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INDIGENOUS DETROIT: INDIGENEITY, MODERNITY, AND RACIAL AND GENDER
FORMATION IN A MODERN AMERICAN CITY, 1871-2000

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the role of indigeneity in the formation of modern Detroit and the impact of urban culture on the reemergence of Indigenous people in that same location at the end of the 20th century. Covering more than a hundred years of urban Indigenous history between the nexus of urban history and Indigenous studies, *Indigenous Detroit* examines, first, non-Natives elites, and later, Native people, and how both deployed gendered and racialized versions of indigeneity. In both instances, “indigenous” identities carried racial and gendered meanings that helped to animate their appeal. Using local newspapers, government documents, and oral histories, this dissertation demonstrates how non-Indians used images of indigeneity to erase Native people from Detroit’s history. Indigenous people reasserted their presence in the Motor City, challenging longstanding definitions of indigeneity. In the first two chapters, I argue that, in a quest to bolster both white masculinity and Detroit’s urban standing, elite white men both memorialized and erased Detroit’s indigenous past. However, as I argue in chapters three and four, Indigenous residents such as Dakota Charles Eastman and women like my great-grandmother Esther Shawboose Mays carved out spaces in Detroit to reinvigorate and redefine indigeneity through the creation of Indigenous cultural and educational institutions in a city now predicated on blackness, whiteness, and labor.

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Introduction: Indigeneity, Modernity, and the Urban

Detroit, Michigan has many histories. In the preface to *Landmarks of Wayne County and Detroit*, written during the year 1898—America’s transit into colonization abroad—compilers Robert B. Ross and George B. Catlin, wrote, “Detroit, from the date of its founding nearly 200 years ago, became the metropolis of the region of the great lakes and the guardian of the straits. For a period of 125 years Detroit was both the rallying point and the emporium of the West.” Continuing to explain the uniqueness of Detroit, the authors state, “Three nations struggled and shed their blood for its possession. Before the advent of the railroad it was almost the only gateway of the vast territory between the great lakes and the Pacific Ocean.”¹ This story uses broad strokes to paint a picture of European colonization, and the importance of Detroit not only in North American history, but also world history. In other words, Detroit, for at least two centuries, was one of the most important geopolitical spaces for understanding wars, migration, and the flow of ideas. Missing from this narrative is any mention of Indigenous people, and the role they played in Detroit.

This dissertation traces the role of indigeneity in the formation of modern Detroit and the impact of urban culture on the reemergence of Indigenous people in that same location at the end of the 20th century. Covering more than a hundred years of urban Indigenous history, *Indigenous Detroit* examines, first, non-Natives elites, and later, Native people, and how both deployed gendered and racialized versions of indigeneity. In both instances, “indigenous” identities carried racial and gendered meanings that helped to animate their appeal. Using local newspapers, government documents, and oral histories, this dissertation demonstrates how non-Indians used images of indigeneity to erase Native people from Detroit’s history. Indigenous people reasserted

¹ Robert Ross and George Catlin, *Landmarks of Wayne County and Detroit*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Detroit, MI: The Evening News Association, 1898), iii.

their presence in the Motor City, challenging longstanding definitions of indigeneity. In the first two chapters, I argue that, in a quest to bolster both white masculinity and Detroit's urban standing, elite white men both memorialized and erased Detroit's indigenous past. However, as I argue in chapters three and four, Indigenous residents such as Dakota Charles Eastman and women like my Saginaw Chippewa great-grandmother Esther Shawboose Mays and her daughter, Judy Mays, carved out spaces in Detroit to reinvigorate and redefine indigeneity through the creation of Indigenous cultural and educational institutions in a city now predicated on blackness, whiteness, and labor.

Indigenous Detroit: Indigeneity, Modernity, and Gender and Racial Formation in A Modern American City, 1871-2000 explores at least three questions. First, what were the processes of Native removal, both discursively and physically from Detroit? How did various constituents, including Blacks, Whites, and Native peoples deploy indigeneity over time and to what end? Finally, how does tracing the shifting meaning of indigeneity and describing how both whites and Natives defined it over time alter our understanding of racial and gender formation in modern American cities?

In chapter one, I argue that in a quest to define Detroit's urban standing, elite white men both memorialized and erased Detroit's Indigenous past in order to cast Detroit as the epitome of modernity. I examine the paradoxes that contradict settler ideology by unpacking three examples of how indigenous presences were instrumental in white men's construction of late 19th and early 20th century Detroit—in their cultural imagination. I argue that while elites were constructing modern Detroit, they simultaneously created themselves as the epitome of modernity, tied to the city's ascent; Indigenous people were seen as relics of the past. Second, celebrations and events during the time period were built on elite fashioning a Detroit identity built on the city's

Indigenous imagery—a romantic one in which settlers of the past had overcome. Finally, I argue that Indigenous people, by their very presence challenged and disrupted those romantic ideas.

In chapter two, I analyze how elite white men constructed a settler memory through performance at Detroit's Bicentennial Celebration. I argue that this constructed memory were used to further usher in a collective understanding of whiteness, and to allow settlers to officially—through performance—claim origins to Detroit, thus employing a white form of indigeneity. A key component of explaining settler memory is understanding how settlers create historical, origin narratives that place Indigenous people in a particular time period. While in chapter one elite White men memorialized Indigenous people such as Pontiac to bolster their sense of masculinity and to place Detroit as the epitome of modernity, in this chapter, elite Whites cemented phase two of their settler project: constructing a historical memory that more firmly placed White men's origins in Detroit—through pageantry, with performance.

In chapter three, I analyze the roots of Indigenous political culture, specifically documenting the Society of American Indians' meeting in the city, Charles Eastman's residency, and the formation of the North American Indian Club (NAIC). These Indigenous political actors/organizations, who had long been on the forefront of Indigenous political activity, came to Detroit in order to continue challenging the depiction of Indigenous people in the settler imagination. And though there is no known direct link between the SAI and Eastman and the NAIC, the former set the stage for ushering in a new political context, which allowed a new generation of Indigenous people to begin deploying an Native version of indigeneity themselves in a city that had long rendered them invisible.

