communication style used by participants in their natural communication environments. The field interviews may have been limited in number because of these criteria within the framework. However, the quality of the data was enhanced and provided a distinct advantage that outweighed the limited number of interviewees.

The evidence gathered for the research was gathered at three different evidentiary levels: microlevel, midlevel and macrolevel. Since qualitative methods are not as restrictive in the sense of making comparisons among data at the same level of analysis, the qualitative method of field interviewing was deemed most appropriate. This method was used because of the major impact of historical influence in Native American communities, especially among the L/N/Dakota peoples. Thus, it was necessary to not only access microlevel evidence – e.g. answers to specific questions, individual



perspectives, direct quotations – but it was also necessary to gather evidence at the two other levels that would support that evidence. Because the data involved specific Native American epistemology, ontology and axiology, it was also necessary to gather such midlevel evidence as conversational structures, interaction patterns, recollections of group behavior, and such macrolevel evidence as cultural values, community norms and shared cultural perspectives.

The field interviews were conducted over a three-month time period. A total of fourteen (14) L/N/Dakota elders – ten men and four women – were interviewed for this project. As stated previously, the number of elders who met the criteria for the interviews was limited due to the diminishing number of elders in our Tribal communities. The elders were chosen primarily because of their reputations for having traditional knowledge. All but two of the elders were interviewed in person-to-person interviews on or near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The other two interviews were conducted over the phone; however, these two interviewees were familiar enough with the researcher so that the process was very comfortable. The field interviews were conducted in a largely informal atmosphere and only written notes were used by the researcher. The possibility of using an electronic recording device was considered but was not considered culturally appropriate by the researcher.

The participants were chosen because of the researcher's observances of their own speaking behavior and their reputations as culturally-knowledgeable "elders" in the L/N/Dakota community. The individuals interviewed are all known for their traditional knowledge, their practice of their cultural ways and for their public advocacy for L/N/Dakota lifeways. In other words, they routinely "practice what they preach". Thus,



the opportunity presented to the researcher was not only to include the actual responses of the interviewees but will also the opportunity to observe critical non-verbal behaviors, speech patterns, and delivery style.

These individuals were also chosen because they were known to the researcher through formal or informal interactions in the community. Thus, they were more likely to provide information that would not ordinary provide a given researcher because the level of trust was elevated by the relationship. During the field interviews, the researcher not only noted the words that were spoken but those that were not (e.g. nonverbal, their own informal speaking patterns, etc.). The field interview technique was beneficial not only for getting direct responses from participants but also for assessing the communication techniques used by the interviewees themselves.

Finally, conducting field interviews with these individuals also served the purpose described earlier of (4) validating or verifying knowledge gained through other sources and (6) inquiring about occurrences in the past. The information gathered through each of these sources has been corroborated with the literature and with information gathered from each of them. The same questions were asked of each participant in order to cross-check findings and identify patterns.

The questions for the field interviews were developed to elicit information both broad in scope and specific in nature. The questions were developed with the elders in mind. They were worded to provide as much opportunity for reflection as possible while remaining simple enough to avoid any confusion or misleading implications. The specific questions were as follows:

- From a Lakota/Dakota perspective, what is the purpose of communication?
- What did your parents, grandparents or other older relatives ever say to you about good speaking or being a good communicator? In other words, what did it take to be a good speaker?
- From a Lakota/Dakota perspective, has taking up the English language changed how we communicate? If so, in what ways?
- Even though we use the English language, do you think there are still Lakota/Dakota ways we use to communicate? If so, what are they?
- If you had to assess a Lakota/Dakota speaker, what sort of criteria would you use to determine if they were a good speaker or not? What would make them a bad speaker?

Qualitative research questions are typically “how” or “what” questions designed to explain, understand, explore or describe. In this case, the research questions utilized were developed with the intent of identifying L/N/Dakota norms and perhaps their origins, as well a broad conception of the role and function of communication. Some questions were somewhat ethnographic in nature (e.g. What did your parents, grandparents or other older relatives ever say to you about good speaking or being a good communicator?) in that they were designed to elicit culturally transmissible knowledge from historic recollections rather than specific current practice. Other questions, using the L/N/Dakota framework of circular reasoning, were designed to elicit specific processes, e.g. if you had to assess a Lakota/Dakota speaker, what sort of criteria would you use to determine if they were a good speaker or not? What would make them a bad speaker?

Much thought went into the stating of questions in order to ensure that they were not too direct. Ironically, Native epistemology places the asking of such direct questions and a directness of answering in a pejorative context. Thus, the process of developing and asking the questions, although proper in the academic world, were somewhat cumbersome in the actual field interview process. The questions sometimes had to be modified in the form of a statement with a questioning tone – e.g. But you were taught English in school...? – as opposed to asking the direct question (in this case, has taking up the English language changed how we communicate?). This process encouraged continued reflection rather than conforming to the ask-and-then-tell format that would have constituted rudeness to the elders' way of thinking.

#### Quantitative Methods

The second type of research method used in this project utilized quantitative measures to determine if the components of the L/N/Dakota model of oratory that were hypothesized by the project were utilized by actual Native speakers. Thus, the individual criteria, validated in the field interviews, were used as the basis for the content analysis. Individual coders used these criteria to analyze examples of naturally-occurring, Tribally-based public speaking acts.

For the analysis, four speaking performances and one written text were used. The four speaking performances were videotaped recordings from previous events that occurred on the campus of the United Tribes Technical College. These were deemed the most appropriate for analysis, since the time frame and budget of the project precluded the evaluators from attending real-time events at which traditional L/N/Dakota speaking performances might (or might not) occur.



The five narratives that were analyzed by the evaluators were combined onto one DVD with packet and consisted of the following:

- (1) Presentation by Mr. Thomas “Tommy” Christian to a United Tribes Technical College Humanities class regarding “The Encounter,” a touring ballet/pow-wow performance in 2006.
- (2) Presentation by Mr. Joseph Marshall to an open, racially-mixed audience on the campus of United Tribes Technical College as a visiting author (author of the book “The Lakota Way”) in 2005.
- (3) Presentation by Mr. Gene Thin Elk to an open, racially-mixed audience on Indigenous mental and spiritual health held during Wellness Week on the campus of United Tribes Technical College in 2004.
- (4) Presentation by Albert White Hat to the graduating class of the United Tribes Technical College, held at the Lone Star Arena on the campus in 2006.
- (5) Text of a speech by Andrew Grey, Sr., (then) Chairman of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, presented during the United Tribes Technical College InterTribal Council Summit VI in 2002.

The presentations for analysis were chosen because they met three specific criteria: (1) the speakers were acknowledged by most individuals in the local Tribal communities to be culturally-grounded, (2) the type of speaking event was impromptu, and (3) accessibility was unproblematic. The first two criteria were identified specifically in order to support the nature of the inquiry while the third criterion was merely a concession to the lack of time and funding.

The first criterion was that speakers were L/N/Dakota orators. Each of the speakers is a member of a L/N/Dakota Tribal Nation and is recognized in Indian Country as being knowledgeable of L/N/Dakota customs and traditions. Since the model is predicated on the assumption that speakers who use the circular patterns of speech do so because of their cultural orientation, it was important to evaluate culturally-grounded speakers.

The second criterion was that the speeches must have been fairly impromptu. In other words, the speech occasions would not call for prepared or written remarks. Each of these speaking performances utilized were conducted without written notes or narratives (in fact, the written narrative provided for Chairman Grey's speech was transcribed from voice recordings after the fact). This was an important criterion because the results may have been skewed by the use of written remarks. In other words, the presence of written remarks might indicate a more linear speech. There was some concern that the speaking occasions may have been too formal and the preference would be to analyze at least some informal occasions (e.g. namings, puberty rites, etc.). However, since it would not be appropriate to videotape such occasions, the choices in occasions for review were somewhat limited.

The final criterion was that the speaking performances be easily accessed by all four evaluators. While some real-time speaking performances could have been accessed in the time frame of the project (one actually was but was videotaped), the availability of the evaluators was not guaranteed. In addition, should any factor distract the evaluators at any given point in the speaking performance, it would have skewed the results. In this

regard then, it was decided to use previously-videotaped recordings in order to facilitate ease of evaluation for the evaluators.

The evaluators assisting with the project were two (2) Tribal members who are culturally knowledgeable, although not necessarily about public speaking practices, and two (2) non-Tribal members who work with Tribal populations and have a basic familiarity with the culture but have expertise in the realm of forensics (see Appendix D for personal biographies). The coders went through an individual training process in which the project was described to them, the evaluation criteria was clarified through examples and any additional questions were answered. These coders were then assigned to review the speaking events to observe and conduct the content analysis. The purpose of utilizing two different types of coders was to assess any differences due to cultural familiarity or bias. The coders who are Tribal members and are culturally knowledgeable may have viewed the speakers very differently from the coders who are more familiar with Western-based speech conventions.

Evaluators were asked to rate the presence or absence of criteria from the L/N/Dakota model of oratory. Evaluators showed consistency in evaluating speakers and did not have any questions or uncertainty about the criterion. The research findings in this regard validated the criteria established by the hypothesis and their use by individual L/N/Dakota speakers. The evaluators -- both Tribal members and non-Tribal members -- were surprisingly consistent. In fact, where there were differences of opinion in coding, the coders who disagreed were more likely to be a cross-culture pair (one Tribal member and one non-Tribal member) than a same-culture pair. There was additional space on the evaluation form to note any comments, although the coders used this feature sparingly.



Another quantitative research technique was intended to be used to correlate any findings with levels of acculturation or assimilation. Speakers at the speaking events were to be asked by the coders to conduct a brief survey (Appendix E) to self-report levels of acculturation or assimilation. The data was then to be used to corroborate the data gathered from the content analysis. The supposition this activity was based upon was that those speakers who are more assimilated will use less of the L/N/Dakota conventions while those who consider themselves more traditional will use more of the L/N/Dakota speaking conventions.

However, this aspect of the analysis was abandoned because of the lack of congruency with cultural norms and values. It is interesting to note that the concept of cross-checking for levels of acculturation or assimilation was formulated in the academic setting and seemed an effective approach. During a hypothetical run-through of the process, however, it became apparent the request for such an assessment was culturally inappropriate. In keeping with the cultural value of humility, traditional speakers would be extremely uncomfortable being asked to rate their own level of traditional knowledge. In addition to creating discomfort, such an approach would also likely provide little additional or useful data.

CHAPTER IX  
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Qualitative Research Findings: Part I

Based on the review of historical and contemporary works, utilizing an appropriate cultural framework, eight (8) components of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory were developed. These components are graphically illustrated in Figure 9. Once again, the circular nature of the model is depicted. The model is constructed upon the medicine wheel and the individual is at the center of the sacred circle.

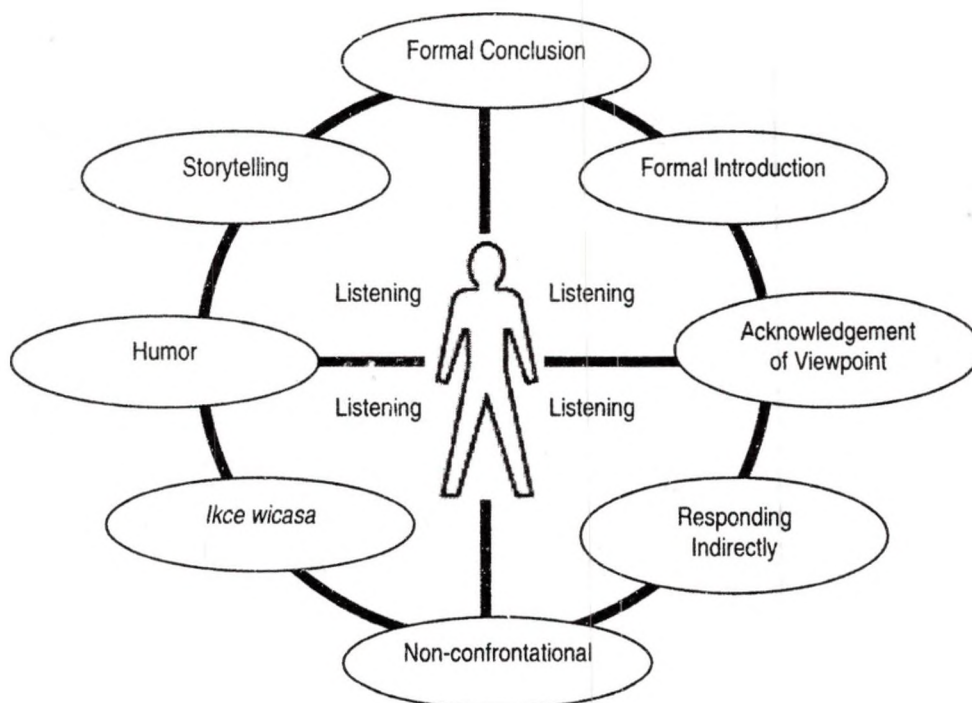


Figure 9. A L/N/Dakota Model of Oratory

The L/N/Dakota model of oratory seeks to address the criticisms of a Native American circular arrangement by illustrating the differences in structure that are derived from cultural worldviews. What is seen as rambling and unstructured in a linear worldview is actually quite focused and structured in a relational worldview. In Figure 9, the lines of the medicine wheel serve as the foundation for the model but also illustrate the paths of movement possible in any given oration. The formal introduction and the formal conclusion are the only aspects of the model that could be considered linear or static. In every other aspect of the model, the orator has the flexibility to travel outward and inward as his or her personal experiences, attempts at relationship-building and intent allows.

The inner circle is characterized by the foundation of listening. A Native orator who listens has the requisite human experience to speak authoritatively on the subject but, because of the cultural value of respect, will not make such an assertion. Thus, the criticisms of failing to establish expertise, not answering questions, and/or not making a point is actually a culturally-appropriate structure built upon these relational values. In addition, listening in this regard is not limited to listening as a basis of prior experience. A good L/N/Dakota orator will also “listen” to the audience by being aware of their non-verbal communication. A good orator will “listen” for impatience, agreement, or other indicators that will give him or her – within the circular style – directions to continue, change course or stop altogether.

Finally, the relating of personal stories is in actuality the form of establishing expertise that is more culturally appropriate than self-promotion. In a relational, oral-



tradition based society the foundation for belief in expertise is the behavior of the individual and, in the absence of this perspective, the illustrative stories about them.

In the L/N/Dakota model of oratory, there were eight (8) criteria initially used in the research as a basis for developing the structure of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory. These criteria represented the aspects of oratory that form the structure of an oration. A ninth criterion was added to the model upon completion of the research presented in this manuscript. These nine criteria, as indicated in the model, are (1) formal introduction, (2) acknowledgement of viewpoint, (3) responding indirectly, (4) non-confrontational delivery, (5) the concept of *ikce wicasa*, (6) humor, (7) storytelling, (8) formal conclusion and (9) listening as a basis for speaking. Each of these nine aspects will be described in greater detail in order to illuminate the necessity of their inclusion in the model. In addition, specific examples from both traditional and contemporary orations will illustrate the concepts further.

#### *Formal Introduction*

The first aspect is the formal introduction. The formal introduction can be identified by the use of a statement or statements of self-description. The purpose of the formal introduction is to establish context and relationship, and answer the question “Who are you?” for the audience. Some of the elements of a formal introduction most commonly used are (1) establishing authority, (2) use of, or reference to, traditional (Indian) name, (3) reference to place of origin, family and/or relatives and, underscoring each of these elements, (4) attempts to build relationship.

Establishing authority to speak publicly, for Native individuals, is not conducted in the same manner as establishing authority in non-Native groups. In non-Native

groups, authority is often based on academic credentials, certifications, or work experience. Speakers granted validity or credibility must have the requisite college degrees, books or research published, or number of years in a particular field.

For Native audiences, however, the number of letters behind one's name (e.g. L.S.W., B.S., M.B.A., Ph.D.) is more often an indication of the degree to which one cannot be trusted. In a Tribal community, establishing authority to speak means establishing your Tribal identity. Thus, a public presentation by a Native speaker would likely begin with the recitation of one's Indian name (or traditional family name in lieu of your own), the claim to Tribal enrollment and a pronouncement of the ways in which one has obtained/maintained cultural knowledge and grounding. For example, a speaker would want to begin by saying, "*Hau, mitakuyapi* (hello, my relatives). My name is Anita Frybread. My Indian name is *Watecawin* and I'm an enrolled member of the Eats-a-lot Tribe. I grew up here on the *Taniga* Reservation and just recently moved to the city". This introduction might be enhanced or expounded upon by the telling of a personal narrative related to these facts.

Establishing relationships is a critical component of public discourse in Native communities that is often absent in non-Native discourse. To be effective speakers in Native communities, Native people must establish their immediate, extended or adopted family relationships in order to gain validity and credibility. It is thus necessary for speakers to acknowledge members of the audience as relatives or use traditional family names so that audience members can put the speaker into the context of the Tribal community. For example, a speaker may say "It's good to be here today. I'd like to acknowledge my Auntie Beatrice in the audience and ask her, as my elder, to forgive me



for speaking up here before her”. This sort of statement establishes the speaker as a relative of an elder Tribal member and also demonstrates an understanding of a Tribal cultural norm (respecting elders). Alternatively, a speaker might say, “I come from the Walking Eagle tiyospaye (extended family). My relatives are the Little Big Horns, the Yellow Hairs and the Arrows Shirts”. This establishes the extent of Tribal connections and, consequently, the extent of credibility.

In many cases, an orator will also use a traditional greeting in the dialect of their language [Lakota/male]: *Hau, mitakuyepi. Le anpetu ki cante wasteya napechiuza pelo* (Yes {Hello}, my relatives. On this day I shake your hands with a happy heart). This figurative “shaking of hands” is an important aspect of establishing relationship and many good speakers will have also physically shaken hands with various audience members prior to taking the floor.

Establishing relationships through the formal introduction is also accomplished through the manner in which orations are given. Balgooyen (1968) noted the historical practice of traditional Native speakers establishing relationships through directly addressing individuals as opposed to speaking to nobody in particular:

In all of his speaking experiences there was a very direct sense of dialogue between the speaker and his listener. In most instances the speaker was talking to one individual even though the speaking was done in a group situation. This characteristic often persisted in the speaking done before United States treaty commissioners. The speaker would seem to address his remarks first to one member of the audience and then another, rather than to the audience as a whole.

(p. 16)



Paradoxically, the establishment of relationship does not extend – as one from the Western worldview would assume – to the establishment of direct eye contact. Pond (1986) related an instance in which he was asked, “Do white men hear with their eyes?” The Western practice of keeping one’s eyes trained on the speaker was considered rude (e.g. staring) while the averting of eyes meant the listener was thoughtfully contemplating and otherwise internalizing the words of the speaker.

### *Examples of Formal Introduction*

Historical examples of the practice of formal introduction are difficult to locate. As Armstrong (1984) notes, many examples of orations recorded for official purposes omitted those parts of speech that were not considered relevant to the subject matter – e.g. “formal introductions”, “formula phrases”, “ritual gift-giving references”, “opening remarks of proffered friendship” – and likely, as well, references to self and context of self often found in formal introductions.

The practice of formal introduction can be seen more readily when texts remain largely unedited or attempts are made to retain the “voice” of the speaker. One example can be found in *My People the Sioux* by Luther Standing Bear (1975). This work, written in the first-person narrative form by Standing Bear, begins with an extensive introduction of himself, a description of his mother and father and a second-hand account of the way in which his father received his name. Although it can probably be argued that this format is somewhat standard for autobiographies, there are elements of the concept of formal introduction in oratory that are too similar to dismiss as mere coincidence. Standing Bear’s descriptions are not simple references but can be said to be the oratorical devices meant to establish his authority to speak as a “Sioux” via his family lineage. He

also recounts historical events that he was far too young to remember himself. He may be using these descriptions also as an oratorical device meant to mark his place – his context – in the shared history of his people.

A similar, but more contemporary, example can be found in the book, *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*, by Severt Young Bear and R.D. Theisz. This collaborative work is also written in the first-person narrative form and begins with an explanation of the history behind Young Bear’s given English name, mentions his traditional Indian name [*Hehaka Luzahan*], and further extensive history behind his Young Bear surname. All of these explanations, and accompanying personal narratives behind them, serve to provide a context into which the listener may then place the speaker.

An excellent contemporary example of formal introduction in oration can be found in a transcribed speech by Mr. Thomas “Tommy” Christian (for full text, see Appendix B) given to a United Tribes Technical College Humanities class regarding “The Encounter,” a touring ballet/pow-wow performance in 2006. His oration begins with the following introduction:

*Hau mitakuyapi meha waste anpetu ki le micante wasteya napechiuza.*

Sounds like Dances with Wolves aye? Sounds kind of cool, I like that, but what I said, what I said, what I shared with you was, uh, I welcome you here this morning. On this day I am going to speak to you to you from my heart, I offer you all my hand. My name is Eagle Claw, that’s who I am, I am just a common man, I don’t know anything and if you will pity me by listening to me real good, I’d really appreciate that so... that’s what I said in my language.

*A lakota he maca dokayeya.*

I am an Indian first. And in that respect, that is not a racist statement. What that helps us understand is the importance as such things as what we are here today to speak about and that's The Encounter.

I am an Indian first, and I say that not from an ethnocentric attitude but one of as an individual. What I share with you in that respect is that every decision I make, all the things that I do, all the attitudes that I have, come from a cultural orientation which is Lakota, and that's what I've been taught, that's what I believe and that's who I am. It affords us an opportunity to look at life in many different perspectives and be afforded the right of our own integrity as we look towards life. And from that... that comes from a more spiritual concept than anything and that's what we are. I am not a religious man, I am not a holy man, and I'm not a medicine man. I am not a medicine man because I don't have a white wife.

(Cha) No, I'm teasing. If I was a really good medicine man, I would have two white wives.

In this example of formal introduction, Mr. Christian exemplifies the structure of a formal introduction within a L/N/Dakota model of oratory and provides several examples useful for analysis. First, he begins with a formal greeting in the Lakota language. This acknowledges not only his identity as a Lakota man but also the relationship with others who may be Lakota in the audience. Secondary and tertiary characteristics of the oration that indicate the relationship building function of the formal introduction are that Mr. Christian metaphorically shakes hands – “I offer you all my hand” – with the members of the audience and references his Indian name in English



translation, Eagle Claw. He goes on to strengthen the relationship by explaining who he is in the context of his self-identity – e.g. “I am an Indian first” – and what aspects of life this entails; for example, spirituality without being a holy man or medicine man. In addition to these techniques, he uses self-deprecating humor to connect with the audience and immediately forges a relationship through this shared laughter (e.g. “I am not a medicine man because I don’t have a white wife”).

#### *Acknowledgement of viewpoint*

Another facet of the L/N/Dakota model of oratory is that of acknowledging another viewpoint. This practice is rooted in the cultural values of respect, harmony and growth as a personal endeavor. By acknowledging another viewpoint in an oration, an effective L/N/Dakota speaker demonstrates respect for others through having listened and grasped another point of view, understanding all facets of an issue to the point of being able to articulate that other point of view and, in effect, conceding that another point of view has validity.

Balگوoyen (1968) noted that acknowledging and accepting another’s viewpoint was so central to the cultures of the Plains Indians that, even in war, respect for others’ opinions was practiced:

On the warpath the leader’s word was law, but any member of the war party could step forth and express his opinions. If a member of the war party and the leader differed drastically in their ideas about what was to be done, the one who challenged the leader might himself become a leader and separate from the original party, taking with him those whom he had persuaded to his point of view.

(p. 19)

The hallmark of a true leader and commendable human being in Native societies was to be a good listener; being a good listener meant one had enough wisdom and self control to listen to all sides before making an informed decision about just what one was willing to believe. This perspective is in direct contrast to the common practice in Western oratorical traditions of argumentation and persuasive discourse. In the Western tradition, it is common to either discredit or directly refute another's viewpoint.

Benjamin Franklin, in his 1753 *Poor Richard* reflections, recounted a story told to him by some white missionaries about the "odd" behavior of Indians who "listened politely and patiently to their sermons, and then refused to believe them!" (Johansen, 1982) The missionaries' shock at the lack of argumentation was embedded in the cultural norm and expectation that disagreement with a viewpoint should result in argumentative discourse or, at the very least, polite refutation.

Today, we see these same cultural norms in the conflicting views of the meaning of silence. For most non-Native groups, silence indicates tacit agreement. It is every person's responsibility to "speak up" and assert their alternative point of view if he or she disagrees with a particular statement or point of view. Paradoxically, extended silence among the L/N/Dakota many times indicates disagreement or disapproval.

For Native American orators, acknowledging another viewpoint illustrated the level of thought that went into a given subject. By articulating an alternative point of view, the speaker demonstrates that he has carefully thought about all sides of an issue and has come to an informed conclusion. The common Native American speaking convention of observing extended moments of silence between dialogue, noted by many

historians and ethnographers, also comes from this understanding that understanding and acknowledging another viewpoint was the mark of a learned person.

#### *Examples of Acknowledgement of Viewpoint*

Historically, there are a great many orations that provide examples of the acknowledgement of viewpoint. One of the best examples comes from a witty speech given by Iroquois leader Canassatego, considered a proficient rhetorician by many seventeenth-century English commentators, at the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744. He replied to an offer of the Virginia Legislature to the Six Nations, inviting them to send six youths to the Williamsburg College of William and Mary (Armstrong, 1984):

We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these Colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged for your kind offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful



Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. (p. 16)

In this piece of oration, Canassatego cleverly rebuffs the offer made to the Iroquois while acknowledging the differing points of view – e.g. the high level of esteem placed on Western-based education, the importance of monetary cost, and the pride in the Western-based “sciences”. These acknowledgements indicate the Iroquois’ understanding of English values and the level of consideration that went into the decision. He also politely concedes the validity of this alternative point of view by stating that “you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same with yours”. He is then able to provide the Iroquois’ own conclusion based on their personal experiences: “We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces...”

A contemporary use of acknowledgement of viewpoint can be found in a presentation by Mr. Gene Thin Elk in 2004 during a Wellness Week event on the campus of United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, N.D.:

I want to start off by saying that everything that you’re learning, like for example in school here, it’s all basically scientific-based information. It may have been empirically studied, it... its... So you’re learning these difference theories, and these different processes, different applications to be able to function in a particular vocation or in vocational areas. I always say it’s based on science and science is an archaic way, an archaic method, of finding out what our Indigenous

people already knew for years and years and years and years... I'll give an example of that...is that... There's a guy with white bushy hair, looks like cotton candy, way out here like this, mustache and... And he said that I noticed that as I studied this here... And then he said I noticed that light travels out but then it travels so fast for every one portion it travels, it amplifies itself twice. And it goes so fast that it doesn't just go straight, it goes in a circle. And I noticed that every atom within there, every atomic particle in there – the electrons, neutrons and protons – I noticed that they're not independent but they're interdependent. And people said "WOW!" ...  $E=mc^2$  Einstein, right? They said "WOW!" And all he said was that, he said, life's in a circle and everything's related (laughs). I said, some of our relatives probably took him in the lodge, eneh..! *Inipi*. Probably got hot in there and he said " $E=mc^2$ !  $E=mc^2$ ! Open the door!" (video)

In this example, the comparison is made between Einstein's theory of relativity and Indigenous epistemology. Notice that, although Mr. Thin Elk provides a humorous depiction of Einstein's countenance – "a guy with white bushy hair, looks like cotton candy, way out here like this, mustache..." – and refers to science as "archaic", he is not refuting science or Einstein's theories. In fact, he acknowledges the validity of this viewpoint by equating it with Native understandings. He even places Einstein within the context of Native life by figuratively placing him in the L/N/Dakota *inipi* (sweatlodge).

The intent of this association was to de-mystify science for the Native students who comprised his audience. This provided the basis for later remarks on the relation of science to wellness and the need for more Native students to understand all of the manifestations of "scientific" knowledge. More importantly, he demonstrates that he has



studied and understood (by listening to) Einstein's theories and can thus make comparisons and speak about the issue at hand.

### *Responding indirectly*

Related to the aspect of acknowledging another viewpoint is that of responding indirectly. For many of the same reasons – respect, understanding and accepting the validity of another view – responding indirectly to another perspective is a hallmark of a good orator. To the L/N/Dakota, directly refuting another's point of view is seen as contrary to the values of humility and respect. Refuting another point of view shows disregard for another person's personal experiences and journey through life. It is akin to telling someone that their perspective of the world is not valid, so you must tell them how to think. By directly responding to another point of view, an orator impedes another's ability to come to his or her own conclusions.

Indirectness, on the other hand, decreased the perception that one was arguing or being confrontational. An effective L/N/Dakota speaker did not respond to another viewpoint, as in Western conceptions of rhetoric or argumentation, with a point-by-point refutation. This was considered impolite and arrogant. Thus, traditional L/N/Dakota speech did not use such terms and phrases as "I disagree that..." or "It is incorrect to believe...". This is not to say that orators could not disagree. On the contrary, a great many debates and prolonged discussions regularly occurred within and by the people of the tribe. However, the alternative approach to direct refutation is to simply provide another perspective and, at worst, gently admonish another if they should suggest that this is the only way to think about the matter.



Benjamin Franklin observed this practice in his “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America”:

Franklin described a Swedish minister who lectured a group of Susquehanna Indians on the story of creation, including ‘the Fall of our first parents from eating an Apple, the coming of Christ to repair the Mischief, his Miracles and Suffering andc.’ The Indians replied that it was, indeed, bad to eat apples, when they could have been made into cider. They then repaid the missionary’s storytelling favor by telling him their own creation story. The missionary was aghast at this comparison of Christianity with what he regarded as heathenism and, according to Franklin, replied: “What I delivered to you are Sacred Truths, but what you tell me is mere Fable, Fiction and Falsehood!” The Indians, in turn, told the missionary that he was lacking in manners: “My brother, it seems that your friends have not done you Justice in your Education, that they have not well instructed you in the Rules of Common Civility. You saw that we, who understand and practice those Rules, believ’d all your stories. Why do you refuse to believe ours? (Johansen, 1982)

In this example, the Native conception of politesse meant acknowledging the alternative viewpoint – ‘it was, indeed, bad to eat apples, when they could have been made into cider’ – and responding indirectly, e.g. repaying the missionary’s storytelling favor by telling him their own creation story. By responding to the missionary’s story in this way, the underlying intended message was that ‘although your way is good, we have our own beliefs and we shall continue to believe them’. In this way, the missionary could have saved face because their rejection was not explicit.

*Examples of Responding Indirectly*

Another historical example of responding indirectly comes from the oration of a Pawnee leader, Sharitarish, in an 1822 address to President James Monroe and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun:

My Great Father – ...If I am here now and have seen your people, your houses, your vessels on the big lake, and a great many wonderful things far beyond my comprehension, which appear to have been made by the Great Spirit and placed in your hands, I am indebted to my Father [Major Benjamin O'Fallon] here, who invited me from home, under whose wings I have been protected ... but there is still another Great Father to whom I am much indebted – it is the Father of us all... The Great Spirit made us all – he made my skin red, and yours white; he placed us on this earth, and intended that we should live differently from each other. He made the whites to cultivate the earth, and feed on domestic animals; but he made us, red skins, to rove through the uncultivated woods and plains; to feed on wild animals; and to dress with their skins. He also intended that we should go to war – to take scalps – steal horses from and triumph over our enemies – cultivate peace at home, and promote the happiness of each other. My Great Father: – Some of your good chiefs, as they are called [missionaries], have proposed to send some of their good people among us to change our habits, to make us work and live like the white people. ... You love your country – you love your people – you love the manner in which they live, and you think your people brave. I am like you, my Great Father, I love my country – I love my people – I love the manner in which we live, and think myself and warriors brave. Spare me

then, my Father; let me enjoy my country, and I will trade skins with your people. I have grown up, and lived thus long without work – I am in hopes you will suffer me to die without it. We have an abundance of horses – we have everything we want – we have plenty of land, if you will keep your people off of it.... (p. 52)

In this example, the orator uses the techniques of acknowledging another viewpoint and responding indirectly to gently point out the rejection of the missionaries' call to abandon the Indian ways and become like white men. He deftly begins by building a foundation for consensus – "...but there is still another Great Father to whom I am much indebted – it is the Father of us all... The Great Spirit made us all – he made my skin red, and yours white; he placed us on this earth, and intended that we should live differently from each other". He then builds his argument upon that consensus by citing the equity of the goodness of different ways of being, e.g. "He made the whites to cultivate the earth, and feed on domestic animals; but he made us, red skins, to rove through the uncultivated woods and plains; to feed on wild animals; and to dress with their skins". The orator then strengthens that assessment by again noting the similarity in each leader valuing his way life – "You love your country – you love your people – you love the manner in which they live, and you think your people brave. I am like you, my Great Father, I love my country – I love my people – I love the manner in which we live, and think myself and warriors brave". In this way, his final appeals – to "let me enjoy my country", "suffer me to die without [work]", and maintain a way of life "if you will keep your people off of it..." – are presented as logical conclusions rather than an outright rejection of another way of being.



A contemporary example of responding indirectly can be found in the oration by Mr. Tommy Christian; his 'response' to those who might criticize the bringing together of ballet and traditional pow-wow dancing:

That's why I'm involved with the Encounter. We're taking the initiative to go take these two venues, ballet and powwow dancing, and trying to meld them together to help people understand that just because we are so diverse doesn't mean we have to stay away from each other. We don't need to repel each other. We can bring these attitudes together and continue to share in a very good way. It doesn't have to be an Indian and white thing. It can be an art thing to where we come out and share these things. Not for ourselves as you will listen to Robert later on. We're not involved in this because we're going to make money. We're here and we're not doing this for money. We're doing this because we feel it's an opportunity for us based on these two venues and this very fast paced life, to express ourselves, to share and help us to understand; to get over ourselves as it relates to this Indian and white thing, this cowboy and Indian thing. We don't need to go there; we're not doing it for ourselves. We're doing it for the sake of the legacy that we're leaving behind. There are a lot of issues that we're wishing to address here but most of all we hope that people will come to this encounter for the sake of realizing an experience that nobody's ever taken forward to this point before. And that's bringing ballet and powwow dancing together. That's so polarized and ... it's like this Indian boy from the rez that's used to eating bologna and bread on the road and these white guys are used to eating hors

d'oeuvres and stuff like that... [laughs] It's important that we can bring these two together. (Appendix B)

In this example, the speaker is anticipating the objections to the co-presenting of two disparate art forms – ballet and traditional Native dancing – and expressing the reasons why it is important. These reasons are provided in a context of conciliation rather than refutation. This presentation appears naturally successive since Mr. Christian already established the groundwork of collaboration by describing his informal friendship with Mr. Meyers. It represents once again the naturally trinity that exists between acknowledgement of viewpoint, responding indirectly, and non-confrontational delivery.

#### *Non-confrontational Delivery*

Together with acknowledging another viewpoint and responding indirectly, a non-confrontational delivery style placed traditional orations firmly within the cultural framework of respect and relationship-building. Mander (1991) provides an analysis of these three related practices through a personal narrative of an exchange between himself and the eminent Onondaga leader and Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Oren Lyons. In his story, Mander observes:

I wondered about this last point, concerning the chiefs' levels of aggressiveness or the use of verbal force. "It's difficult to define," he answered. "You can be very powerful if you are right and can persuade [the people]. Ordered thought, logic, are the persuasive tools of Six Nations' meetings. [But equally important] is respect for other points of view and opinions, and the power and patience to listen and understand". I finally gathered that it was a subtle point, a matter of degree.