In chapter four, I examine the intersecting concepts of Indigenous feminism, racialization, and indigeneity in the postwar period. This chapter makes two major arguments.

First, it was Native women who were the major architects of political change in Indigenous Detroit. Second, through the creation of cultural and educational institutions, Indigenous women created new meanings of what it meant to be Native in late 20th century Detroit, thus challenging longstanding beliefs of Indigenous disappearance. These women, as I shall outline below, were urban Indigenous feminists.

The women in postwar Detroit were urban Indigenous feminists. This brand of feminism is historically situated, geographically specific, and trans-generational. To understand and accept an urban Indigenous feminist is to also locate these women's experiences in a particular time and place, and recognize how they actually lived—not how we might image them to have lived. In my understanding, we must understand both how the urban political culture shaped Indigenous women's activism and political consciousness as well as how they used indigeneity to shape post-rebellion Detroit's political culture.

I conclude the dissertation in two ways. First, I briefly discuss the potential of understanding Detroit as a settler colonial city. Second, I examine, briefly, of the nation's third-ever public school with a Native American curriculum: Medicine Bear American Indian Academy. With the closing of Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, the dream of a mother, realized under her daughter, had crumbled. The closing nation's third ever public school with an Indigenous centered curriculum effectively shut down Indigenous educational institutions in the Motor City. Though there remain very little physical remnants of Indigenous political activities in Detroit (at least in the public imagination), the high times of activism, especially that produced by women, still remains within the hearts of many.

Detroit remains an important case study for urban Indigenous history because of how indigeneity was deployed and employed. In the late 19th century, indigeneity was used to bolster

white masculinity and to help them create a historical narrative that erased Indigenous people from their contemporary presence. Now, however, later on, Indigenous people began to reclaim how indigeneity would be deployed, and used education to challenge longstanding beliefs of Indigenous erasure in Detroit. I now want to explain very briefly about how I define space in the dissertation.

When using the term Indigenous space, I am not necessarily referring to the actual geography nor the built environment, and how those impacted Indigenous people. The actors in this dissertation embodied Detroit in ways that made sense to them. Though many were products of reservation communities, especially in the postwar period, were urban Indigenous people, which was very different from those who had grown up on reservations or rural areas. Instead, I use the work of Renya Ramirez, especially her concept of “Native hub.” Ramirez argues that urban Native communities “maintain a sense of connection to their tribal homelands and urban spaces through participation in cultural circuits and maintenance of social networks.”² She continues that Native people create hubs in urban spaces through “memory sharing, storytelling, ritual, music, style...and other banners.”³ Therefore, space in this dissertation is defined through cultural memory and symbols that Native people produce in how they actually lived, within the larger settler idea of their supposed invisibility. I now turn to the an examination of both urban Indigenous history and Detroit history.

Historiography

² Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 3.

³ Ibid.

Since at least Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson's edited collection, *The American Indian in Urban Society* (1971), scholars have attempted to document the urban Indigenous experience. Existing works have produced familiar themes: cultural assimilation versus cultural maintenance; modernity versus tradition; and Native versus non-Native (mostly meaning white). They have also framed Indigenous people as the new immigrants to the city.⁴ This literature is remarkably similar to portrayals of white ethnics in earlier periods.⁵ Indeed, Waddell and Watson made statements such as "with the move to cities, many Indians have lost the traditional image and with it their psychological stability."⁶ Although attempting to understand the situation of Native people in cities, Jeanne Guillemin remarks focused on how Indigenous people maintained their cultures, also assuming that they were recent migrants. Guillemin remarks, "urban Indians

⁴ Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson (eds.), *The American Indian in Urban Society* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); Nancy Shoemaker, "Urban Indians and Ethnic Choices: American Indians in Minneapolis, 1920-1950" *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1988; Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Donald Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); Jeanne Guillemin, *Urban Renegades: The Cultural Strategy of American Indians* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975); Edward Liebow, "Urban Indian Institutions in Phoenix: Transformation from Headquarters City to Community," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* Vol. 18, Winter 1991; David Beck, "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Native American Self-Determination in an Urban Indian Community," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2002; Susan Lobo, "Is Urban a Person or a Place?: Characteristics of Urban Indian Country," in Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters (eds.) *American Indians and the Urban Experience* (Walnut, Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001); Sol Tax, "The Impact of Urbanization of American Indians," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* Vol. 436, American Indians Today, (March, 1978), pp. 121-136.

⁵ See, James Barrett, *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012) Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁶ Waddell and Watson (eds.), *The American Indian In Urban Society*, 404.

develop their cultural strategies in an area beyond the comprehension of the wider society, namely, in the domain of family and tribal organizations.”⁷

Other urban Indian histories begin in the postwar era, such as Donald Fixico’s *Termination and Relocation*, which focused on veteran returns after World War II, and the devastating effects of the termination and relocation policies of the 1950s.⁸ Although he tries to differentiate between immigrants of a previous century and Native people, he still utilizes similar rhetoric of assimilation and cultural dislocation as a result of moving away from reservations. “In contrast [to European immigrants’, many Indian relocatees did not leave their country,” wrote Fixico.⁹ Rather, they “left the center of their culture and beliefs.”¹⁰ In tying culture strictly to a land base, Fixico ignores how Indigenous people brought those cultures with them and made meaning of urban spaces. As a result, scholars have produced urban histories that are short-sighted policy and social histories with little attention to culture, or how Indigenous people understood the urban space themselves, and made meaning of it. In essence, many urban Indian histories ignore how indigeneity is deployed and employed by various actors. Perhaps one early example of pushing the time period of urban Indigenous people beyond the postwar period is Nancy Shoemaker’s study of the Native experience in Minneapolis, Minnesota from 1920 until

⁷ Guillemin, *Urban Renegades*, 10.

⁸ Donald Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the 1950s.¹¹ Fixico also wrote about the urban Indigenous experience with a similar message: that the urban and Native people were incompatible.

In *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (2000), Fixico writes an immigrant narrative in which Native people were largely incapable of living in the city. Fixico makes very essentialized claims about urban Indians. “Transforming from a rural to the urban mainstream resulted in a new set of problems,” he writes, and this created, “social alienation, community prejudice, and racism” which “made urban life difficult.”¹² His book is an immigrant narrative, and a sad account of Native experiences in the city.