Good orators have an influence, but the power of oratory *itself* should not be used to overcome rationality and full discourse. (p. 244; emphasis in original)

Mander also observes that this non-coercive use of oratory by traditional Native American leaders is not necessarily appreciated by other cultures that do use coercive power. Anthropologists and other social commentators often denigrate this type of leadership as “embryonic”, “nascent”, or “poorly developed” rather than acknowledging the sophistication of such societies. He notes that “the notion that coercive power is somehow ‘higher’ than systems that function without it is debatable to say the least (p. 229)”. The unflattering view in this regard, however, most likely stems from the fact that the notion of non-coercive power of leaders was highly problematic for the U.S. government in its relations with the Indian people. Balgooyen (1968) uses the example of the Sioux [Lakota] leader Red Cloud to describe this dilemma. While Red Cloud was indeed a prominent leader among the Lakota, many historians assert that the United States attributed more power to Red Cloud than he actually had. One U.S. official commented that the U.S. government spent too much time “believing that he was a kind of autocrat who could force his will upon the people” (p. 30). This statement reinforces the idea that Plains Indian speakers, regardless of their prominence, were only personally responsible for what they said. They could not make speech a weapon of force to intimidate members of the Tribal council (Balgooyen, 1968).

The use of a non-confrontational delivery style along with acknowledging another viewpoint and responding indirectly were mechanisms for maintaining peace. A non-confrontational delivery style was characterized by passive and peace-making language. When any blame or recrimination was made, as in many historical circumstances, it was



made in broad and general terms rather than direct confrontation. In some cases, leaders themselves would acknowledge their contributions to the conflict as a way of avoiding overly accusatory tones.

*Examples of Non-confrontational Delivery*

One particularly eloquent historical example of non-confrontational delivery is a recorded speech by a Creek elder named Speckled Snake. His words were recorded in 1829 after a “request” from President Andrew Jackson to the Creek and other tribes to move west of the Mississippi River:

Brothers: We have heard the talk of our Great Father [the President]; it is very kind. He says he loves his red children... When the first white man came over the wide waters, he was but a little man...very little. His legs were cramped by sitting long in his boat, and he begged for a little land... When he came to these shores the Indians gave him land, and kindled fires to make him comfortable... But when the white man had warmed himself at the Indian's fire, and had filled himself with the Indian's hominy, he became very large. He stopped not at the mountain tops, and his foot covered the plains and the valleys. His hands grasped the eastern and western seas. Then he became our Great Father. He loved his red children, but he said: “You must move a little farther, lest by accident I tread on you”. With one foot he pushed the red men across the Oconee, and with the other he trampled down the graves of our fathers... On another occasion he said, “Get a little farther; go beyond the Oconee and the Ocumulgee [Indian settlements in South Carolina and Georgia] – there is pleasant country”. He also said, “It shall be yours forever”. Now he says, “The land you live upon is not yours. Go

beyond the Mississippi; there is game; there you may remain while the grass grows and the rivers run". Will not our Great Father come there also? He loves his red children, and his tongue is not forked. Brothers! I have listened to a great many talks from our Great Father. But they always began and ended in this – "Get a little farther; you are too near me". I have spoken. (p. 56)

This oration provides a good example of conformity to the non-confrontational style in spite of being a strong statement about the unwillingness to give up additional land once again. The speaker is obviously distressed at the notion of moving and has strong sentiments about it; however, he manages to avoid a directly confrontational tone and instead uses figurative speech to generalize about 'the white man'. He also effectively uses the phrase "he [says he] loves/loved his red children" on three different occasions within the speech in order to provide a conciliatory, yet subtly ironic, tone.

A contemporary example of non-confrontational delivery style can be found in the oration by Mr. Albert White Hat in a commencement address to the graduating class of 2006 at the United Tribes Technical College:

We've come a long ways in education, you know? When I went to school, we had no idea of college. I went to a government day school for... 'til I was 16 years old. Sometimes today I thought about that and I was thankful that they never taught me anything. We spoke Lakota all the time. When I was 16, I went into a mission boarding school and it was a great shock. I walked into the institution and because of my age they put me in with the eighth graders. And I walked in there and all my peers laughed at me because I was Lakota. I was ridiculed. I was a 'big Indian', a 'buck Indian'. And all my peers, they were...

some were relatives from the area and they all really made fun of me. Many years later, I found out that they had been in that institution since they were five so by the time they were teenagers they were already being conditioned to deny their Indian-ness. And that happened to many of us. They took that spirit away from us...of who we are. We come out of those institutions with a third grade level of education. As Lakota men, we were trained to be workhorses. Common laborers. They never taught us academic training. So we were good workers, hard workers. But we couldn't negotiate, we couldn't look ahead, because we didn't have that academic education. We come out of those institutions totally dependent to authority. We couldn't function without consent. We don't question.

In this example, Mr. White Hat makes an indictment of the government's intentions to 'kill the Indian, save the man' through government and mission boarding schools. Yet he does so in a non-confrontational way. Notice that he does not make such statements as "It can be argued that these schools did not teach us properly" or "I disagree that the government schools provided an adequate education". Rather, he uses himself as an example and shares his own personal experiences of it. By using this non-confrontational style, he does not make any direct criticisms of the system but shares his experiences of it and allows the listener to come to his or her own conclusions about the effectiveness of government boarding schools.

Another way in which Mr. White Hat uses the non-confrontational delivery style is by generalizing. For example, the use of "they" – "*they* took that spirit away from us...of who we are" and "*they* never taught us academic training" – indicts an institution



as opposed to any individuals. Thus, the criticism is diffused rather than being a pointed accusation or confrontation.

### *The Concept of ikce wicasa*

In the L/N/Dakota language, *ikce wicasa* is the term for a “common man” or Everyman. The concept of *ikce wicasa* is firmly embedded in the L/N/Dakota value of humility. Humility was especially important because a humble person was open to others’ ideas, aware of others’ perspectives, and mindful of their own frailties. An arrogant person, on the other hand, was often closed-minded and was no longer able to learn new things. Author Joseph Marshall, in *The Lakota Way*, relates the traditional conception of humility this way:

A humble person rarely stumbles, the old ones say, because such a person walks with face toward the Earth and can see the path ahead. On the other hand, the arrogant man who walks with his head high to bask in the glory of the moment will stumble often because he is more concerned with the moment than what lays ahead. ... The burden of humility is light because a truly humble person divests himself or herself of the need for recognition. The burden of arrogance, on the other hand, grows heavier day by day. (p. 19)

One of the traditional practices of the L/N/Dakota people provided a venue for reciting accomplishment but also ensured humility. This was the traditional practice of *waktoglaka*, or the telling of exploits. This venue was usually provided at public gatherings. There, warriors could recite their brave deeds and accomplishments in battle in narrative form. However, the warrior was not at liberty to embellish his exploits as a witness was required for these acts. In this matter, a warrior could gain status, honor and

a good reputation among the community without “bragging”. Balgooyen (1968) noted this custom as well:

Young Plains warriors had a problem in speaking similar to that of young politicians in western society. His future depended upon the convincing way in which he presented his record of brave deeds. Yet it was important for him to learn how to sound modest, or at least reasonably so. The Comanche women had a clever device for correcting the speeches of the braggart. Women sometimes made a war bonnet in secret to bestow upon a braggart whose words spoke louder than his deed, and the presentation was made in public at an opportune moment. The recipient of such a war bonnet had to live up to the obligations of that war bonnet or else lose it and become an object of ridicule. (p. 16)

In contemporary practice, the concept of *ikce wicasa* means that a traditional L/N/Dakota speaker does not speak arrogantly, recite his or her professional exploits (“brag”), or talk about himself or herself excessively. On the other hand, *ikce wicasa* is manifested in phrases such as “I am not an expert”, the acknowledgement of the acquisition of wisdom from others (e.g. “these are teachings I learned from my grandparents”) or being open to other ways (e.g. “you can feel free to disagree with me on this because this is just my experience...”). By establishing himself or herself as a humble person, a speaker actually gained credibility. The existence and common recitation of a great many morality tales in the L/N/Dakota tradition, among other Tribal traditions, points to the importance of teaching Native youth the folly of arrogance and the virtue of humility.

*Examples of use of 'ikce wicasa' concept*

Historically, there are numerous examples of the *ikce wicasa* concept. Although *ikce wicasa* is a L/N/Dakota term, the concept is similar among all Native speakers.

Following are several examples of this concept:

- My Brothers and my Friends who are before me today: God Almighty has made us all, and He is here to hear what I have to say to you today. The Great Spirit made us both. He gave me lands and He gave you lands. ... (p. 91: *an oration by Red Cloud to a general audience in New York City*)
- I am opening my heart to speak to you – open yours to receive my words. ... Father, I am happy to see you. The heavens have cleared, the day is bright, and I rejoice to hear your voice. These beads are a road between us. Take hold at one end, I will at the other, and hold fast... (p. 48: *an oration by a Potawatomi leader in 1793*)
- Here I am, my father; all these young people you see arrived here are yours, although they are poor and little, yet they are your children. All my nation loves the whites and always have loved them. Some think, my father, that you have brought all these soldiers to take our lands from us, but I do not believe it. For although I am a poor simple Indian, I know this land will not suit your farmers... (p. 50: *an oration by Big Elk, Omaha, at a council of tribes in 1819*)
- My Father: a long time has passed since first we came upon our lands; and our people have all sunk into their graves. They had sense. We are all young and foolish, and do not wish to do anything that they would not approve were they living... (p. 78: *an oration by a Potawatomi leader in 1821*)



In these examples, each of the speakers allude to the fact that they do not possess any special wisdom or authority but are speaking from their perspective alone, as one human being to another. In the first two examples, the orators seek to establish equity. The first oration does so by noting the commonality of being creations of the “Great Spirit/God Almighty”. The second example seeks to establish equity through the use of such figurative speech as the opening of hearts and the beads-as-roads between the two groups. These devices establish speaker and listener as colleagues in a common purpose.

In the second two examples, specific phrases such as “poor simple Indian” and “we are all young and foolish” are used to express the humbleness of the speaker. The use of such descriptors was common in historical oratory. The intent was to position the speaker and his listener on common ground and was meant to facilitate connection and consensus. Neither speaker nor listener was forced into a position of weakness by virtue of setting oneself up as an expert. However, the use of such self-referent phrases – e.g. “poor”, “ignorant”, “pitiful” – were often misconceived by white audiences as an acknowledgement of the Indians’ inferiority to the white man. By contrast, the historical orations in which white government officials addressed Tribal audiences on behalf of whites were often comprised of terms and phrases extolling the virtues of their society, e.g. Whites as “powerful”, “educated”, and “benevolent”. This practice illustrates the differing cultural worldviews; one which sought to create consensus through the establishment of equitable relationship and one which sought to gain advantage through “one-up-manship”.

The contemporary usage of the *ikce wicasa* concept is often less subtle than historical orations. In contemporary orations, one will find more direct phrases such as “I

am not an expert in this or anything...” or “I’m just talking from my own perspective here...” or some similar sentiment. It is not clear whether this is a result of the limitations of transcribing and recording – e.g. recorders of history who eliminated such direct phrases from orations – or whether the practice changed over time and became more direct. Regardless, contemporary examples appear to be much more common.

A clear contemporary example of the use of the concept of *ikce wicasa* can be found in the oration by Mr. Tommy Christian cited earlier. In his speech, he provides several examples of humility and references himself as a ‘common man’ in several ways:

[M]y name is Eagle Claw, that’s who I am. I am just a common man, I don’t know anything and if you will pity me by listening to me real good, I’d really appreciate that so.... (Appendix B)

In addition, he uses several other references throughout his oration, including the statement “I’m just a typical little Indian boy from the rez and I think this opportunity to help others understand the importance of being Indian in 2006 is really important”. Through these explicit phrases, Mr. Christian places himself on equal ground with his audience and works from this position to further explicate his purpose.

#### *Use of humor*

Effective Native speakers use humor and specific delivery styles in a cultural context. Indeed, the use of humor has become a hallmark of Native American survival. Jokes, teasing, satire and humorous stories have become a requisite part of competent public speaking. A Lakota elder explains the use of humor thusly:

I think Indian humor plays a big part in the whole social structure of the Lakota, and here’s my way of interpreting that. ... Among the Lakota, no matter what



hardship there is, whether it's death in the family or a serious ceremony or a discussion of a problem we might be concerned about, there's always humor connected with it. I think that humor brings us back to reality and reminds us that we are not really that important, or that the issue on the floor is not really that bad, or that somebody who is a good speaker or a mature leader knows when to lighten things up by telling a funny story or making fun of himself or somebody in the audience. We all get a smile on our faces and nod agreement and feel better. When somebody can't laugh or enjoy a joke in the middle of something else, we take it as a sign that they're not comfortable with themselves, or aren't too sure of themselves and can't laugh at times. (p. 168)

Humor was so essential to the L/N/Dakota way of life that there existed a formal role in Tribal communities for eliciting laughter and easing tension. The *heyoka* was an individual who was called to the art by a dream or vision of the *wakinyan* (thunder beings). The *heyoka*, similar to a medieval court jester, would be responsible for being the 'other face' of drama. Unlike the jester or the "clown" (as the word *heyoka* is translated to English) however, the *heyoka* was viewed as a sacred vocation. He was capable of great power and medicine and his role of maintaining peace and social harmony was formalized into society. The *heyoka* use of humor kept people from negative thinking, criticism of others, self-importance, or excessive grief and melancholy.

#### *Examples of Use of Humor*

Historically, humor was difficult to transcribe because of the differing cultural conceptions of what was humorous. Tradition tells us that Native American humor was subtle and verbal in nature, as opposed to the mostly raucous and physical humor of non-



Indian clowns, carnivals, sideshows and other diversions. Nevertheless, one interesting historical example of the use of Indian humor can be found in the writings of Creek poet and journalist Alexander Posey. Writing in the late 1800s to early 1900s for an Oklahoma newspaper called the *Indian Journal*, Posey often used satire, teasing and a self-deprecating pidgin English form of narration to illuminate the often contradictory and pompous ways of Whites. This piece, written in 1903, mocked the edict from U.S. officials, “Big Man,” for Indians to change their traditional Indian names to Christianized names:

Big Man he was say this time the Injin was had to change his name just like if the marshal was had a writ for him. So, if the Injin’s name is Wolf Warrior, he was had to call himself John Smith, or maybe so Bill Jones, so nobody else could get his mail out of the postoffice. Big Man say Injin name like Sitting Bull or Tecumseh was too hard to remember and don’t sound civilized like General Cussed Her or old Grand Pa Harry’s Son. (Nabakov, 2000)

A contemporary example of humor can easily be found in Mr. Tommy Christian’s oration. In it, he provides several examples of self-deprecating jokes and teasing as well as a short explanation as to his use of humor:

- I am not a medicine man because I don’t have a white wife. (Cha) No, I’m teasing. If I was a really good medicine man, I would have two white wives.
- We tease like that in our culture. It’s not to be degrading or anything like that but to help us understand the importance of this balance that we aspire to as First Nations people.

- So I'm using what I have learned and what I have taken to a standard that most people can't attain because I don't drink, I don't do drugs, I don't do alcohol. I do smoke cigarettes and I do chase women. (Cha) I'm teasing. I'm a warrior. *Akicita hemeyelo*. I've got about six wives.
- [W]e all know as First Nations people that when you adopt somebody as a relative, the elders told me, you should appreciate and respect that relationship even more than your natural children, your natural brothers and sisters, your siblings. In spite of that guy's character defects, he has so many, I still want him as my brother. He's a white guy, I thought he had money. He ain't got Jack. He's asking me for money and I'm saying, "Wait. I'll sell these calves and I'll get you some. I'll sell this block of cheese for five bucks".
- I was up kind of promoting this in Canada. I spend a lot of time in Canada. I said, "Well, I'm gonna do this ballet thing". "Tommy, you gonna put on tights?" "Heck no, I'm bony enough! They won't be able to see me!"

(Appendix C)

The many instances of humor in this oration (and there were more) indicate the importance of humor in Native American oratory.

#### *Use of Storytelling or Personal Narrative*

Another way public discourse is utilized in a cultural way is through the use of personal narrative. For non-Native audiences, the need for official facts, statistics, research and studies to prove a given point reveals the reliance on science and reason in a quest for "truth". For Native audiences, however, truth is more often revealed through

personal narrative and experience. A personal narrative relating to the topic at hand is essential to establishing authority, credibility and relationship:

Learning comes early in indigenous institutions, not through lectures but through experience: customs, habits and practices. The primary lesson learned is and was that knowledge and understanding come from our relatives, the other “persons” or “beings” we have relationships with and depend on in order to live. And it is through these relationships, physical and psychological, indeed spiritual, that human beings begin to understand who, why, and even to some degree what we are. A value-free, neutral, objective science of things cannot give us that, and it is this discovery of meaning through very complex relationships that is the hallmark of American Indian education (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 33).

The use of proper personal narrative provides culturally-based relevance and validity similar to Jurgen Habermas’ (1987) notions of the lifeworld and the public sphere. Habermas, a noted German rhetorical theorist, defined the “lifeworld” as the “cognitive interpretations, moral expectations, expressions, and valuations” (p. 327). It is in the public sphere, informal places where groups can form consensus, that the lifeworld and its ‘truths’ are either embraced or rejected. This process is the one into which a Native speaker must tread with a culturally confident step.

#### *Examples of Storytelling or Personal Narrative*

In the introduction to *I Have Spoken: American History through the Voices of the Indians* (Armstrong, 1984), contributing writer Frederick Turner notes that the speeches recorded by the various American Indian leaders during the Indian Wars era of U.S. history shared a similar pattern:



1. expressions that the Indian is a man of peace – this apparently with reference to the particular nation’s dealings with whites;
2. a backward glance toward earlier charities extended to whites;
3. recitation of the Indian’s landed heritage;
4. recital of more recent history – Indian land concessions to the ever-advancing whites;
5. hopes voiced that such a process may here and now be permanently arrested;
6. concluding expressions of peace and amity. (p. xv)

Within Turner’s analysis of pattern is reference to the storytelling or personal narrative components of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory; specifically, “a backward glance toward earlier charities extended to whites”, the “recitation of the Indian’s landed heritage”, and further “recital of more recent history of Indian land concessions to the ever-advancing whites”. These three parts of the pattern, which constitute half of it, are accomplished through the telling of stories or personal narratives.

A contemporary example of the use of personal narrative or storytelling can be found once again in Mr. Tommy Christian’s oration:

Robert Meyers is a very renowned world renowned and nationally acclaimed artist in photography from Los Angeles. He originally came from Chicago.

Robert and myself got hooked up in 1996. He told the story last time about how me and him got together but I’ll tell it this time. I was right over here at the powwow grounds. I was walking around just before grand entry and I had on my regalia with paint and everything. You know how white people are when you’re dressed up, “Oh Tommy, you’re such a Noble Indian”. [laughs] Anyway his

wife, she's the only playmate of the year from North Dakota so she's really a fox...aye...she comes up and he had a thing over there where he's taking pictures and she walks up to me and she says, "Sir, my husband's over here. He's a photographer. He'd like to take pictures of some very good people and you look like a good one so could you come over there?" Well, we were chatting, me and this little white woman, and I was trying to hit on her and stuff. Well, there was three Indian girls standing behind me that knew me and they said, "Look at Tommy's hitting on that white woman". So one of them said, "Go over there, go over there!" So she went up and said, "Tommy, your wife wants those pampers! She wants you to get home right now!" Carmen takes off and runs off because she didn't know what was going on. It was a joke. I wasn't hitting on her anyway. I don't like white women. Naahh...I'm just teasing. Anyway, that's how Robert and I met up. (Appendix B)

In this example, the telling of the story reveals something about the speaker, about the relationship between the speaker and his referent (Robert Meyers, as well as his wife), and the context in which the two have established and maintained a relationship. Although Mr. Christian notes that Mr. Meyers is an acclaimed photographer, he does not focus on his professional career or accomplishments. In this instance, it would have made sense for Mr. Christian to reference his professional relationship since the purpose of his presentation (the promotion of "The Encounter" performance) was rooted in their professional collaborations. However, Mr. Christian rather uses a traditionally L/N/Dakota format in illustrating the casual nature upon which their relationship is based.

### *Formal Conclusion*

The use of a formal conclusion was also a common practice and is therefore an important component of the model of L/N/Dakota oratory. In the strictest sense, the formal conclusion utilized by L/N/Dakota people was a customary phrase: *hecitu welo*. This phrase is commonly translated to mean “I have spoken” or “it is so”. Most North American tribes utilize the same practice of formalized statements that signal the end of an oration. This practice is rooted in the cultural value of respect; others did not interrupt a speaker until the speaker indicated that he was finished speaking. This culturally-specific practice was helpful for Native speakers since another common practice was to engage in extended periods of silence throughout an oration in order to gather thoughts, phrase the next words or reflect on the words already spoken. Thus, a verbal cue as to when a speaker was finished (as opposed to just taking a ‘think break’) was helpful.

Some of the Tribal groups who initially met the early American colonists were especially noted for their superior skills at oratory and, indeed, one contemporary Tribe has even derived their commonly-known and accepted name from their skills and the practice of formal conclusion:

Another matter that surprised many contemporary observers was the Iroquois’ sophisticated use of oratory. Their excellence with the spoken word, among other attributes, often caused ... others to compare the Iroquois to the Romans and Greeks. The French use of the term Iroquois to describe the confederacy was itself related to this oral tradition; it came from the practice of ending their orations with the two words *hiro* and *kone*. The first meant “I say” or “I have said” and the second was an exclamation of joy or sorrow according to the



circumstances of the speech. The two words, joined and made subject to French pronunciation, became Iroquois. The English were often exposed to the Iroquois' oratorical skills at eighteenth-century treaty councils. (Johansen, 1982)

A less stringent understanding of a formal conclusion is the inclusion of prayer and spirituality as an important part of Native public discourse. Most public speaking events in Tribal communities begin and end with prayers offered by an elder audience participant. It is the responsibility of the speaker to offer tobacco or other gift to a Tribal elder when requesting their assistance in offering prayer. This practice ensures a spiritual element to the proceeding, with elders often requesting that good words and truth come through the speaker. Sometimes, speakers themselves will end with a prayer as their formal conclusion.

#### *Examples of Formal Conclusion*

Although most examples of historical renditions of orations have edited out the formal conclusions, there are some cases in which they have been retained. Two examples are below. The first is the end fragment of a short speech given by Tamaha, a noted orator among the Mdewakanton Dakota, who was arrested and threatened with death:

Colonel Dickson, the heart of Tamaha is strong. If one word would save the life of Tamaha, Tamaha would not speak that word to save his life. As the forest leaf falls silently and calmly to the ground, so shall Tamaha go calmly and silently to the spirit land. *The talk of Tamaha is ended.* (Diedrich, p. 16; emphasis added)

Another piece of oration, also given by Tamaha, was given late in life at an 1862 war council:

What! What! Is this Little Crow? Is that Little Six? You, too, White Dog, are you here? I cannot see well now, but I can see you with my mind's eye the stream of blood you are about to pour upon the bosom of this mother of ours. I stand before you on three legs, but the third leg [referring to his staff] has brought me much wisdom. I have traveled much; I have visited the people whom you think to defy. This means the total surrender of our beautiful land, the land of a thousand lakes and streams. Methinks you are about to commit an act like that of the porcupine, who climbs a tree, balances himself upon a springy bough, and then gnaws off the very bough upon which he is sitting; hence when it gives way, he falls upon the sharp rocks below. Behold, the great Pontiac, whose grave I saw near St. Louis; he was murdered while an exile from his own country! Think of the brave Black Hawk! Methinks his spirit is still wailing through Wisconsin and Illinois for his lost people! I do not say you have no cause to complain, but to resist is self-destruction. *I am done.* (Diedrich, p. 68; emphasis added)

A contemporary example of formal conclusion, as well as formal introduction, can be found in the address of Chief Oren Lyons, Haudenosaunee Faithkeeper, given to the delegates to the United Nations Organization opening "The Year of the Indigenous Peoples" (1993) at New York City in December of 1992. Lyons begins his oration with this formal introduction, "For all of us, I am Oren Lyons, *Haudenosaunee*, and speaking on behalf of the Indigenous People of North America, this Great Turtle Island". He also provides a good example of a traditional formal conclusion in his oration thusly, "On behalf of the Indigenous People of the Great Turtle Island, I give my appreciation and thanks. Dah ney' to. Now I am finished".

This type of formal conclusion, in which the traditional phrase is actually used, is largely forgotten as a cultural practice. However, a Tribal college speech and English instructor provided some interesting insight into this phenomenon. He noted:

The part I see students struggle with is ending a speech. Our students tend to just want to end with “Well, I guess that’s it...” or “Well, I really don’t have anything else to say...” or some other similar phrase. (Palecek, personal communication)

While this may be seen as students’ ignorance of any type of speech-making process, perhaps it could also indicate a cultural dissonance associated with the abandoned practice of ending orations with formal, ritualistic phrases. The sort of phrase identified by this instructor may in fact be the linguistic equivalent to “I have spoken”. Or “it is so”.

Another Tribal college speech instructor reiterated this perception but also added an additional, thought-provoking observation:

Our students are generally risk-takers but are so “unrisky” when preparing creative introductions. They have a hard time using attention-getting devices, such as facts, a startling statement, a quote or some other way. They all want to start by saying “Today I want to talk about...” and end with “...that’s all I have to say”. They have trouble with the beginning and the ending. (Huber, personal communication)

The same phenomenon may apply in the case of using formal introductions as well. These students, many of whom come from Tribal communities and families but may not have examined traditional ways, may be floundering as a result of these abandoned speaking conventions.



### *Listening as a Basis for Speaking*

The ninth criterion of listening as a basis for speaking was added upon completion of the field interviews. The reasons for adding this criterion will be described in more detail later. However, it is important to note that this concept came through as a major influence on the oration process. Because of this, it became necessary to conduct a brief review of the literature to determine the historical importance of this criterion.

The characteristic of good listening has long been attributed to Native American people. Benjamin Franklin, in his 1753 *Poor Richard* reflections, commented that Indian conceptions of listening were in direct contrast to “the Mode of Conversation of many polite Companies of Europe, where, if you do not deliver your Sentence with great Rapidity, you are cut off in the middle of it by the impatient Loquacity of those you converse with, and never suffer’d to finish it!” (Johansen, 1982)

For Native people, the ability to listen was a skill that was honed through many different cultural practices. One such practice was listening to traditional stories (morality tales) during certain seasons. Young people were expected to be able to listen to these stories and recite them from memory. A person who was not a good listener, on the other hand, was said to have “no ears”. The value of listening was predicated on the notion that wisdom was acquired through a good listener’s ability to internalize and synthesize knowledge. The contemporary Native American practice of “talking circles”, or the use of a “talking stick”, reflect a process used to formalize the traditional value of listening to others. In a talking circle, participants pass along an object such as a stick, staff, rock, eagle feather or some other artifact, and take turns speaking from the heart. This technique is often used as a therapeutic sharing of issues, concerns and feelings. It

is based on the premise that the person holding the significant object is the only person with the right to speak. Others cannot refute, question, interject or otherwise interrupt the speaker. In this way, it is ensured that every person has an equal right to speak their mind and others must be active listeners in the process.

Listening also plays an integral role in self-reflection and self-awareness, two fundamental attributes of wisdom. This ability to self-reflect and build self-awareness, in turn, are the foundations for connecting – sharing puzzle pieces – with other human beings. Listening as a part of oral tradition is essential for understanding relationships and their multiple meanings (Fixico, 2003).

Carbaugh (1995, 2002) has provided some interesting insights into this process of listening in Native American cultures, especially as it pertains to the Blackfoot of the Northern Great Plains and its role in oratory. In his work, Carbaugh notes some significant logical disparities between the Blackfoot and mainstream American styles of public speaking. Noting the difficulties his Blackfoot students had in conducting public presentations, he delved into cultural epistemology to understand this incongruence. His findings suggest that the difficulties can be traced to the differing beliefs about inherent connectedness, authority to speak, and the use of silence as a valid form of communication. He calls the Blackfoot belief that all beings are in continuous spiritual communication “silently connective co-presence”. In this worldview, the Blackfoot individual prefers a continued state of silent self-reflection in which he or she remains open to spiritual communication. Carbaugh notes that, while this type of discursive silence is fundamental to the Blackfoot worldview, the primary verbal speaking authority



among the Blackfoot is the traditional Tribal male elder. This remains a strong boundary for acceptable behavior and illuminates some of the difficulties his students experience.

Interestingly, a Tribal college speech and English instructor also recently made note of the different manner of listening that his American Indian students engaged in:

I've noticed that our students have a different sense of listening even. They listen differently to elders, for example, than to me when I'm lecturing. Not that they're not just as respectful, but they just listen in a more reflective way perhaps.

(Palecek, personal communication)

Carbaugh (1995) explores further the concept of listening as a cultural form of communication and identifies a strong connection between listening and place by noting that "When used in a special way by Blackfeet [sic], the term, 'listening' REFERS to a form of communication that is unique to them; when ENACTED in its special way, 'listening' connects participants intimately to a specific physical place" (p. 251, *caps in original*).

Sharing his experiences of traveling to the Blackfoot reservation and experiencing the profound silence of nature, Carbaugh notes also that "discourse and culture come hand-in-hand; that senses of place run deeply into cultural discourses; that these can include communication forms that may be, in large part, non-linguistic; and further that some cultural uses of discourse and language, such as the directive to 'just listen' can, for some people, presume this basic, non-linguistic communication process, as a kind of cultural action prior to language" (p. 253).

Carbaugh cites some of the current literature relating to the development of understandings of "linguistic patterns as cultural routines", "how fashions of speaking



relate to places”, “ways in which discourse keeps the past and places alive in the present”, and “linguistic relativity”. Each of these strands of inquiry reminds us “how deeply discourse and language is being variously fashioned by people in, and about place” (p.252).

In a subsequent work, Carbaugh (2002) offers a comparison-and-contrast between the “whiteman’s” way of using communication and the Blackfoot way of using communication. He notes specifically that the “whiteman” way of using communication includes speaking as a primary mode of communication and that the cultural premise for communication is speaker-active and constructive. In other words, the speaker has the primary responsibility for constructing and relaying a message for the benefit of the listener. For the Blackfoot, on the other hand, silence is the primary mode of communication and the cultural premise for communication is rather listener-active and interconnected. In this mode, the entire purpose of communication is based on a shared experience rooted in spiritual “listening”. These distinctions illustrate the reasons silence is often seen in the non-Native world as an “absence of communication” rather than as a valid communication form. Fixico (2003) explains it this way:

Silence is the test for patience. In silence, two people are still engaged in the same experience of concentrating on the same item or piece of knowledge. In this way, learning to deal and function with silence is a means for securing one’s thoughts and confirming one’s beliefs. In this way silence is an opportunity, not a negative. Such silence is uncomfortable for the mainstream person whose world is filled with many man-made noises. This opportunity is for self-reflection and introspection in the process of understanding one’s own mind, and finding

balance within oneself. Personality is shaped, changed, and refined. Character is built. (p. 5-6)

It is interesting then to note the way in which Carbaugh connects listening to “place”. Intricately related to this revelation are Deloria and Wildcat’s (2001) assertions that power and place produce personality. In Native American epistemology, power and place are dominant concepts, with “power being the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe, and place being the relationship of things to each other” (p. 22-23). Thus, for Native Americans, this circles back to the belief that communication was an integral part of identifying and establishing these relationships within the living universe.

#### Qualitative Research Findings: Part Two

Upon completion of the field interviews, open coding was used to analyze the initial data. This process led to the development of a ninth criterion that was added to the L/N/Dakota model or oratory upon completion of the field interviews. This criterion was identified as “listening as basis for speaking” and was a particularly strong theme throughout the interviews. Axial coding was then used to provide structure to the thematic elements found in the analysis. Through this process, the categories could be linked together in a meaningful way. With the exception of the addition of the ninth criterion, the field interviews did not reveal any additional categories.

The findings from the field interviews indicated that the criteria postulated by the research were accurate. As a result of the field interviews, each of the eight (8) original criteria developed were validated and one (1) other criterion was added. The original criteria developed were:

- (1) Formal introduction
- (2) Acknowledgement of viewpoint
- (3) Responding indirectly
- (4) Non-confrontational delivery
- (5) Utilization of *ikce wicasa*
- (6) Use of humor
- (7) Use of storytelling or personal narrative
- (8) Formal conclusion

It should be noted, however, that one terminology change was also made as a result of the field interviews. The criterion of “not arguing” was changed to state “non-confrontational delivery”. The research subjects noted – in their own manner, of course – that Native American axiology contributed significantly to the connotations of the word *argue* or *arguing*. Thus, a Native American speaker could *argue* a point of view in the sense of having a healthy debate or offering an alternative perspective but it was considered extremely rude to *argue* in the sense of being confrontational or telling another person that he or she is wrong in their perspective or beliefs. Based on these distinctions, the phrasing was changed to non-confrontational.

In affirming the concept of the formal introduction, a majority of the elders (86%) mentioned the practice of a speaker relating his or her Indian name as a form of proper introduction. They stated that this process was central to the purpose of communicating, which several stated was “to make a spirit-to-spirit connection”. One elder stated “our main purpose for communicating is to connect spirit-to-spirit. The foundation is that each of us has a *nagi* (a spirit) that seeks a connection to other human beings and all



living things”. This elder mentioned the cultural belief that one must have a traditional L/N/Dakota name (e.g. Crazy Horse) in our language in addition to an English name (e.g. Thomas Smith) in order to be taken to the spirit world upon death. He asserted that “the telling of your Indian name is the on-going process of connecting to the spirits”.

In this same regard, another elder mentioned the cultural belief that the L/N/Dakota call children *wakan yeja* (sacred beings) because we believe that until they are of a certain age, they still have a spiritual connection with the *wakan* (the Great Mystery). The children have a ‘soft spot’ on their heads that allows their spirit to travel freely and communicate with the *wakan*. However, this is also why our ancestors advised parents and grandparents never to speak harshly to children, yell at them or hit them. These two critical examples indicate that all communication involves a spiritual aspect and must be deliberate and careful.

Several elders affirmed the criterion of using a formal introduction by discussing the importance of a good L/N/Dakota orator to establish a connection with the audience. They cited the practices of shaking hands (either literally or figuratively through language), introducing self as member of a Tribe, mentioning familial relationships, acknowledging any relatives in the audience, and mentioning how/where one grew up. They indicated that a good speaker was one who made audience members feel comfortable.

A few of the interviewees (21%) mentioned the practice of orators making the traditional L/N/Dakota greeting in the language: *Hau, mitakuyapi. Le anpetu ki cante wasteya napeciyuza pelo*. This phrase translates to: *Hello, my relatives. This day I shake*

*your hand with a happy heart.* This was also considered an indication that the speaker was culturally grounded and knew his or her L/N/Dakota ways.

The interviewees also affirmed the criterion of acknowledgement of viewpoint, responding indirectly and not arguing. These three concepts were described as being interrelated and were discussed by all the elders (100%). The elders often addressed the mainstream criticism of Indian ways of speaking as “not getting to the point” as being instead a respectful way of communicating. One elder stated:

They say we don't get to the point. But “talking around it” is not “talking around it”. It is providing context to what I say and how it ties back to our ancestors. I am always aware that I am not just talking for myself and this knowledge I have is not my own. It is the acknowledgement of all the things my ancestors learned and then taught me. (personal interview, 2006)

The interviewees also discussed this criterion in terms of the use of respectful language. All noted that it was important to take time to stop and collect one's thoughts before one spoke. This practice allowed a speaker to formulate the proper concepts as well as the appropriate wording that would not offend. One elder stated it rather succinctly by saying, “My parents and grandparents taught me to think about what you are going to say before you say it. Nowadays, people get impatient and want you to get to the point. But when you talk fast, you cause hardship”. Another elder used the phrase *iyapi wakan* to describe the process of speaking. *Iyapi wakan*, or sacred words, acknowledge the power of words to help, to heal, to create understanding – or, conversely – to wound. This elder emphasized that the *lakol wicohan* (Lakota way of life) recognized that communication was an internal process before it was an external one.