James LaGrand presents another immigrant narrative in *Indian Metropolis* (2002). He writes a social history of Native people who migrated to Chicago in the postwar era. He describes the formation of pan-Indianism and community in Chicago. *Indian Metropolis* is fundamentally concerned with questions of identity formation and the construction of community. He asked questions such as, “What sorts of experiences have shaped them and their notions of identity?”¹³ Though he carefully constructs how city life changed Native people, he rarely considers how Native people or indigeneity impacted Chicago.¹⁴ Immigrant narratives remain an consist part of urban Indigenous history.

Nicholas Rosenthal’s *Reimagining Indian Country* (2012) is also an immigrant narrative. Though Rosenthal offers a much more complicated narrative, showcasing Indigenous agency in

¹¹ Shoemaker, “Urban Indians and Ethnic Choices,” 432.

¹² Donald Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 5.

¹³ LaGrand, *Indian Metropolis*, 2.

¹⁴ Rosalyn LaPier and David R. M. Beck, *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893-1934*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015). A major contribution of this book is that it considers Native history of Chicago prior to the pre postwar World War II period.

twentieth century Los Angeles, he ultimately believes that Indigenous migrations to cities should be compared to those of immigrants from an earlier time period. Rosenthal writes, “American Indian scholars have written about assimilation and government paternalism, while immigrant historians have charted efforts at Americanization. The two conversations ought to be merged as one.”¹⁵ Although Rosenthal does acknowledge that Indigenous people are different from other groups because of their government-to-government relationship with the U.S., he does not explore the potential pitfalls of this particular comparative approach, and it certainly says nothing of status Indians versus non-status Indians. Approaches that compare the Indigenous engagements with urban spaces and immigrants coming from a different nation-state all together shows no appreciation for the longer indigenous histories of urban places, how they made meaning of such places, and frames Native peoples as recent arrivals to cities, with no relationship to their modern development.

While my dissertation builds upon these studies, I hope to disrupt the idea that Native people and cities are incompatible, or that they were only recent migrants to cities. I will illustrate how Native people made sense of urban Detroit, from their perspective and cosmologies, as well as providing examples of the ways in which an indigeneity was evident in Detroit throughout the city’s modern history.

Recent works have departed significantly from the older narratives of pan-Indianism and Indians as migrants to the city. Instead of exploring whether or not Indigenous people maintained community and traditions or writing short time-framed social histories, these scholars have tried to expand the time period in which Native peoples occupy spaces. What makes these scholars unique is that they reimagine urban spaces and place Indigenous people at the center of their

¹⁵ Nicholas Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native Migration and Identity in Twentieth Century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 50-51.

development, and in modernity. Their larger goal has been to put forward an Indigenous conception of modern cities, both in the U.S. and beyond. As Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush write, “Indigenous people are more than metaphors in the settler imagination” they are “active participants in the shaping of uncanny narratives of both resistance and persistence.”¹⁶

Coll Thrush’s book *Native Seattle* (2007) is an excellent example of writing of urban histories and Indigenous histories as co-constitutive. Thrush explores the histories of three Indigenous tribes in Seattle. Using newspapers and tribal oral histories, he explains the process of Indian invisibility while also demonstrating their long presence in cities, through both imagery and their actual bodies. His central argument for urban Indigenous history is that we cannot adequately understand urban history without acknowledging the active presence of Native peoples. “There is very little distance, in either space or time,” writes Thrush, “between the dispossession of local indigenous people...[and] what it means to be urban and what it meant to be Native have been inextricably linked in Seattle.”¹⁷ Thrush’s work, importantly, takes a long chronological view, and is at once a cultural and social history. While departing significantly from previous urban Indigenous histories, Thrush shows the contradictory process in how Native people became a ‘vanishing race’ in Seattle but indigeneity remained present in the city’s media and popular imagination.

Scholars such as Thrush and Penelope Edmonds have sought to understand the urban Indigenous experience in global, transnational contexts. Thrush’s more recent work has engaged with the early modern period, and the histories of Indigenous people in London, a site of both

¹⁶ Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, eds., *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), xi.

¹⁷ Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2007), 13.

Indigenous and British creation—through various performances. He calls the interaction of Indigenous people and London residents “Algonquian London.” Thrush’s work traces the experiences of Indigenous peoples from North America who traveled to London—some on their own accord and others forced—and made their mark on the city. Thrush states, “the experience of Indigenous travelers to London suggest that parallel Indigenous processes of exploration and meaning making were taking place, in which the city played a dominant role, and which would shape the histories of both settler colonies and Indigenous nations.”¹⁸ Other scholars have placed the urban and Indigenous histories further back as well.

Penelope Edmonds’s *Urbanizing Frontiers* (2010) compares two settler colonial cities—Melbourne, Australia and Victoria, British Columbia. Using the concept of urbanizing frontier, Edmonds is able to show the historical process of urban creation; yet Edmonds illustrates how indigenous peoples’ presence disrupted the belief in their assumed invisibility, and how it was a contested terrain. This book makes an important contribution to scholarship that has either ignored Indigenous peoples in urban spaces, or has ignored the fact that these spaces were colonized in earlier periods, and Native peoples contested colonization, years after settlers prophesized their disappearance. Edmonds brilliantly states, “Today’s cities may, therefore, be understood through a close examination of the socio-spatial histories of race found in the nineteenth century’s developing urban landscape.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Coll Thrush, “‘Meere Strangers’: Indigenous and Urban Performances in Algonquian London, 1580-1630,” in *Urban Identity and the Atlantic Public Sphere*, ed. Elizabeth Fay and Leonard von Morze (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013), 197.

¹⁹ Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 9. As I shall show later, this is very different from other urban studies, who, while writing on contemporary urban crises, utilize the frontier concept similar akin to Frederick Jackson Turner without

Historians have not been the only ones to produce urban Indigenous narratives. Although written primarily by anthropologists, the edited collection *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (2009) explains the important role of Indigenous women in shaping postwar political culture in cities.²⁰ This collection of essays offers new material about the role of Indigenous women in maintaining indigeneity in urban spaces. An important example is Susan Lobo's chapter on "Urban Clan Mothers."²¹ She illustrates how urban Native women used their homes as hubs for community building and maintaining Indigenous culture in the city.