Some of the elders discussed the purpose of communication as being a way of coming to a consensus about beliefs, concepts or ideas. They recalled the major speaking events as those where a decision had to be made or a consensus had to be reached. In these instances, the elders of the community would talk for “hours and hours and hours” until everyone could agree on the subject at hand. At these events, all the speakers would have an opportunity to speak from their perspective and give their opinion of the subject matter. In these events, the interviewees recalled that there were “never arguments” or any confrontational language that was used. Rather, speakers emphasized agreement and points of consensus. Conversely, one of the interviewees described a bad or ineffective speaker as one who spoke of negativity and created disharmony.

The practice of expecting certain members of the community to be spokespersons was also discussed at length. In the same way that leaders were chosen as leaders by the people who followed, there were certain people in the community who were expected to be the speakers in and for the community. Two interviewees recalled their grandfather being asked to speak at functions in a ceremonial way, through the offering of a gift before the event. They stated that there was an expectation for him to be the speaker but they could not articulate why this was so.

Most of the elders also stated that a good L/N/Dakota speaker would not interrupt or jump into a conversation. He or she would wait until an opposing speaker was fully finished talking. After the speaker was finished talking, the other party would take some time to ruminate on what they heard and formulate their response. This practice kept “arguing” – or responding in a negative way – to a minimum. In taking the time to think about the subject at hand, the listening party (and subsequent speaker) was also taught to



“speak about what we will speak about” (personal interview, 2006). In other words, the speaker spoke from his or her perspective as opposed to speaking directly to refute or corroborate any points made by the previous speaker.

Several of the interviewees spoke about some of the ways of speaking that are currently practiced (e.g. in Tribal councils or community meetings) as antithetical to a L/N/Dakota oratory. They listed practices such as pointing fingers (literally and figuratively), not telling the truth or telling only half-truths, interrupting, talking loudly, and self-righteousness as being negative speaking practices that came about because of colonization. These ways were deemed argumentative and were not helpful in making connections, building relationships or sharing of spirit.

In addressing the concept of not arguing, one elder stated that this concept was central to our being and the reason the *Dakota* people were a strong nation. Indeed, he noted that the word *Dakota* (as well as *Lakota*) meant “ally” or “friend”. The reason the People were named *Dakota* was because of their belief that communication was for establishing friendships and relationships:

That is the one thing that kept the *Dakota* people strong [not arguing or being confrontational]. When I talk, I try to make someone feel that their ancestral background is a part of the topic. We never bring up a subject of confrontation or be confrontational about anything. This was the reason we were so powerful as a People. (personal interview, 2006)

The fifth criterion of the utilization of the concept of *ikce wicasa* (common man) was noted by all of the elders (100%). Two of the representative comments in this regard were that “as Indian people, we never thought of ourselves as good speakers but we had

to do it” and “we’re not traditionally assertive people so it is always hard to get in front of others to speak”. Many of the elders specifically used the word “humble” to describe a good traditional L/N/Dakota speaker. It was noted that good orators, like good leaders, were chosen by the people rather than self-appointed. In many instances, good orators were recognized by being asked to serve as announcers or speakers at various community events. One of the interviewees discussed the way in which speakers are today asked to speak with a microphone to very large audiences for (mainly) entertainment purposes. This practice was also antithetical to the L/N/Dakota practice. He stated:

To be in public, we had to learn a whole new way of talking. A lot of times, silent communication was stronger than words to us. My grandmother just had to give me a look and I knew what she wanted. But today, in order to live in this non-Indian world, we have to go from being soft-spoken to loud, from silent to all talk and not much action. Today, people don’t listen to each other; instead, they are thinking about what they are going to say next. (personal interview, 2006)

The use of humor was another criterion that was mentioned by nearly all of the interviewees (93%). One speaker summed up the sentiments by saying that “a good Lakota speaker will use humor when they are talking or they will use a Lakota slang word here and there that makes people sort of chuckle” (personal interview, 2006). They cited this humor as a mechanism for establishing rapport – a connection – with the audience.

While the concept of using humor was noted as a tactic for making a connection, its purposes were also identified by interviewees as making the audience feel good, establishing the speaker as a human being (*ikce wicasa*) because maybe the story is about



something goofy the speaker had done, and easing the tension when the humor or teasing had a teaching element to it. Several of the elders noted that teasing was sometimes done by older speakers in a subtle way as a mechanism for correcting behavior or admonishing someone's behavior. For example, a person who interrupts another speaker might get teased for "having small ears" (i.e. not being able to listen). In this way, the teasing was a subtle hint for the listener to engage in self-corrective behavior.

The use of personal narrative or storytelling was also mentioned by all of the interviewees (100%). One elder, who is a teacher at an elementary school, stated that storytelling is a traditional practice for teaching:

When I teach, I teach about life and personal experiences, tradition and culture. That's how we teach. Not lecture. We do it through stories and through experience. And we show them also. Long time ago, when the winters were long, stories were told and re-told so that we remembered them. (personal interview, 2006)

Storytelling was mentioned as a critical part of the communication process because it allowed freedom of thinking. By telling stories, the speaker allowed the listener to draw his or her own conclusions rather than making a statement as to what a person should believe or what is "fact". One interviewee also stated that making a connection with the audience required the speaker to "tell their story". In this context, the importance of storytelling was for the speaker to impart to the audience their perspective of 'truth'.

The eighth criterion posed in the hypothesis – the formal conclusion – was mentioned by a little over half of the participants (57%). Several of the participants



specifically mentioned the traditional phrase used by speakers – *hecitu welo* – but others also mentioned that speakers would often use formal words of conclusion in order to signal that they were done speaking. This included phrases such as “that is all I have to say”, “that’s what I wanted to share today”, “maybe someone else has something to say” or some similar remark.

One interviewee mentioned that the formal conclusion was a mechanism for maintaining harmony. The formal conclusion signaled to others in the group that the speaker was finished. The interviewee noted that this minimized hard feelings because of interruptions and unfinished thoughts. It was also customary for there to be “at least one full minute of silence” before another speaker began talking. This allowed the listeners to then begin formulating their own thoughts.

The additional criterion of “listening as a basis for speaking” was added as it became a major theme in the field interviews. A vast majority of the elders interviewed (93%) noted that it was important for a good L/N/Dakota speaker to first be a good listener. Although this important point was alluded to in the literature review, it was moved to a prominent criterion as a result of the stated importance. One interviewee stated that, for L/N/Dakota people, “communicating is an internal process before it is an external one”. Thus, the basis for a L/N/Dakota model of oratory would begin long before a sound was uttered or a word was formed. A good speaker was a listener first. This meant that he or she would take the time to listen to all points of view from others as well as take the time to listen to one’s ‘inner voice’ and be self-reflective.

Two other critical points that several elders mentioned as far as listening are that (1) the L/N/Dakota way is not to impose, not to proselytize, and (2) it is important for a

good speaker to be ready to speak when the time comes. These two points were mentioned in several different ways and are important foundations for speakers.

In stating that the L/N/Dakota way is “not to impose, not to proselytize”, the elders were expressing the cultural norms of respect and wisdom. As stated earlier, the primary purpose of communication is not to persuade but to connect. Thus, it is considered impolite to try to influence another person to one’s way of thinking or, in other words, to interject and try to obstruct another’s path of learning. This action implies that one person can control another human being, that the other person does not have a mind of his or her own, or that there is one superior way for all people that should be followed. Rather, an important part of the communication process was being able to truly listen to another point of view in order to determine if that way is a good way and should be taken up or if that way was incongruent with one’s inner voice. The Native American adage that states “If you see something good along the white man’s road, pick it up and keep it. But if you see something that is bad, drop it and leave it alone” expressed this critical norm of respect for each person’s ability to determine what is “good” and what is “bad”.

The second point made by the elders with respect to listening is that a speaker must be ready to speak at any given time. This means not only that our orators were great impromptu speakers, which historical accounts affirm, but being “ready to speak” also meant that one must have enough personal experience with listening under one’s belt in order to make significant observations. A good speaker would be able to not just give their point of view (which many people are fond of doing) but could fully articulate how they had come to that conclusion, why it was the best choice from their perspective and



provide the historical and cultural context (e.g. treaties, history, etc.) of the subject matter. Today, many modern commentators could take a lesson in this regard.

There were four other major themes that emerged from the field interviews that bear examination. These are simplicity, honesty, spirituality and colonization. Many of the interviewees touched on these topics in some manner when discussing a model speaker and model speaking practices. However, these themes were not incorporated into the criteria because of the fairly low level of frequency mentioned for each (e.g. less than half of the elders).

The first theme that was mentioned by some of the elders was simplicity (43%). One elder specifically stated that “communication is about simplicity” (personal interview, 2006). He related that traditional L/N/Dakota ways were based on the principle of simplicity and that is what made it so hard. He stated that, as L/N/Dakota people, “we have ‘burdens of goodness’ that we must carry. The ways are hard because they only require us to do what is right” (personal interview, 2006). Others stated this same principle in other ways. For example, another interviewee told a story about her grandfather, who was a successful local county office holder. She said that he never “campaigned” or made speeches. He just talked from the heart and the message she received from his actions were to keep it simple.

This story related to the second theme that emerged from the interviews: honesty. Many of the interviewees (43%) said that a good speaker was one who was honest and direct. Honesty was important as it added credibility to a speaker. Those who were not recognized as being honest speakers were not listened to. One elder stated, “If a speaker is known to be knowledgeable and honest, then we were able to believe what he or she



said, even as far as to believe in the fables he or she told us to teach us lessons or morals”. This honesty was noted to be a cornerstone of spirituality.

Spirituality, in turn, was the third theme to emerge from many of the interviews (29%). One interviewee noted that when he is asked to speak in front of groups, he often takes time to offer a silent prayer for the right words to say. He stated that public oratory, like prayer, has to “come from within”. Another interviewee stated that spirituality is at the heart of communication and meaning:

We use communication to make meaning of things. But that meaning comes from the center of each of us, from that place of spirituality. This is why some people get lost looking for something outside to ‘cure them’ or ‘help them’. Our way is not to chase something outside of us; instead we make it a part of us by giving it a name. (personal interview, 2006)

Another interviewee discussed the spiritual aspect of public speaking by saying that a good speaker was a healer through the “door” of his mouth. A good speaker was one who prayed before he or she spoke so that what he or she said provided healing as opposed to hurt. The spirits would give him truth and guide his words when prayers were offered before speaking.

All of the interviewees discussed the process of colonization and the effect it had on communication. One elder stated that using the English language is a decoding process. Another elder noted that her elders were continuously translating. This is another reason why they took so long to “process” information before speaking. She stated:

Those older people had to translate from English to Lakota first and then think about what that meant. I remember thinking that it always looked like they were sleeping but they were actually engaged in listening. There was an internal process going on. People wouldn't look directly at the speaker but they were listening. I remember this one man who I thought was sleeping but he got up and recited a bunch of stuff word-for-word that the speaker said, even way back at the beginning of his speech! (personal interview, 2006)

Another interviewee stated that "sometimes it seems like they're looking off in the distance or they're daydreaming or something. But that's their way of listening" (personal interview, 2006). This traditional practice of 'processing' information before responding to it has been lost as the number of fluent Native speakers has decreased, as well as the pace of modern life has increased.

Some of the other criteria that were briefly mentioned by various interviewees included external and non-verbal behaviors. One interviewee stated that how a speaker dressed was important. He stated that a good speaker dressed for the occasion but didn't try to 'advertise' their Indianness. For example, a good speaker didn't wear a warbonnet or dress in full dance regalia to speak. This line of reasoning was consistent with the concept of humility in a traditional speaker, while acknowledging the importance of making a good impression through dress.

Another interviewee addressed the issue of gestures. She stated that a good speaker used his or her hands a lot when talking "to express or emphasize their point". She noted that the use of a lot of hand gestures is something that a lot of Native people do but that a good speaker would use these gestures to emphasize certain points.

Standing up so that an audience could see and hear the speaker clearly was another point brought up by one of the interviewees. He stated that standing up showed respect for the audience.

Finally, two interviewees noted that being positive was a hallmark of a good speaker. A good speaker could make everyone in the audience feel good about their presence there and what the future would hold for them by their words of encouragement and optimism. One interviewee stated that a traditional L/N/Dakota speaker did not use negativity but focused on how to 'get back on track' with positive ways. As opposed to a good speaker who made people feel good with his or her words, a bad speaker created disharmony among the People.

The qualitative interviews not only yielded verbal validation for the proposed criteria, as well as the additional criterion, of a L/N/Dakota speaker, but revealed much of the exact behaviors under discussion. In perhaps the most interesting aspect of the interviews, each of the speakers exhibited many of the criteria as they were being interviewed including using a formal introduction, acknowledging another viewpoint and responding indirectly, listening as a basis for speaking, use of humor, and use of storytelling.

Each of the interviewees used somewhat of a formal introduction when speaking. Most of the interviewees discussed their personal background, including where they grew up and their extended relatives, during the initial part of the interview. Several of the interviewees shook hands formally at the beginning of the interview (although they were familiar with the researcher). All of them mentioned either parents, grandparents or other



older extended relatives in the course of the conversation and attributed knowledge to them.

In the course of the conversations, several of the interviewees also exhibited the behavior of acknowledging another viewpoint and responding indirectly. Some of interviewees acknowledged their Western educational backgrounds (e.g. formal schooling and/or degrees achieved) and stated that these are “good to know” but later reminisced about the importance of their own cultural heritage and knowing traditional ways. One interviewee talked about the reality of living in two worlds:

We have our rez life and we have our off-rez life. Long ago, we staked ourselves in battle. We have to do that now in life. We have to stake ourselves to this life and stand up to it. We’re not assertive people by nature but we have to learn to be that way in the non-Indian world. Then when we need to get back to ourselves, we come home. Then we get the solitude that is important to us as Native people.  
(personal interview, 2006)

The interviewees each exhibited behavior that illustrated listening as a basis for speaking as well. This included sharing stories they had heard as young people and knowing the reasons for certain behaviors. They also illustrated listening as a basis for speaking by their non-verbal behavior. As they were being asked the formal interview questions, they would often assume the same posture: cross their arms, lean back, close their eyes or stare off into space. None of the interviewees looked directly at the interviewer during the interviews; if they did, it was only intermittently. The interviewees took several minutes to think about the question asked before answering and several of them asked questions for clarification before answering.

Finally, the interviewees all exhibited humor and storytelling throughout the interviews. All of the interviewees told a story at some point during the interview to illustrate a point they were making. Every interviewee also made a joke, told a joke, made a joking reference to themselves, teased the interviewer or relatives of the interviewer, or told a funny story during the course of the interview.

In reviewing the criteria set forth by the research project, it is evident that a majority of them held true as indicators of traditional L/N/Dakota orators. The major criteria were spoken of by a majority of the group. And, while some of the other elements of a good speaker mentioned by interviewees did not warrant inclusion in the final analysis because of their infrequency (with the exception of the listening as a basis for speaking criterion), they offered insight into and support for other criteria. The frequency in which the criteria were mentioned is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of Criteria.

Criteria:	Frequency:
Acknowledgement of viewpoint	100%
Responding indirectly	100%
Non-confrontational delivery	100%
Utilization of <i>ikce wicasa</i>	100%
Storytelling	100%
Use of humor	100%
Listening as a basis for speaking	93%
Formal introduction	86%
Formal conclusion	57%
Simplicity	43%
Spirituality	43%
Honesty	36%



## Quantitative Research Findings

The quantitative research findings supported the presence of the components of the L/N/Dakota model of oratory. The evaluators completed and submitted their written evaluations in a timely manner and expressed their interest in the line of inquiry. Each of the criteria will be discussed individually to determine any inconsistencies, irregularities or underlying assumptions made by evaluators.

*Criterion One.* The presence of a formal introduction was noted in a fairly consistent manner. There were ambiguities, however, in two instances. In one video recording, the speaker was introduced by an emcee with a formal biography that consisted of many of the criteria established as a formal L/N/Dakota introduction (e.g. Indian name, community in which the speaker grew up, etc.). The two Tribal evaluators noted that the criterion was not met. The two non-Tribal evaluators indicated that, although those aspects of the formal introduction were not met, the criterion also included a formal expression of gratitude to the audience for being there and listening that was present. In the same manner, a second instance occurred in which the two Tribal evaluators noted that the formal introduction criterion was not met because of the absence of introduction of self while the two non-Tribal evaluators noted that the speaker utilized prayer, formal thanks and reference to family background.

*Criterion Two.* All evaluators were consistent with this criterion.

*Criterion Three.* All evaluators were consistent with this criterion.

*Criterion Four.* In this instance, the only inconsistency was with a coder who provided a “not applicable” response while the other three agreed with the criterion. The evaluator in this case was one of the non-Tribal members.



*Criterion Five.* In this criterion, all were in agreement except in one instance. In this instance, the disagreement was between two cross-culture coders. Two cross-culture coders saw an absence of “arguing” and affirmed the criterion while the two other cross-culture coders indicated “not applicable”. The coders who indicated “not applicable” stated that they did not see any instances in which there was opposition to another way of thinking.

*Criterion Six.* This criterion produced the most disparity of all the criteria. In 80% of the cases, there was disagreement between coders. Surprisingly, however, the disparities were not cultural. Both Tribal and non-Tribal coders disagreed to the same extent.

*Criterion Seven.* In this criterion, there was only one instance of disagreement. This area of disagreement was with the written text, however, and can be explained by the differences in reading as opposed to watching live recorded performances.

*Criterion Eight.* The criteria provided a few instances of disagreement. However, one example of a recorded performance was cut off and this may have led to some confusion as to the actual conclusion.

*Criterion Nine.* This criterion produced some disagreement between coders, although not much. In two cases, there was listed an absence of specific phrases that would clue the listener as to the criterion.

In conclusion, there appeared to be two major criteria that were a bit nebulous for coders. These included utilization of *ikce wicasa* and formal conclusion. The disparity between the coding of the *ikce wicasa* criterion may have occurred because of the broad sense in which the concept of *ikce wicasa* was understood. The disparity between the

agreement as to a formal conclusion could be attributed to the confusion related to the recording or to the fact that the formal conclusion is not utilized to the extent that it has been used historically. Follow-up research is needed to reveal these issues.

Table 3 indicates the frequency of agreement between coders on the various criteria. This table provides insight as to which areas were more nebulous than others:

Table 3. Frequency of Agreement.

Criteria:	Frequency:
Formal introduction	60%
Acknowledgement of viewpoint	100%
Listening as a basis for speaking	100%
Not 'arguing'	60%
Responding indirectly	80%
Utilization of <i>ikce wicasa</i>	20%
Use of humor	80%
Storytelling	60%
Formal conclusion	40%

## CHAPTER X

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While the implications for this line of inquiry have been discussed in regard to the benefit they may provide to Tribes and Tribal individuals, it is also necessary to discuss some of the advantages these research findings portend and the issues related to their elucidation. The primary advantage includes the development of a “language of respect” that would necessarily help all human beings as our world continually connects us, yet isolates us. The issues related to this include developing a language of respect given our growing dependence on communications technology and our burgeoning awareness of the role of the Other, including gender issues. While, as will be discussed, the role of gender is not as pronounced for certain American Indian peoples, it nevertheless deserves additional mention.

#### Language of Respect

The notions of communication described here are admittedly culture-bound in their understanding of the role and purpose of communication. For Native Americans, communication is based on the fundamental cultural value of respect and harmony. Since most Indigenous groups in the North American continent were egalitarian and democratic, the language used to facilitate this type of structure was necessarily based on mutual respect, negotiation and relationship-building.

The various aspects of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory are grounded in a language of respect. This language of respect is characterized by humility, consensus (the sharing



of “puzzle pieces”), relationship and spirituality. The aspect of the model calling for a formal introduction, for example, answers the initial “Who are you?” question that arises when two human beings first come into contact. Rather than forcing another person to ask the “Who are you?” question, a formal introduction seeks to place the orator in a particular context and give the listener a sense of the identity and nature of the speaker. Thus, the mainstream Western-based practice of introducing self in the context of work is sometimes completely insufficient. The use of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory would allow others to gain a more personal view of their co-workers, colleagues and subordinates. In fact, in various cultural awareness trainings that I have facilitated, I have used this introduction strategy and many non-Native people, after the initial discomfort, actually prefer the personal manner of introduction. When individuals come to know each other on a personal level and make a connection with another, they are more likely to treat them in a courteous and respectful manner. Thus, a L/N/Dakota model of oratory would facilitate respect among all human beings.

Other aspects of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory – storytelling and use of humor, for example – also help illuminate the identity of a speaker but assist the listener in making an internal connection through shared experiences as well. As the speaker relates his story or joke, the listener is not a *tabula rasa* who is passively accepting this story. Quite the contrary, the listener is recalling similar experiences and connecting to the speaker through the recollection of these shared experiences (or, on the other hand, recognizing a lack of connection). This personal connection is critical in a world that is becoming increasingly disconnected through the use of electronic media.

Acknowledging another viewpoint, responding indirectly and a non-confrontational delivery style are also hallmarks of the language of respect. These structural language patterns ensured that an individual did not elicit animosity or confrontation but rather established a foundation upon which to build consensus. In truly democratic societies, this foundation was far more advantageous than a foundation of dialectic or coercion/persuasion. This type of communication is becoming increasingly important in the context of globalization. Acknowledging another viewpoint, responding indirectly and a non-confrontational delivery style are effective strategies for interrelating with cultures that are often very different from American culture. These components, formulated as they are in this manuscript, have the potential to be much more effective as a strategy than the mere tips and techniques currently used to facilitate multicultural and multinational interactions.

The concept of *ikce wicasa* can also be helpful in this regard. *Ikce wicasa* is a term used to denote the commonality of all human beings. The verbal acknowledgement and recognition of the concept of being “common” men and women forged humility as a basis for speaking. Humility – recognizing we are all essentially of the same value to the earth and to each other – builds upon the foundation of consensus. Humility allows individuals to concede their equality rather than basing a relationship on unequal distributions of power (e.g. one up, one down).

Finally, a facet of a L/N/Dakota model of oratory that also denotes a language of respect is the use of a formal conclusion. The formal conclusion reduces the instances of impolite interruptions or questions that distract the speaker from his or her train of thought. A formal conclusion is a verbal cue that supports politeness in communication.



The existence of a model for a language of respect may be especially helpful when considering the type of unconstructive behavior that is common to much of today's public discourse: people clamoring for attention, interrupting, trying to "one up" another; people talking *over* rather than *to*, discounting or denigrating others' opinions; people who think about their own responses before truly internalizing or understanding another point of view. These behaviors are antithetical to this notion of communication.

Such a model may also be especially prescient as our world becomes more technologically oriented and human-to-human interaction becomes less common. Ong (1982) asserts the written word has restructured our consciousness as a society and has created discourse which cannot be questioned or contested as it has been detached from its author. After absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before (Ong, 1982). This immortalization of words renders them "inhuman". Ong notes that Plato's early objections to writing parallel 'Luddite' objections to technology; like writing, technology destroys memory and pretends "to establish outside the mind what in reality can be only in the mind". A L/N/Dakota model of oratory, on the other hand, seeks to elucidate the value of relationships inherent in communication acts.

In the Native conception of communication, establishing and building relationships is viewed as an internal-external process of communication. Communicating is an inherently 'human' act that may be facilitated through the use of communication tools but does not replace it; in other words, the medium is *not* the message.

With the advent of such paradigmatic shifts in thinking about the world as Frederick Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* in 1913, however, the view of



world-as-machine became ubiquitous. Using this paradigm as a framework, the Shannon-Weaver model of communication was developed in 1949. Coinciding with the development and proliferation of the various communications technologies (e.g. telephone, radio, etc.), the basic Shannon-Weaver model of communication became the fundamental understanding of the human communication process as well. Figure 10 illustrates the basic Shannon-Weaver model:

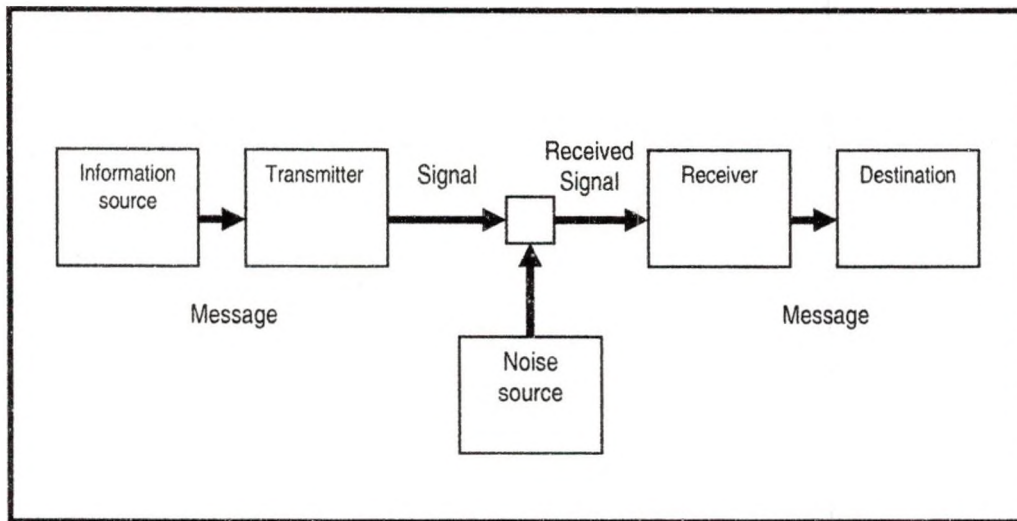


Figure 10. Shannon-Weaver Model.

This model exemplifies the emphasis on the form of the message rather than the internal process which creates a message. As this model was integrated into the mainstream understanding of communication, the emphasis of 'making meaning' shifted to the outward flows of communication and the process of 'making messages'. As the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* notes, "variations on this transmission model, whether simplistic or sophisticated, still typify everyday thinking and much of the academic literature about communication" (Sloane, p. 125). Although this emphasis is shifting to

more constitutive models within the arena of communication studies, the influence of the Shannon-Weaver model is still evident in many ways.

#### Other Issues to Explore: Technology

Since the quintessential clash of cultures between the Old World and the New World in 1492, the Indigenous people of the North American continent have struggled with a near constant state of change. The rapid influx of new tools and objects created both amazement and consternation. While the new tools made life easier in many ways, the wisdom of such technology was questioned by the more traditionally grounded individuals. Indeed, historical accounts tell us that some bands of L/N/Dakota would not allow the use of New World items such as metal pots and trade beads, citing the destruction of their way of life.

Today, the advancement of technology has created the same dilemma in Native American communities with regard to communication issues. The rapid rate of change has only accelerated. This has created new states of amazement and consternation while the questioning of the use of new technology has remained. A well-known Native American adage, often attributed to Sitting Bull, states that if you see something that is good on the white man's road, pick it up and keep it. If you see something that is bad, drop it and leave it alone. Native Americans, in many respects, continue to struggle with the question of whether something is good or bad for the Native community. Critical questions that are asked in Tribal communities often relate back to the central question of "Is it good for the People?" These questions include: Will the "new" benefit and improve Native way of life or will it lead to its destruction? More importantly, can these new

tools be used effectively to perpetuate and sustain way of life rather than taking away? If so, how?

Telecommunications technology—broadly defined to include telephone, videoconferencing, computer networking, information systems, multimedia, radio/TV, and the like—offers considerable potential to help Native Americans reestablish and strengthen their cultures (U.S. Congress, 1995). Indeed, many reports on the status of telecommunications technology have indicated that Native Americans' use of technology is primarily for the purpose of strengthening cultural values and language while helping maintain traditional way of life.

Unfortunately, telecommunications and technology use in Tribal communities is lacking. The lack of telecommunications technology in Native communities is currently being addressed by many individual Tribes as well as by federal and private organization initiatives. However, there remains some substantial barriers to the development of technology infrastructure that include lack of a strong economic base that inhibits private investment and skills development; geographical remoteness and terrain which raises the cost of providing technology infrastructure; *Native distrust of new technologies* and federal assistance; lack of a comprehensive, integrated, interagency Native American technology infrastructure investment strategy; federal policy that fails to consider the severity of the technology gap faced by Native Americans; inadequate information on the part of Native Americans regarding opportunities and assistance available; and insufficient strategic planning by tribes (Riley, et al., 2000; emphasis added).



As the digital divide is being bridged, however, the issue of technology impacting the cultural way of life for Native Americans, as well as all Americans, remains. As the prominent American Indian author and scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., (1979) notes:

...[In] harnessing electricity to our machines, and particularly in inventing new forms of communication, we have created a situation in which the world comes to us as an organic unity, and it comes instantaneously, binding the various human societies into a Tribal, or village, situation. The result of this instantaneous media-connected world is the destruction of our old patterns of interpreting data. We can no longer categorize, separate, and intellectualize about our experiences. We can simply perceive the larger picture that confronts us and attempt to come to grips with it. Thus we are speaking of perception as a means of gathering knowledge about the world. We can no longer derive concepts that will explain the world to us, for the world moves too fast. We must perceive situations in a total experience in order to make sense of our lives. (p. 112)

This new way of looking at the world in a holistic manner is one that is inherently Native. Thus, the issue for most Native American individuals and Tribes is not how to adapt our lives to the new technology but how to use the “tool” of technology to maintain and affirm our cultural worldview, values and way of life. This is especially critical given the views of communication and the purpose of communicating.

Wildcat (2001) suggests that Tribal worldviews have always viewed technology as a part of the function of human beings. In fact, he cites “human ability to manipulate environmental elements to compensate for our physiological awkwardness” as the trait that sets us apart from the animal kingdom (p. 72). Today, what he calls the TC<sup>3</sup> formula

– the integration of technology, community, communication and culture – instead are often compartmentalized; researched and discussed within various disciplines as if they bear no relationship to each other. As both Wildcat and Deloria note (2001), this compartmentalization leads to a natural and social forgetfulness about how these elements are related. This, in turn, has led many in Western society to instead view tool-making and tool-using as a sign of (false) superiority. For example, they note that the Western scientific community has neglected to identify and classify the ecological niche of human beings in the world and, as a result, equate making life easy through technology with progress or marks of civilization. In a quintessentially Native view, the development of technology is not necessarily an indicator of progress.

Native American people, for the most part, view technology as any other tool. Tools were made to make life easier for human beings not so that they could amass material wealth and have more “toys” but so that they could focus on the truly important aspects of life – taking care of relatives and have-nots, prayer and development of the spiritual aspect of self, and learning inner self-control.

Although Native American Tribal nations are also using telecommunications technology to aid in economic development, the primary uses are for social and cultural affirmation. In *Telecommunications Technology and Native Americans: Opportunities and Challenges*, the first federal government report on Native American telecommunications prepared at the request of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, the importance of telecommunications as it relates to the perpetuation of Native cultural way of life is acknowledged in the first chapter:



It [telecommunications technology] offers new opportunities to save endangered Native languages, including traditional stories and histories, and to perpetuate language with new educational software and greater opportunities to converse with other Native speakers. Using telecommunications, cultural information (including art, songs, stories, dances, research findings, genealogies, and historical interpretations) can be easily shared and distributed among rural and metropolitan Native American communities. It also allows Native Americans, as individuals or through institutions, to broaden public awareness of their cultures. (U.S. Congress, 1995)

This process of integrating communities and digital technology for the preservation of way of life allows Native communities to exercise true sovereignty. No longer is the power to “tell our story” in the hands of non-Native government, sociologists, anthropologists and other researchers. With digital technology, Tribes have the ability to generate and disseminate their own societal knowledge. Indeed, many federally-recognized Tribes have already undertaken the task of creating Tribal websites that contain far more extensive and culturally-grounded Tribal histories than any non-Native-written-and-printed resources. This provides not only Tribal members with information heretofore unacknowledged but also provides non-Natives with a more extensive knowledge based on oral tradition that is normally excluded from established academia. This process has been beneficial and cathartic for Tribal peoples. For economically and socially marginalized communities to have the opportunity to recount and preserve their histories is a basic way of raising their self-esteem and is a fundamental part of the conquest of citizenship (Worcman, 2002).



The dangers of using technology to perpetuate culture, however, are just as great as the opportunities. One such danger was described in a *Telecommunications*

*Technology and Native Americans: Opportunities and Challenges* report:

While sharing cultural material may help broaden public awareness, it also could work against the promotion of Native American cultures if the material were non-authentic. The ease of transmitting and manipulating digitized material using telecommunication technologies could exacerbate ongoing cultural problems, such as: 1) continuation of negative stereotypes of Native peoples; 2) non-Native Americans posing as spiritual leaders and elders in public forums; and 3) the difficulty of protecting sacred information, such as sacred sites of worship and rituals, from both the general public and unauthorized community members.

(U.S. Congress, 1995)

The unfortunate reality many tribes are currently observing is the proliferation of “wannabes” on Native American websites, the fabrication of new Internet “tribes” such as the “Rainbow Bear Clan of the High Rise Penthouse Cherokees”, and the rise of on-line “shaman” courses so the Average Joe can conduct traditional Native ceremonies for the low, low price of \$59.95. These problems, however, existed prior to new telecommunications technologies and are not new in substance so much as in form.

Another danger communications technology poses for Native communities is the supplanting of personal relationships with technological ones. Many elders tell stories of days when Native American families would travel for days by wagon or train to stay with friends and relatives in another community. These pilgrimages were made for the purposes of strengthening the bonds of relationship, discussing pertinent issues affecting

family and community, spiritual renewal and, not to mention, plain old catching up on gossip. Today, the telephone and Internet have replaced the need to travel for many days to visit extended relatives or friends. However, neither does one actually commune with another person over the Internet or telephone. Rather, we “talk to” a piece of plastic or a LCD computer screen. This lack of actual human interaction is a real danger to Native way of life for Native people believe that human communication is more than just a sharing of words. When communicating, human beings share more than mere sounds and syllables. Communication is an act of sharing power with one another. Cooper (1998) states that “speaking, singing, shouting, gesturing, staring, and other forms of expression allowed *potential* energy to become *kinetic* energy” (p. 30). They share their “sacred breath”; the power they have to form community. Depending on the occasion, “communication could be seen as a transforming, transferring, unleashing, or sharing of power, whether destructive or creative” (Cooper, p. 30).

Thus, it is not only important for the Native American community to fully comprehend the uses and dangers of communications technology, it is also important for all people to come to a new understanding and respect for the world and our roles in it. Wildcat (2001) uses the term “technological homelessness” to describe the phenomenon of over-emphasizing technology or using technology for material/economic purposes alone at the expense of communicating with one another. Technology, says Wildcat, must co-exist with humanity to provide a sense of place. In other words, the medium must not become the message. Says Wildcat (2001):

[A]s we disengage technology from communities (which include plants, animals, and geographic/geologic features) with a sense of place, and thereby create



cultures and forms of communication that are relatively abstract, we unconsciously destroy conditions for our human survival... (p. 76)

In his book, *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations*, author Jerry Mander (1991) provides an antithetical and controversial perspective to America's fascination with, dependence upon, and use of technology. He bases his assertions on the history and understandings of Native people, as well as his research in working with Tribal communities. In the chapter "Indians are Different from Americans", Mander asserts that most historic cultures – including those that were "Western" in orientation – believed that the Earth was a living thing and parallels the Native American adage of "what is above is also below":

They believed that the Earth was a being, with skin, soul, and organs. The skin was the soil, the soul was contained within the rocks and bones of the dead, the organs included rivers (the bloodstream) and the wind (lungs). Such categories were not meant as metaphors. Earth was alive; we lived upon it as millions of tiny microorganisms live on human skin. (p. 211)

The advent of the age of scientific revolution, however, reduced the earth and all corresponding aspects of life to "a dead thing, a machine". Thus, communication was no longer a part of our sacred being. And the function of communication shifted from being a way of connecting to a way of getting what we want (via persuasion), such as material wealth, creature comforts and power.