The edited collection *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* investigates the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian cities. Focusing on identity construction, cultural transformation and continuity, and modernity versus tradition, this volume challenges out-dated scholarship that assumes Indigenous peoples and urban spaces are incompatible.²²

Although not a historian, Renya Ramirez's work, *Native Hubs* (2008), offered another way of understanding the urban Indigenous experience not as an immigrant narrative but as a space in which relationships and activism can not only occur, but also thrive. Using the concept

acknowledging that these cities were built on Indigenous lands and that the majority of Native peoples no longer live in urban areas.

²⁰ Susanne Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard (eds.), *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

²¹ Susan Lobo, "Urban Clan Mothers: Key Households in Cities," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) edited by Susanne Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard, pp. 1-21.

²² Heather Howard and Craig Proulx, eds., *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

of “hub,” “highlights the importance of the urban area,” stressing the potential for political power as Native men and women organize across tribal lines.”²³

The most recent installment of books about Indigenous peoples and cities is the edited volume *Indigenous in the City* (2013), co-edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen. Through sixteen chapters, this volume analyzes the experiences of Indigenous people in cities in four settler nation-states: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Broad and interdisciplinary in scope, the volume challenges two core assumptions. First they challenge the idea that Indigenous people and cities are incompatible. Second, they challenge also the idea that “authentic” Native people live on reservations and “inauthentic” Native people live in cities.

The major impact of this edited book is that it compares and illustrates similarities between indigeneity and urbanization across four countries. In using this interdisciplinary approach, the editors can broadly state, “We position urban Indigenous identities not as incomplete or diminished vestiges of more authentic indigenous locales (like those of rural areas).” Instead, argue Peters and Andersen, they understand urban spaces as “highly vernacular engines of indigenous cultural power.”²⁴ Though Peters and Andersen offer a broad range of current scholarship, C. Matthew Snipp and Nancy Lucero’s chapters are most relevant to my dissertation.

In “Being Indian in the City: Generational Differences in the Negotiation of Native Identity among Urban-Based American Indians” Lucero analyzes identity development among four generations of Denver, Colorado’s Indigenous community. Using a qualitative approach, the

²³ Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 12.

²⁴ Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, eds., *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation* (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 11.

author asked participants about their identity and how the urban environment impacts that identity. Lucero noted a particular discourse among Generation Two participants, who believed that living in the city impacts their identity in three ways. First, there exists a discourse that if you live in a city a person is somehow less Indigenous than those who live on the reservation; if one lives in the urban environment, you can lose your Indigenous identity; and finally, growing up in an urban environment might preclude someone from gaining an Indigenous identity at all. Another discourse that emerged during the Red Power era was that in order for one to be truly Indigenous one must embrace “traditional” values in the city and demonstrate one’s Indigenous heritage through outward appearance, dress, or performing one’s tribal ceremonies.²⁵ These identity markers slightly change in generations three and four, but often times the same discourses impact those who do not quite look “Indigenous” enough. While getting at the social history of the Denver Indigenous community, it maintains the same intellectual trope regarding Indigenous people in cities: while briefly acknowledging that Denver was a space that Indigenous people always moved to, it reiterates the urban Indigenous history that emphasizes the postwar era.

In “American Indians and Alaska Natives in Urban Environments,” Snipp offers a descriptive analysis of the long history of Indigenous urbanization. While arguing that Indigenous people have built cities over a long period of time, including Cahokia, being on par with ancient cities such as London, modern urbanization (beginning in the late 19th century) was seen as something that apparently went by most Indigenous people. Unfortunately, this narrative suggests that Indigenous people were pre-modern and cities were modern, which renders the

²⁵ Nancy Lucero, “Being Indian in the City: Generational Differences in the Negotiation of Native Identity Among Urban-Based American Indians,” in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, ed. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 211.

relationship between the two incompatible. For example, Snipp writes, “by the twentieth century, the American Indian population was fully contained in the rural backwaters of American society, left behind by the growth of the nation’s urban industrial economy.”²⁶ Moreover, Snipp writes, “As the nation industrialized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, great cities grew rapidly across the Midwest.” However, as far as Indigenous people were concerned, they remained in rural areas, on the fringes of (modern) society. And this condition did not change “until the conclusion of the Second World War brought rapid growth to many places in the West.”²⁷ Unfortunately, this narrative suggests that Indigenous people were pre-modern and cities were modern, which renders the relationship between the two incompatible. For one, not all Indigenous people were left on the fringes of society in the Western United States. In addition, though it is important to acknowledge the removal of Indigenous people, places like Michigan’s Indigenous community, while put on reservations, also continued to migrate back and forth across borders, including Canada. As a result, they were always engaging with the modernity of cities like Detroit, even if rendered invisible by the public discourses of the time period.

What is most striking about the recent urban indigenous history scholarship is that it has pushed scholars to think more critically about how Indigenous peoples have been portrayed in urban spaces, and how their political activities and living in cities contradict the notion that Indigenous peoples are outside of modernity, incapable of living in urban areas. Perhaps more important, they also force us to reconceptualize the time periods in which we begin urban

²⁶ C. Matthew Snipp, “American Indians and Alaska Natives in Urban Environments,” in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, ed. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 175-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

histories. Indeed, this dissertation requires that we reconceptualize urban places as arenas of Native agency. Just as the construction of reservations as settler colonial spaces was a long, historical process, so, too, was the removal and erasure of indigenous bodies and histories from Detroit's history. Another recent development in urban history, though, has been the proliferation of "colonialism" discourses in cities. In the next section, I will take up this discourse as a larger part of the erasure of Indigenous people from the area.

Urban Studies and Discourses of Colonialism in the City

The Detroit of yesteryear and today has been called a frontier, a place founded out of a virgin soil. For example, Thomas Sugrue, author of one of the most important urban histories in the last twenty years, wrote the forward to the book entitled *Ruins of Detroit*. He stated that, "Unlike older, more concentrated cities, with dense apartment building and row houses, Detroit had vast tracts of open land. Abandoned, it reverted to its natural state: forest and prairie."²⁸ He was not alone. The description of cities like Detroit is indicative of a larger theoretical issue within Urban Studies at large: no acknowledgment of urban spaces as indigenous spaces, too.

Scholarship in urban studies since the 1960s and 1970s has repeatedly used the concept colonialism to define the condition of desolation, poverty, and institutional racism that Black Americans have experienced in postwar American cities.²⁹ Kenneth Clark, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, and later, Robert Blauner, wrote of inner-city ghettos across the U.S. as internal colonies. Clark took a social-psychological approach. In the 1965 classic *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*, Clark wrote of the invisible wall that kept Blacks locked inside of a

²⁸ Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *The Ruins of Detroit* (Steidl, 2010), 10. The authors' website has pictures that signals what once was a thriving city to a city of ruins. <http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit/index.html>

²⁹ For example, see Robert Staples, "Race and Colonialism: The Domestic Case in Theory and Practice," *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 9 (June 1976): 37–48.

cycle of deprivation. “The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and—above all—economic colonies.”³⁰ Clark’s work decried the pathologies in the Black ghetto but also explained to white America that these pathologies were not inherent to Black people’s culture: Blacks were trapped in ghettos by public policy and racism. Those who controlled capital, mostly white men, also controlled the lives Black people could lead, including what jobs they could get, the type of education they would receive, and the ability to move out such conditions.

Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton explained internal colonialism simply: it was a product of institutional racism. Carmichael and Hamilton wrote, “Black people are legal citizens of the United States with, for the most part, the same *legal* rights as other citizens.” However, “they stand as colonial subjects in relation to the white society. Thus institutional racism has another name colonialism.”³¹ And, like Clark, they distinguished institutional forms of racism from individual racism. It is important to acknowledge that they understood the fact that American settlers dominated the Indigenous peoples. What they failed to do, though, was also acknowledge that those people who were dominated still persisted—and resisted—colonialism. In essence, they were participating in the erasure of Indigenous bodies and histories by excluding them from the conversation. In other words, while these intellectuals have described well the difficult situation in which Blacks found themselves during the 1960s, they did so at the expense of Indigenous peoples and their realities.

Robert Blauner also explained the internal colony. In his seminal article, “Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt,” Blauner attempted to explain the differences between “classic”

³⁰ Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harpers & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965).

³¹ Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Press, 1992), 5.

colonialism—that which happened to African peoples throughout the continent—and internal colonialism, which he described as severe repression and the status of being a minority in the U.S.³² Blauner did not offer a direct definition of internal colonialism, though he alluded to the fact that Black Americans were trapped and were attempting to change that condition with revolts.³³

Some scholars, though, have attempted to analyze the city as a (settler) colonial space. For example, in *Postcolonialism and the City* (1996) Jane Jacobs argues that cities are a prime place for understanding imperialism. “It was in...cities that the spatial order of imperial imaginings was rapidly and deftly realised. And it was through these cities that the resources of colonised lands were harnessed and reconnected to cities in imperial heartlands.”³⁴ Detroit fits within this narrative. In the documented histories of Detroit, as I explain in chapter two, elite white men fashioned Detroit as the one unique place where a celebration of its colonial past should be realized. The imperial imaginings are important for understanding the presence of Indigeneity in Detroit, for the historical memory and colonization cannot occur without the processes of elites cultural reimagining the city, its history, and who is included. The creation of a local history rooted in white male “origin myths” is also important to acknowledge. Related to this origins myth are the celebration of indigenous imagery and the memorializing of indigenous peoples (and their histories) through pageantry. Indeed as Jacobs argues, “Colonial constructs not

³² Robert Blauner, “Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt,” *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (Spring 1969): 393–408.

³³ Robert Staples, “Race and Colonialism: The Domestic Case in Theory and Practice,” *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 9 (June 1976): 37–48. Staples provides a broad overview of the ‘internal colonialism’ debates.

³⁴ Jane Jacobs, *The Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 4.

only belong to a past that is being worked against in the present, but also to a past that is being nostalgically reworked and inventively adapted in the present.”³⁵ And this reworking is for the benefit of the elite.

Understanding urban spaces and indigeneity as a part of an imperil narrative thus allows for scholars to critically engage with Indigenous histories of place. For instance, in the edited volume *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*, co-editors Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush provide scholars an opportunity to take seriously the relationship between indigeneity, place, and ghost stories. Combining cultural and environmental history and literature, this edited collection considers indigenous ghosts as a particular site for understanding the combined histories of settlers and Indigenous people. In general, they advocate for a method to understand Native ghosts as not simply a 'thing' of the literary imagination, but as a process for understanding how settler and Indigenous histories and present realities are shaped by ghosts and indigenous cosmologies of land and landscapes. Indigenous ghosts are not simply imaginary; they are a reality that shapes consciousness and history, and also the contemporary. Boyd and Thrush write, “for all their ubiquity and legibility, indigenous ghosts are remarkably complex facets of the experience of colonialism and highlight the ways in which knowledge of place and past are constructed, produced, revealed, and contested.”³⁶ Boyd and Thrush’s comments relate specifically to Detroit, and how colonialism works unlike a place such as Seattle.

Detroit Histories

Erasure and Historical Memory

³⁵ Ibid., 15.

³⁶ Boyd and Thrush, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*, ix.