Mander also postulates a comparison between what he terms *technological peoples* and *Native peoples* in their "tendencies" that are relevant to this discussion. For example, under the category of "sociocultural arrangement and demographics", he notes



that for technological peoples, history is written in books and portrayed in television docudramas; for Native peoples, history is transmitted through oral tradition and carried through memory. Under the religion and philosophy category, Mander notes that technological peoples “gain most information from media, schools, authority figures outside their immediate community or experience” while Native peoples “gain information from personal experiences” (p. 219). This discussion reiterates the differences in fundamental worldviews that have impacted our individual views of communication.

Mander goes on to utilize the political and governmental forms of Native peoples to make further assertions regarding these fundamental differences. In particular, he notes the concept of rule without coercion. He points to the work of French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, who noted that “What qualifies a man to be chief is his technical competence, his oratorical talent, his expertise as a hunter, his ability to coordinate ... and in no circumstance does the tribe allow the technical superiority to change into a political authority” (p. 228). Mander cites his own personal experience with Indian tribes not only to confirm the absence of coercion but also to illustrate the deliberately slower pace of communication used by Indian tribes, and to further explicate the negative consequences of high-speed communication technologies on these traditional ways of communicating. He recalls an instance in which he met with a group of traditional religious Hopi leaders (*kikmongwis*) to ask permission to make a film about strip-mining on sacred Hopi lands. He states that, although he expected to get a quick reply as he would in the mainstream world,

I experienced a meeting unlike any I'd ever been part of before. The first half of the meeting lasted all morning, during which the *kikmongwis* (there were ten present) sat in a circle engaging in a very slow conversation, in Hopi. My translator, without revealing exactly what was being said, told me in general terms that they were discussing previous experiences with white outsiders who had come to them with projects, and how the issue was viewed from the perspective of Hopi teachings. It wasn't until midday that I was able to speak. I delivered my proposal in a well-organized snappy fashion, which took about twenty minutes. For the next several hours, the Hopi elders continued to discuss the matter in Hopi. It was the *style* of their discourse that amazed me, even more than the duration. Each speaker spoke in quiet, modulated tones, punctuated by very long silences. Meanwhile, the others sat very still, often with their eyes closed. Sometimes they seemed to be asleep, but I have since realized, from several such experiences with Indians, that there is among oral cultures a unique way of listening and remembering. They were not asleep; they were alert in a way that was difficult for me to see. Most of all, I was astonished that no speaker attempted to use any degree of persuasion on any other, except insofar as they expressed their own understanding of Hopi teachings on the matter at hand. It seemed to me to be a process of peeling away layers of consideration until nothing but a clear agreement remained. (p. 244)

Mander's epiphany illustrates the value of a L/N/Dakota (and, as well, other tribes') model of oratory. He advocates for a view of technology as tool that is used by humans rather than as a mechanical juggernaut using humans. Only through this shift in

perspective can humans reclaim meaningful human-to-human interactions and move away from blind self-destruction. In his reflections, Mander comes to the conclusion that Native people are best-equipped to deal with the rapid pace of technology. In quoting a young Menominee woman, Mander illustrates this important point:

The traditional Indian people are protecting something that is important for everyone. They are trying to keep the land alive, and the world in balance. Sometimes I get the feeling that you [non-Native America] don't really get the point. You are not really helping us. We are helping you. (p. 224)

#### Other Issues to Explore: Gender

Another aspect of this research that bears further scrutiny is the impact of colonization and assimilation on oratory and gender roles in Native society. The process of colonization that occurred as Native American tribes were divested of land and resources in North America had a major impact on the changing role of Native women and their use of discourse. Theories about the colonization process and its impact on Native peoples assert that the role of Native men subverted by colonization has strengthened the role of Native women in contemporary society (Duran and Duran, 1995; Jamison, 2000).

Traditionally, Native men were the hunters and warriors, charged with providing food for the family and protecting the family from intruders. This role, however, changed dramatically during the reservation era when the U.S. army prevailed in subjugating Indian warriors and government Indian agents curtailed men's rights to hunt and instead provided rations to families. For women, however, the role of mother, wife



and keeper of the home remained essentially the same. The Native woman was not displaced to the degree that Native men were displaced.

We know that, historically, many Native American Tribal nations had “women’s” languages and “men’s” languages. Does that distinction persist today, even though we speak the universal English? Could it be manifested in different ways? Or are the rules of language tied more strongly to culture as opposed to gender? The answers to these questions need to be examined much more carefully through further research. Just as Indigenous peoples are losing traditional Native language speakers every day, so too are the cultural conventions which govern our communication interactions slowly eroding.

Most tribes were egalitarian, that is, Native women did have religious, political and economic power – not more than the men, but at least equal to men’s (Miheuah, 2003). In this view, the role of men and women had equity but were not equal. In other words, gender roles were not “better” or “worse”, they were just different. And each role, whether fulfilled by a male or a female, had validity and value to the Tribal group. Indeed, Native women have often described Native men and women as having relationships rather than roles within the universe and within society. This emphasis on relationships rather than defined and rigid roles is based on the Native worldview of the natural balance that men and women create in the universe.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) cites gendering as one of the indigenous research projects necessary for decolonization. She describes the issue thusly:

Colonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations which reached out across all spheres of indigenous society.

Family organization, child rearing, political and spiritual life, work and social

activities were all disordered by a colonial system which positioned its own women as the property of men with roles which were primarily domestic. Indigenous women across many different indigenous societies claim an entirely different relationship, one embedded in beliefs about the land and the universe, about the spiritual significance of women and about the collective endeavors that were required in the organization of society. Indigenous women would argue that their traditional roles included full participation in many aspects of political decision making and marked gender separations which were complementary in order to maintain harmony and stability. (p. 152)

Historically, Balgooyen (1968) describes the role of women as orators as very limited. Although it is difficult to know whether this was truly the case or if, as some assert, Euro-American anthropologists and historians were using their own cultural lens through which to view women, Balgooyen is one of the few commentators who asserts that women “also figured prominently in public address”, but adds the caveat that “the opportunities were not equal to those of men” (p. 21). He observes that, for women, the most acceptable public speaking role was in urging warriors to fight bravely on those occasions when they prepared for war and raiding. In addition, while he acknowledges the role of the “White Buffalo Woman” [White Buffalo Calf Pipe Woman] as a central messenger to the L/N/Dakota people, he also notes that:

There were restrictions placed upon women speaking in public, with the exception of an occasional woman warrior or strong medicine woman. A woman could not speak in public who held no position at all in the tribe, and no woman was



seriously listened to unless she was virtuous and chaste according to the standards of the tribe. (p. 21)

Like most commentators, he does not consider – or, more likely, did not have access to – some of the occasions during which women might present orations among themselves. Perhaps such occasions – women’s societies and ceremonies – were fertile ground for the development of women’s orations. The lack of documentation of this possibility has made it difficult, if not impossible, to know the true extent of women’s roles as orators. Thus, some of what currently serves as a framework for understanding the role of gender in communication is supposition. Many of the current hypotheses regarding the role of Native women as orators is supported by the remnants of oral traditions found deep in Tribal communities and cultural understandings that have survived the onslaught of assimilation.

However, with regard to communication and discourse in contemporary Tribal societies, it is a common assertion that the impact of culture often transcends the impact of gender. Especially in the realm of oratory, Native men and Native women adhere to Tribal cultural norms before mainstream societal gender norms. Some research has indicated that there are more commonalities between male and female Native public speakers than between Native and non-Native speakers. In an interesting study conducted in Canada with First Nations college students (Fiordo, 1985), one researcher advocated a bicultural approach to teaching speech communication because of the cultural differences of speech presentation by Native students versus non-Native students. In that study, 400 male/female and Native/non-Native students in basic speech communication classes were scored according to such criteria as volume, rate,



articulation, vocal quality, vocal variety and pause. Findings indicated that Native students tended to speak in comparatively lower sounds, usually with dialect differences affecting articulation and pronunciation. Findings also illustrated that the rate utilized by Native speakers was usually a comfortable pace in comparison with that of non-Native speakers, who tended to have a more rapid delivery style. Finally, findings suggested that Native speakers tended to limit their vocal variety more than non-Natives, while pausing more effectively and maintaining a soothing vocal quality throughout.

While the findings of this study pertained to the teaching of basic speech communication courses at a university level, the ramifications also suggest a cultural differentiation of speaking style that pertains to the topic at hand. The study group consisted of both male and female subjects and no significant differences were marked within that group while the differences between cultural groups were substantial.

As discussed, it appears that the cultural norms of some traditional Native tribes transcend the emphasis on contemporary gender roles in matters of public speaking while others may continue to emphasize a gender distinction (e.g. Blackfoot). This phenomenon appears to be a result of the effects of the colonization and subsequent decolonization process experienced in many Native American Tribal communities. Some of the Native American (as well as other minority) resistance to mainstream notions of feminism has resulted in a reclaiming of the emphasis on traditional Tribal balanced reciprocity rather than hierarchical and gendered structures. While this approach is certainly not entirely pervasive or representative of all Tribal communities, it does represent a significant movement in Indian Country. A line of inquiry into this phenomenon would be especially fascinating and timely.

## Using the Findings

It is envisioned that a L/N/Dakota model of oratory could be used in four major ways. Each of these ways builds on the previous and serves to strengthen the overall purpose of the model.

The first manner in which a L/N/Dakota model of oratory could be used is to reclaim cultural ways that have been ignored for many years. During the course of the field interviews, one interviewee stated emphatically that, “even though Native people use the English language, those who have grown up in the ways of the People still use the same approaches when speaking” (personal interview, 2006). Thus, a model of L/N/Dakota oratory can assist in identifying uniquely cultural practices that can be reclaimed within the English language. This is a new area of cultural awareness that has been discussed little within the various disciplines and could open doors for further valuable research and public discourse.

The second way in which a L/N/Dakota model of oratory can be used is to articulate an alternative model of oratory. The model can contribute to public scholarship and offer alternatives for Native Americans who struggle with modern public speaking practices. Such a model could articulate a L/N/Dakota way of oratory as a different way as opposed to labeling the specific strategies and techniques as “miscommunication”, as is often the case. In addition, a L/N/Dakota model could also encourage other Tribal Nations to begin examining their own cultural practices for models.

The third way in which a L/N/Dakota model of oratory could be used is to provide an alternative model as a basis for textbooks in basic speech courses in high schools and colleges. Many Native American students struggle with speech courses in



high school and colleges/universities because the model they've been exposed to (e.g. the L/N/Dakota model) is incongruent with the modern, Greco-Roman based model currently taught in high schools and colleges/universities. By offering this alternative model, students could have options for presenting public oratory that are more familiar and comfortable. This could also lead to more of a willingness to try established models when it is presented as "another" way as opposed to the "only" way.

Finally, a L/N/Dakota model of oratory could be used to offer alternatives to multicultural students in high schools and colleges as well. Those various cultural groups whose values are reflective of L/N/Dakota values would also be comfortable using the model as an alternative way of conducting public speaking.

#### Conclusion

As with most research projects, the conclusion is that the subject matter bears further research. Ideally, this project would be extended significantly to include not only more interviews but more speaker observation opportunities as well. The project could also be extended geographically to include subjects from the Sioux (L/N/Dakota) reservations in South Dakota (Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, Rosebud Indian Reservation, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Yankton Indian Reservation, Lower Brule Indian Reservation, Crow Creek Indian Reservation) as well as the two located in North and South Dakota (Standing Rock Indian Reservation and the Lake Traverse Indian Reservation of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate).

This project will also continue in a manner that is culturally appropriate with respect to research issues. Harala and colleagues (2005) discuss the importance of collaborating with Tribal communities in any given research project. In this regard, this



paper will be taken to the Tribal communities of origin for assessment and validation. This collaborative process not only seeks to confirm findings but also seeks to build trust in the research process in Native communities.

One final critical insight that came from an elder interviewed was that the study of speaking should not be compartmentalized. Like much of L/N/Dakota life, one aspect alone cannot be extracted and studied to the exclusion of other aspects of life. The study of communication, then, must necessarily account for spirituality and education and history and leadership and all else that cuts across the boundaries of meaning. Perhaps this insight will help guide further research in this new and exciting arena.

*Pidamaya. Hecitu yelo.*

## APPENDICES

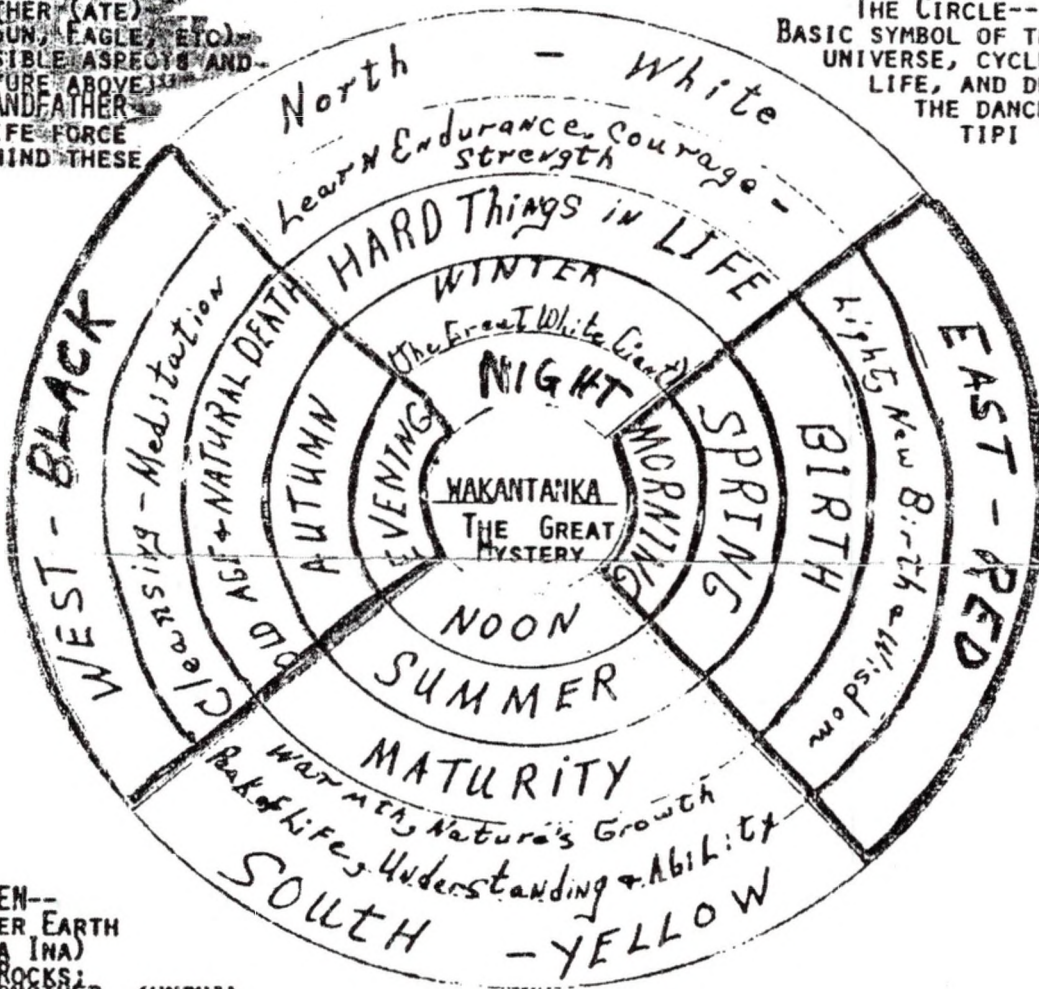
APPENDIX A

CYCLES OF LIFE IN THE LAKOTA RELIGION

BASED ON TAPE RECORDING BY ARTHUR AMIOTTE  
(OGLALA) AT SPICE PROGRAM, BROOKINGS, SD JULY 1970

BLUE HEAVENS  
FATHER (ATE)  
(SUN, EAGLE, ETC.)  
VISIBLE ASPECTS AND  
NATURE ABOVE  
GRANDFATHER  
-LIFE FORCE  
BEHIND THESE

UNITE IV  
THE CIRCLE--  
BASIC SYMBOL OF THE  
UNIVERSE, CYCLES OF  
LIFE, AND DEATH,  
THE DANCE, THE  
TIPI



GREEN--  
MOTHER EARTH  
(MAKA INA)  
AND ROCKS:  
GRANDMOTHER - (UNCHI)

THE LIFE FORCE THAT MAKES THE PLANTS GROW  
AND PUTS THE CYCLES INTO MOTION.



APPENDIX B

Oration by Mr. Thomas "Tommy" Christian  
March 2006  
United Tribes Technical College  
Bismarck, North Dakota

1 *Hau mitakuyapi miha waste anpetu ki le micante*

2 *Ikce wicasa*

3 Sounds like Dances with Wolves aye? Sounds kind of cool, I like that, but what I said,  
4 what I said, what I shared with you was, uh, I welcome you here this morning. On this  
5 day I am going to speak to you from my heart. I offer you all my hand. My name is  
6 Eagle Claw, that's who I am; I am just a common man, I don't know anything and if you  
7 will pity me by listening to me real good, I'd really appreciate that so... that's what I said  
8 in my language.