On April 29, 1853, the *Detroit Daily Free Press* published an article that spoke of Indigenous demise. “We noticed four aborigines yesterday, on seeing whom we could not but reflect on the great changes that have taken place in our city in fifteen years.”³⁷ Here, the anonymous author articulated how Detroit as a city developed outside of its Indigenous inhabitants, near the city, but not living within the official city parameters. The article continued, “1838, a person, by merely glancing through almost any street, could see parties of these children of the forest scattered throughout its entire length.”³⁸ The author noted that you could see Indians and hear them dancing near all of the modern Detroit structures, including the Woodworth Hotel. Apparently, Indigenous presence near the hotel must have bothered some of the residents, but after fifteen years, civilization prevailed:

...horrible were the grimaces, and discordant the yells, of the dusky-features performers, as they hopped and writhed with the utmost agility, destitute, as they were of nearly every article of clothing. Now, it is comparatively rarely that one of them is to be seen. They are almost gone, and in a short time, their former existence among us will be know only through the medium of tradition. Farewell, ‘Injuns’ ‘Nitchees,’ a long farewell!³⁹

Indigenous Peoples’ relationship to Detroit’s history is generally of two categories. First historians have narrated Indigenous peoples as caught in the past, especially in the Fort’s early development, with the Odawa chief Pontiac’s attempted seizure of Detroit as a major point of historical inquiry. Second, Detroit’s Indigenous historical subjects were used as a caveat, a trope to move settlers’ interpretation of history from savagery to civilization.

³⁷ Indians,” *Detroit Daily Free Press* (Detroit, MI, April 29, 1853).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

For the most part, Indigenous people have no place in Detroit's settler constructed historical memory. Indigenous erasure is not, though, by accident. It requires a reinterpretation and reimagination of how Detroit came to be—without its First inhabitants. Peter Novick writes, historical memory “sees events from a single committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; and reduces events to mythic archetypes.”⁴⁰ White inhabitants did their very best to erase Native Americans in order to dominate the land. Like other lands occupied by Indigenous people in what would later become the United States, Detroit (along with the eastern part of Michigan) became ceded territory with the signing of the 1807 Treaty of Detroit. While Native peoples continued to live and occupy spaces in the broad definition of Detroit (including its many islands in the Detroit River), they inhabit a precarious case within Detroit's historical memory. They are at once erased and memorialized.

Historical memory—in contradiction—ignores its Indigenous past. Detroit's official flag captures Indigenous erasure and settler historical memory quite well. Created by David E. Heineman in 1907 (although the city did not officially adopt the flag until 1948), the flag is broken down into four quadrants with a large circle in the middle. The bottom left quadrant represents French rule over the era from 1701 until about 1760. The upper right quadrant represents the British occupation of the Fort from 1760-1796. The top left quadrant contains thirteen white stars. The bottom right quadrant has thirteen red and white stripes—representing the original thirteen British colonies. The circle in the middle of the four quadrants has two women in the middle. One has her hand gently touching the village of Detroit, which is in flames. The other seems to be comforting her, holding her hand over the developed Detroit. The Latin phrases next to both of them explain the meaning: “*speramus meliora* and *resurgent*

⁴⁰ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 3-4.

cineribus, meaning “we hope for better things” and “it will arise from the ashes.” These women serve as caretakers of the city.

The second Latin phrase is a reference to the 1805 fire that nearly destroyed the entire city. More than this, the narrative implants—through representation—that Detroit is a white male space. The flag is an official narrative of the city, and hangs over a place that holds the official histories of it: the Detroit Historical Museum. To be sure, the museum itself has a Native history within it, but that generally stops after the War of 1812. The flag represents the idea of white male settlement and domination, and does not acknowledge any Indigenous presence that existed during the occupation of each European power. Detroit’s history is one of empire, race, gender, class, and conflict. And Indigenous people played no small part in all aspects of these histories.

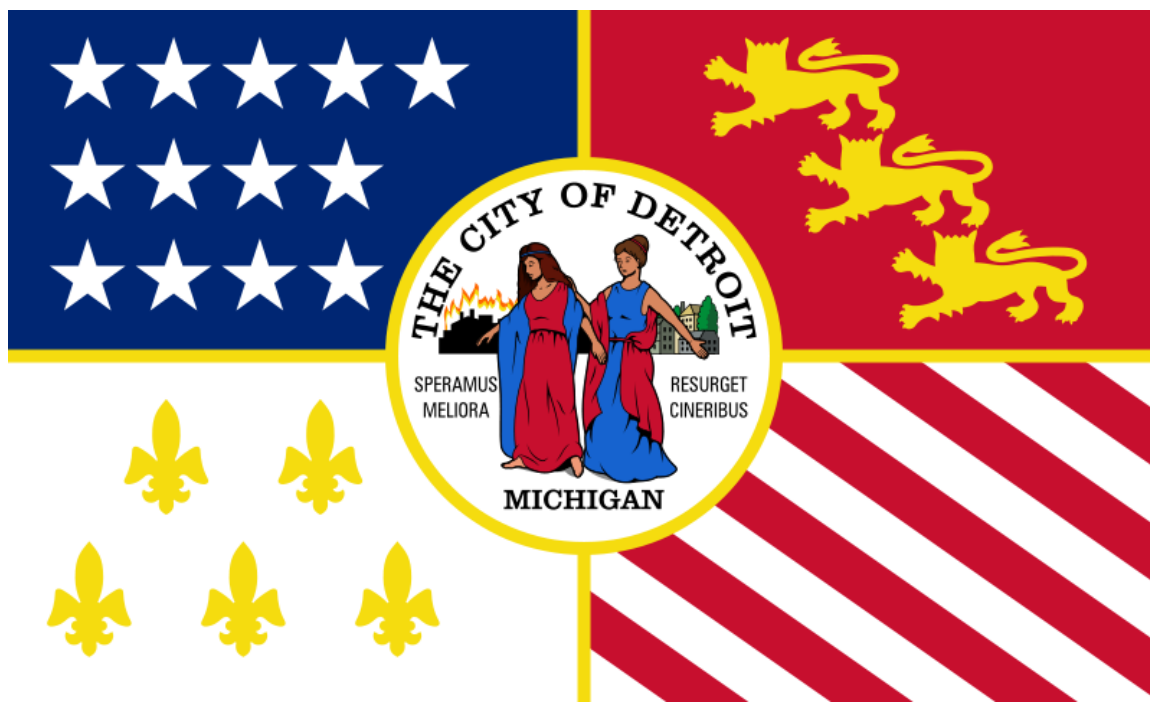


Figure 1. The Flag of the City of Detroit. Designed by David E. Heineman in 1907, officially adopted in 1948. Image in the public domain.

A geographical place such as Detroit has changed in several ways since before Cadillac laid claim to the land as a French fort in 1701. The area has changed in name several times, its landscape has been altered by buildings; we can see the imprint of imperialism in name and landscape. According to Roman Catholic Missionary Frederic Baraga, who worked among the Anishinaabe, Native peoples had their own word for Detroit. They called it “Wawiiatan,” which, according to Baraga, simply meant Detroit. However, Virgil Vogel offered further explanation, suggesting that this word meant:

“The aboriginal name of the Grand River may be related to that of Detroit, which Baraga gave as Wawiiatan, from *wawieia*, "it is round or circular," which is apparently compounded with *atan*, 'town.' With the addition of the suffix *ong*, often seen in references, the name signifies, according to Baraga, 'in or at Detroit, to or from Detroit.’⁴¹

Indigenous names of places are not based upon ownership, but are descriptive. This seems accurate. Native conceptions of space are based upon a historical relationship and a familiarity of the land. Thus, the Huron apparently called the place Ka-ron-ta-en, meaning “the coast of the straits.”⁴² Historian of the city Clarence M. Burton mentions other names, including, Tsyeh-saron-dia, which apparently referred to the bend in the (Detroit) river. Burton did not mention the particular tribal community to whom the name belonged. The French first called it Fort Pontchartrain, in honor of Count Pontchartrain. Early French explorers commented on the waters

⁴¹ Frederic Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language, Explained in English* (Cincinnati: Jos. A. Hermann, 1853). Hathi Trust Digital Library, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081691226;view=1up;seq=12;q1=detroit:start=1;size=10;page=search;num=iv>. [Accessed February 19, 2013]. I am fully aware of the pitfalls with using colonial sources. However, linguistic missionary records can be considered reliable if we consider that they were truly sincere in their efforts to convert and assimilate indigenous peoples.

⁴² Clarence Burton, William Stocking, and Gordon Miller, eds., *The City of Detroit Michigan, 1701-1922*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Detroit and Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), 40.

that connected Lake Huron and Lake Erie—the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, and the Detroit River. Thus, the “straits” became known to the French, what it is called today, Detroit. As can be seen here, Detroit as a settler place was simultaneously created in name and place by multiple Indigenous peoples and the French. As such, even to call Fort Detroit a French settlement is misleading, for it discounts the Indigenous presence beforehand, and the Indigenous presence during and after the settlement. Indigenous histories of Detroit end in the first part of the 19th century. And, as a result, 20th century historiography, as I shall discuss below, exists entirely in Black and White, literally and figuratively.

20th century Detroit historiography has been dominated by studies of unions, class, and racial (read Black and white) ethnic conflict. For example, in examining the 1967 rebellion of Black Detroiters, Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, authors of *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (1975), contended, “what clearly differentiated the Detroit experience from other major social movements of the sixties and early seventies was its thoroughly working-class character.”⁴³ Sympathetic in tone, and focused on the lives of Detroit’s Black revolutionary community from 1967-1974, this book documents their struggle against labor exploitation and racism in the factories of Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors. Through interviews conducted in 1972 and by using Detroit News papers as well as the *Inner City Voice*, an anti-capitalist organ, they tell the story of how Black workers (largely Marxists), challenged class and racial exploitation through written protest, strikes, and public demonstrations. They focus on groups such as Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. Since then, a plethora of

⁴³ Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), 5.

scholarship has focused on Detroit's labor movement.⁴⁴

Following Georgakas and Surkin's work, historians have focused on the tensions between Black and white races and of unions and workers' responses to labor exploitation. Key among those are the works of David Levine and August Meier and Elliot Rudwick. Levine's book explores the racial segregation of Black Detroiters and from 1915 to 1926. Meier and Rudwick's book analyzes the development of the United Auto Workers in Detroit. One major exception is Victoria Walcott's *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (2001). It does discuss class (the politics of respectability) and race/gender (African American women), it analyzes these Black women during the interwar years, and is noteworthy for bringing Black women's experiences into the picture.⁴⁵ However, more recent works have continued the trend of focusing on labor, including Heather Thompson's study *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (2004), which analyzes the role liberalism played in promoting racial discord and unrest in 1960s and 1970s Detroit.⁴⁶ Other works have

⁴⁴ George Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Richard Thomas, *Life for Us is What we Make it: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Beth Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Richard Oestreicher, *Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); B.J. Widick, *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989); Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986).

⁴⁵ Victoria Walcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ Heather A. Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

focused on post-1967 rebellion Detroit and how public policy caused inner-city poverty.⁴⁷

It is worth highlighting two of the foremost scholars on Detroit: historian Thomas Sugrue and geographer Joe Darden. Sugrue wrote one of the most compelling urban history books over the last few decades with the publication of *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996). This book explains the causes of urban decay in Detroit in the post-World War II period. Beginning in the 1940s, Sugrue offers a complex history of deindustrialization, housing and employment discrimination, as well as class stratification amongst Black Detroit from 1940s up until right before the 1967 riots. Sugrue's work was a response to popular narratives of decline that had placed blame on Detroit's decline following the race-rebellion Detroit, which essentially blamed Black people and Mayor Coleman Young's office for Detroit's decline. In addition, his work challenged the scholarship of urban decline, called the "underclass", sparked by the work of William Julius Wilson's major first publication *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978) and his follow-up work *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987).⁴⁸ Others, however, have tried to understand the origins of severe urban poverty and racial segregation in earlier periods.

Detroit's Indigenous History

⁴⁷ Joe T. Darden et al., *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Joe T. Darden and Richard W. Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide* (Detroit: Michigan State University Press, 2013). This book is an updated version of the 1987 text.

⁴⁸ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Wilson writes, "individuals who lack training and skills and either experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long-term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency" (8).