9 *A lakota he maca dokayeya.*

10 I am an Indian first. And in that respect, that is not a racist statement. What that helps us  
11 understand is the importance as such things as what we are he today to speak about and  
12 that's The Encounter. I am an Indian first, and I say that not from an ethnocentric  
13 attitude but one of as an individual. What I share with you in that respect is that every  
14 decision I make, all the things that I do, all the attitudes that I have, come from a cultural  
15 orientation which is Lakota, and that's what I've been taught, that's what I believe and  
16 that's who I am. It affords us an opportunity to look at life in many different perspectives  
17 and be afforded the right of our own integrity as we look towards life. And from that,  
18 that comes from a more spiritual concept and anything and that's what we are. I am not a  
19 religious man, I am not a holy man and I'm not a medicine man. I am not a medicine  
20 man because I don't have a white wife. Cha! No, I'm teasing. If I was a really good  
21 medicine man, I would have two white wives.

22 *Wasica wiyan pi a Mastercard wacin.*

23 My uncle, help me out, I want to white woman because I want a Mastercard [laughs].  
24 We tease like that in our culture. It's not to be degrading or anything like that but to help  
25 us understand the importance of this balance that we aspire to as First nations people.  
26 I don't know what the politically correct term to refer to myself is other than a Lakota.  
27 I'm Assiniboine and I'm Sioux. My mother is a Lakota so I speak my mother's language

28 and try to do that as respectfully as I can. And in regards to that, it's important for us to  
29 understand that some of the protocol, some of the dogma that we are involved in  
30 throughout our life is so diverse, not necessarily from tribe to tribe but from sometimes  
31 from clan to clan from family to family and even from individual to individual and we  
32 need to understand that. That's why I am involved with The Encounter: to help us to  
33 realize there are many different venues in which we can express ourselves. For myself, I  
34 am an accomplished dancer, powwow dancer. I don't know, some of you may know of  
35 me. That one photographer that was here recognized me from the powwow here. I won  
36 the seniors adult men's traditional contest here this past year. I'm 53 years old and so I  
37 dance with the old guys but I don't act like an old guy. I'm trying to be young, I'm going  
38 through a change in life [laughs]. No I'm not. I'm just a typical little Indian boy from the  
39 rez and I think this opportunity to help others understand the importance of being Indian  
40 in 2006 is really important. So I'm using what I have learned and what I have taken to a  
41 standard that most people can't attain because I don't drink, I don't do drugs, I don't do  
42 alcohol. I do smoke cigarettes and I do chase women. Cha! I'm teasing. I'm a warrior.  
43 *Akicita hemeyelo*. I've got about six wives. [laughs]  
44 And I say that, you know, with some sense of jovialness because long ago a lot of our  
45 warriors had many different wives. But you say that now and, people, their first thought  
46 goes right to sexual, aye. That's not the case at all. Long ago we had that because if you  
47 had like six or seven wives, what that said was you were a fierce provider, aye, you were  
48 a good hunter. You could provide for that many families. A lot of the times, those  
49 families were taken on because your brother's had passed away so you took on his  
50 family. So that's just some of the differences and some of the thoughts I would like you  
51 to think about as it relates to Humanities. Some of the differences that existed long ago  
52 but don't exist now. But yet, some of those practical experiences of Indian men now  
53 days as a result of oppression, suppression and depression, we have come to understand  
54 the importance of having to say these things. And so I say those things with a sense of  
55 jocularly just for the sake of them being said in public and not just me and Robert talking  
56 about how much we enjoy women [laughs]. No I'm teasing.  
57 It's important that we do these things and, again, I think it helps us to understand that  
58 every one of us in spite of our culture, in spite of our legacies that were choosing to



59 pursue, that we have an opportunity to share some of these things from a perspective of  
60 being Indian. The Encounter involves ballet. You are not going to see me in leotards and  
61 a tutu and running around like some gay guy. And they're not all gay I swear. Not all of  
62 them... [laughs]. But it's a form of expression, it's an art that takes a lot of discipline in  
63 order to partake and involve yourself in something like ballet. That's the experiences that  
64 I've had. But even more than that, it's an opportunity for them to say something without  
65 having to talk. They interpret it with the music through this ability to keep time and they  
66 tell their story. Well, that's the same thing that I do as a traditional dancer. I am out  
67 there keeping time with to the heartbeat of our Mother Earth and telling a story. A lot of  
68 people don't look at it like that. They think it's just out there keeping time and having all  
69 these feathers on and this paint and all that good stuff. They don't understand the  
70 importance of how much it helps me and it's very therapeutic in its value. Because I  
71 have an opportunity to express myself. Although I articulate with some sense of  
72 eloquence in a loquacious manner. It sounds cool, huh? Well I really sound like a white  
73 guy now [laughs]. But it gives me an opportunity to do that in a manner in which again  
74 comes from a cultural orientation. It helps me share my experiences as it relates to the  
75 pride that a feel being a Lakota, being an Indian and taking this opportunity in going to a  
76 powwow and sharing. And then people give you money for that and that's what's even  
77 cooler. I like that [laughs]. And even more than that, I shared with the last class; I don't  
78 feel I'm a good dancer, I don't feel that I really do the moves like some of the other  
79 champion dancers. I feel that what I do and what people see, they see how much I enjoy  
80 it, how much I get into it, how much it comes from the inside. That's why I'm involved  
81 with the Encounter. We're taking the initiative to go take these two venues, ballet and  
82 powwow dancing, and trying to meld them together to help people understand that just  
83 because we are so diverse doesn't mean we have to stay away from each other. We don't  
84 need to repel each other. We can bring these attitudes together and continue to share in a  
85 very good way. It doesn't have to be an Indian and white thing. It can be an art thing to  
86 where we come out and share these things. Not for ourselves as you will listen to Robert  
87 later on. We're not involved in this because we're going to make money. I come here  
88 last week. I've been here eight days in Bismarck. I stayed at a hotel, then I stayed at  
89 some old ladies house. God, that was hard. She's the typical white lady, aye. I went into  
90



91 her house. She's in Minneapolis. She said you can stay here and here's a bedroom. I  
92 went in there and it's so clean. I said "holy cripes". I didn't want to walk around, I  
93 couldn't sleep at night. I slept on her couch and I slept real still, got up in the morning,  
94 took a shower and wiped everything off. Real clean. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't get  
95 dressed and so they moved me over to Rusty's. And now I'm currently at Rusty  
96 Gillette's house. I can sleep; dogs running around. He's got a dog named J-Lo, that's real  
97 cool man. He's got a nice camp and treating me real well, so now I'm finally getting  
98 some rest.

99 We're here and we're not doing this for money we're doing this because we feel it's an  
100 opportunity for us based on these two venues and this very fast paced life, to express  
101 ourselves, to share and help us to understand. To get over ourselves as it relates to this  
102 Indian and white thing, this cowboy and Indian thing. We don't need to go there; we're  
103 not doing it for ourselves. We're doing it for the sake of the legacy that we're leaving  
104 behind. There are a lot of issues that were wishing to address here but most of all we  
105 hope that people will come to this Encounter for the sake of realizing an experience that  
106 nobody's ever taken forward to this point before. And that's bringing ballet and  
107 powwow dancing together that's so polarized. And, like, you can take this Indian boy  
108 from the rez that's used to eating bologna and bread on the road and these white guys that  
109 are used to eating hors d'oeuvres and stuff like that. It's important that we can bring  
110 these two together. I think powwow dancing has probably been in existence longer than  
111 ballet and so why is ballet being acknowledged in such high standards and why isn't  
112 powwow being addressed like that...? Well it is! In the Indian world, powwow is cool,  
113 man. Nobody has ever had the experience to participate or actively involve themselves  
114 and even just being part of the audience, so this is what this is going to bring us to.  
115 Hopefully not for our sakes but for the sake of the children and even the children that are  
116 not here yet that we can get over ourselves. We don't have to involve ourselves in spite  
117 of religious beliefs or because we need oil to get involved in Afghanistan, Iraq or stuff  
118 like that; to put our children in positions to where they need to give that ultimate  
119 sacrifice, their life, so that we can continue to live this freedom. I was talking to a  
120 general in the Army over in Montana and he says, "You know we always send our people  
121 over to fight for this freedom, everybody thinks it's free, its not." These young kids are



122 putting themselves in harms way for the sake of what? You know, a philosophy and  
123 attitude. And, again, this is what this Encounter is helping us to understand. Going  
124 beyond those barriers, going beyond those differences, helping us realize that we as  
125 individuals have a right to be responsible and to try and coexist together. I'm hoping that  
126 Robert will tell the story about Christopher Columbus that we're trying to go out and  
127 proliferate amongst everybody. It's important that this coexistence can continue to go on.  
128 And rather than be a Democrat or a Republican, be an individual and say "I can make a  
129 change, I can make a difference". This is why we are taking initiative and going forward  
130 with something like the Encounter from an artsy perspective, aye. So that we can hide  
131 behind the art and say, "How come you did that, Tommy?" "Well, I'm an artist" as  
132 opposed to "I'm an Indian" but... We have these commonalities, we feel strongly about  
133 this endeavor that we refer to as the Encounter, to hopefully to go beyond some of those  
134 barriers and help us to understand in a more spiritual perspective, not a religious one but  
135 a more spiritual perspective. To address some of these inhibitions that society has pushed  
136 upon us. "You're an Indian, you're supposed to be on the rez. Blah, blah, blah..." No  
137 I'm not. I'm not supposed to be on the rez. I'm supposed to be free. I aspire to freedom of  
138 spirit, I aspire to this understanding that we're all human, that we're all spiritual, and try  
139 to achieve that balance. Talking about people, judging people and stuff like that, we get  
140 human. Then I go and sweat and try to get all holy and get next to the Pope and I get out  
141 of balance again because I think I'm cool. 'Cause I think I'm close to God and I get out  
142 of balance again. But where our existence is something like this, bringing together this  
143 humanness and humanities class is no better place to kind of address these things and  
144 hopefully open ya'll's minds to really look at it and broaden your horizons with regards  
145 to "I'm not in this alone" but at the same time I have the right and I should be afforded  
146 the right to my own integrity.

147 Robert Meyers is a very renowned, world-renowned and nationally-acclaimed artist in  
148 photography from Los Angeles. He originally came from Chicago. Robert and myself  
149 got hooked up in 1996. He told the story last time about how me and him go together but  
150 I'll tell it this time. I was right over here at the powwow grounds. I was walking around  
151 just before grand entry and I had on my regalia with paint and everything. You know  
152 how white people are when you're dressed up, "Oh Tommy, you're such a Noble



153 Indian.” Anyway his wife, she’s the only playmate of the year from North Dakota so  
154 she’s really a fox, aye. She comes up and he had a thing over there where he’s taking  
155 pictures and she walks up to me and she says, “Sir, my husband’s over here. He’s a  
156 photographer and he’d like to take pictures of some very good people and you look like a  
157 good one so could you come over there?” Well, we were chatting with this little white  
158 woman and I was trying to hit on her and stuff. Well, there was three Indian girls  
159 standing behind me that knew me and they said, “Look at Tommy’s hitting on that white  
160 woman.” So one of them said, “Go over there, go over there.” So she went up and said,  
161 “Tommy your wife wants those Pampers, she wants you to get home right now.”  
162 Carmen takes off and runs off because she didn’t know what was going on.  
163 It was a joke [laughs]. I wasn’t hitting on her anyway, I don’t like white women.  
164 Naahh, I’m just teasing. So anyway, that’s how me and Robert got started. And so I did  
165 go over to this booth and did some photographs and what not and signed this release and  
166 what not and all that good stuff and we started our relationship from then. Well as a  
167 result of this spiritual attitude that Robert had towards life and some of the things he’s  
168 done with Native Americans... He’s not a white guy that wants to be Indian, he’s not  
169 that. He’s typically white, the guys a white guy, look at his beard and all that good stuff.  
170 But he understands the importance of us identifying with who and what we are and  
171 having that opportunity to be able to express ourselves from that perspective. And so as a  
172 result of many, many discussions... I even took him in the sweat, cooked his ass too. He  
173 looked like a lobster when he come out. I had to splash water. “Where’s God? Cool me  
174 off! Open the door!” What did you say?! My taco sauce, what am I supposed to say?  
175 *Mitaukuye oyasin*. He got all excited. It was a very good experience because it was a  
176 healing sweat and I believe that we did some good for that young girl that had cancer at  
177 that time and we prayed and he became a part of that. So it was a personal choice on his  
178 part to come and participate, even at that level. It’s something that we evolved into, our  
179 relationship. As we all know as First Nations people that when you adopt somebody as a  
180 relative, the elders told me, you should appreciate and respect that relationship even more  
181 than your natural children, your natural brothers and sisters, your siblings, for the simple  
182 reason, in spite of that guys character defects, he has so many, I still want him as my  
183 brother. He’s a white guy, I thought he had money. He ain’t got Jack. He’s asking me



184 for money and I'm saying, "Wait I'll sell these calves and I'll get you some. I'll sell this  
185 block of cheese for five bucks." But in spite of that, we've really evolved and I believe  
186 it is really a spiritual experience. He come to my house. I live in Poplar, MT. I live in  
187 Devil's Alley. The worst place in Poplar and I live there, aye. And he comes there and  
188 we're visiting and one of my friends was there and listening to us talk. He would think  
189 something and I would say it. That's how tight we are, and I think it's something there.  
190 We have these commonalities and what not and so I think the Encounter is something  
191 that really gives us an opportunity from the humanities perspective to go forward and  
192 share these differences but in a very respectful, dignified and honorable manner. It's to  
193 help us to understand that, you know, although I could blame these white people for  
194 everything that has ever happened to me as it relates to oppression, suppression and  
195 depression. I don't necessarily need to do that. I'm an Indian. I'm an Indian first. I  
196 acknowledge who and what I am. I have a legacy that I represent. I have a heritage that I  
197 am trying to follow. I have some things that I want to do and it's all based on respect.  
198 It's all based on going forward and affording each and every person. My dad told me the  
199 most respectful thing you can do to anybody is to treat them as an individual as opposed  
200 to blaming them. Take responsibility for your actions, who and what you are. I'm the  
201 biggest Indian in the world and yet I have a grandfather who comes from Wales, over in  
202 Scotland. In that it's not so much ethnocentric or racist, it's more of an open mindedness  
203 that I'd like to share. Not just with my children but with everybody's kids. So this is that  
204 humanities thing that we're doing here.

205 I don't know. Did I touch on everything? Should I say anything more or just introduce  
206 you...? In respects to that, all of this thing...I would like you to feel the relation that we  
207 have together. What brought about this whole thing called the Encounter; what brought  
208 ballet and powwow dancing together. What helped in bringing that forward. And of all  
209 places in Bismarck, North Dakota. I was up kind of promoting this in Canada. I spend a  
210 lot of time in Canada. I said, "Well I'm gonna do this ballet thing."

211 "Tommy, you gonna put on tights?"

212 "Heck no, I'm bony enough. They won't be able to see me?" [laughs] No, I said, I'm  
213 going to wear my regalia but we're gonna bring these things together. They said, "Oh,  
214 where's this ballet company coming from?" I said, "Bismarck, North Dakota". They

215 said, "Bismarck?! Ballet?" I mean that was about as bad as ballet and traditional  
216 powwow dancing coming together. They didn't think there was a ballet production  
217 company in Bismarck. Well, these are some of the things that we're going forward with  
218 in spite of those things.





## APPENDIX D

### Biographies of Evaluators

**Leona White Hat** was born and raised on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. While growing up, Leona was exposed to the Lakota culture through various forms of education. She participated in ceremonies and social functions, all of which taught her how to maintain a balance between her traditional Lakota culture and her academics. She graduated from Todd County High School in May 1997 and began her undergraduate studies at Black Hills State University that fall. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in English and Secondary Education in May 2002 and spent the summer teaching with the BHSU Upward Bound program. In the fall 2002, Leona began a program through BHSU for a Master of Science degree in Curriculum and Instruction. While working on her masters, she served as the Assistant Director for the BHSU Center for Indian Studies. During the summer of 2004 she began teaching at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND.

**Jodi Gillette** (*Oyate Awayanka Win*) is the daughter of Dave and Betty Archambault and is an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. She is married to Rusty Gillette and has three children, Vance, Coral and George. She earned her B.A. degree in Government from Dartmouth and a Masters of Public Affairs from the University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Ms. Gillette is a former Deputy Director and is the current Director of the Native American Training Institute.

**Carole Barrett** grew up the 'mobile' child of a father in the Marine Corps and a stay-at-home mom. When she was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, her father retired and moved the family to Massachusetts. Carole received a BA and MA in English. After receiving her master's degree, she moved to the town of St. Francis on the Rosebud Reservation where she taught kindergarten, high school, and college at various times. After leaving St. Francis, she worked in the INMED Program at the University of North Dakota, then at United Tribes Technical College in the Placement Office. Carole has since been at the University of Mary for many years, where she teaches American Indian studies courses and the occasional English course. Last year, she received her Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning (emphasis in higher education) and her dissertation, "Into the Light of Christian Civilization: St. Elizabeth's Boarding School for Indian Children", entailed collecting oral accounts of people who attended St. Elizabeth's as well as developing a history of the institution. Carole has two sons, both of whom are enrolled members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and have their Indian names!

**Dennis J. Neumann** is currently the public information director of United Tribes Technical College. He is the husband of Joanie M. Ramey-Neumann (Lakota), an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. He was born and raised in Bismarck, North Dakota and educated in the community's public school system. His professional work has principally been in mass media and communications. He was a broadcast journalist, TV producer, and technical writer. He also served as deputy director of the North Dakota Centennial Commission and director of the North Dakota Centennial Trees Commission. His Master's Degree in Mass Communication in 1997 from North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota, involved the study of diversity in mass media. Neumann was the first station manager of tribal radio station KLND, Little Eagle, South Dakota. It was there he received the Lakota name, *Oyate ta eyapaha* (voice for the People).

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