According to the Anishinaabe migration story (oral histories), the Anishinaabek migrated from the East Coast. It was prophesized that they would make seven sacred stops. Moving along the St. Lawrence River, those stops are said to have been present-day Montreal, Niagara Falls, Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie, Duluth (Minnesota), and Madeline Island. The third sacred stop was near present-day Detroit. It is important to recognize first that Native peoples existed near present day Detroit (including its many islands), and were the dominant group here before European arrival. Importantly, there is a difference between the Indigenous history of the area and how that history has been remembered and documented within Detroit's historical scholarship. An Indigenous history of the area requires that we understand how they understood the space within their own cosmologies, but not just in origin "myths" and such, which can border on stereotyping Indigenous people. Instead, at least for this project, understanding Indigenous histories of Detroit assumes that we understand them how they lived in modern times, and how they made meaning of urban spaces in spite of their assumed invisibility.

Early American Indian histories have thoroughly documented Detroit's founding as a French fort, demonstrating how this was a place of negotiation, settlement, and violent conflict.⁴⁹ Founded by Frenchmen Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac in 1701, Detroit was created as an important site to ward off advancing Iroquois and English aggression, as a space of peace negotiation between Algonquian peoples and the Fox, and as a fur trading post. Scholar of Great Lakes Indian history and geography Helen Hornbeck Tanner wrote that prior to Fort Detroit being founded in 1701, no "tribal group was settled in the region south of Detroit on the

⁴⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in the New World*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

western and southern shores of Lake Erie.” She continued further stating that Detroit was founded “on the fringe of an apparently vacant area.”⁵⁰ Tanner’s point is important because it suggests that a place like Detroit was a contested space on many levels, and various Indigenous communities roamed around prior to French colonization. When Cadillac occupied the area, he recognized that it was not a safe place, and he needed allies. As a result, he beckoned Midwestern Indigenous communities to come and settle at the fort. Indigenous allies provided protection from the hostile Iroquois, food for military personnel, and furs for traders. The Wyandot from Michilimackinac were among the first to accept Cadillac’s invitation in 1703, joining the already resident Tionontati—a tribal group who spoke Huron. Over the next few years other tribal communities joined the Huron at the fort, including some Ottawa from Mackinac, two Ojibwa bands called the Salteur and the Missisauigi, whom Cadillac suggested form a single village. A group of Pottawatomi and Miami came from the southeastern shore of Lake Michigan.

Apparently Cadillac mentioned a group of Openango, or “wolves,” which were probably a Delaware clan. By 1705, according to Tanner, “there were 2,000 Indians including 400 warriors living close to Detroit.”⁵¹ By 1712, only four tribal communities lived in the area: the Ojibwa, Ottawa, Pottawatomi, and Huron. The Missisauigi Ojibwa moved to the Thames River in Canada. The other Indigenous communities moved to near Lake St. Clair, and became eventually known as the “Chippewa of Saginaw Bay.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, “The Location of Indian Tribes in Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio,” in *Indians of Northern Ohio and Southeastern Michigan* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), 326, 327.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 329.

Violent conflict remained a unique part of fort Detroit's history. As historian Richard White has persuasively shown, Detroit was the "most volatile regional bloc in the *pays d'en haut*.⁵³ The violence, though, was not necessarily between the French and indigenous peoples in the area. Rather, it was between the Algonquian peoples and the Fox. However, histories of early Detroit are declension narratives. For example, Richard White writes, "the imperial contest over the *pays d'en haut* ended with the War of 1812. Indians, he further contends, "could no longer pose a major threat or be a major asset to an empire or a republic."⁵⁴ That is, while Native peoples created, along with European colonizers, a place of mutual negotiation and exchange, after the sudden ending to major indigenous moments of resistance such as Pontiac's Rebellion or the killing of Tecumseh in the War of 1812, Indian resistance was no more. The U.S. nation state had triumphed, and Native peoples' ability to shape history or political affairs was no more. But White's declension narrative tells only one side of the story. Detroit continued as a site of negotiation and treaty making, and more important, a space where Indigenous peoples still lived, well into the 19th century.

Following the American Revolution, Detroit remained a key site of conflict and negotiation. The British and the United States fought over Detroit during Seven Years' War (also French and Indian War) and the War of 1812. Other important treaties such as the Jay Treaty, formally called the *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of Americans*, named after Chief Justice and lead negotiator John Jay, between the British and United States allowed for Native communities to roam freely for hunting and trading in the Great Lakes region (which at the time was still occupied by

⁵³ White, *The Middle Ground*, 146.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 517.

British forces at Fort Detroit and Fort Mackinac). From 1805 to 1847, Detroit was the capital of Michigan. In 1807, Detroit was the place where the Ojibwa, Odawa, Potawatomi, and Wyandot signed the Treaty of Detroit. This treaty ceded lands in present day Southeast Michigan and Northwest Ohio to the U.S. In 1855, Odawa and Ojibwa bands ceded lands over to the U.S. Again, this occurred at Detroit. Detroit, then, has been a prominent space in British, French, and U.S. colonial histories. But it has also become an important place—paramount for this study—for late 19th and 20th century indigenous histories.

In the twentieth century, there is only one book that has been published on Detroit's Native American community. Edmund J. Danziger's *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit's American Indian Community* (1991) analyzes the postwar history of Detroit's collective Indigenous community using oral histories and relying on local organizational documents such as Detroit's American Indian Center and the North American Indian Association.⁵⁵ While his attempt to represent the experiences of Indians with Indian voices was commendable, it failed in two ways.

⁵⁵ J. Edmund Danziger, *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit's American Indian Community* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 36. For unpublished manuscripts see Beatrice Anne Bigony, "Migrants to the Cities: A Study of the Socioeconomic Status of Native Americans in Detroit and Michigan." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1974; Thomas E. Glass, "A Descriptive and Comparative Study of American Indian Children in the Detroit Public Schools." Ph.D. Dissertation, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1972; Gordon Douglas Northrup, "Pan-Indianism in the Metropolis: A Case Study of an Emergent Ethno-Syncretic Revitalization Movement." Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1970; Ralph L. West, "The Adjustment of the American Indian in Detroit: A Descriptive Study." Master's Thesis, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1950.

Table 1. Detroit's Population, 1880-1970 Bureau of U.S. Census, *United States Census of Population, 1880-1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, various years).

Year	Detroit	Metropolitan Area
1880	34
1890	11
1900	14
1910	41
1920	155
1930	350
1940	434
1950	730
1960	691	912
1970	2914	5693

First, although he demonstrated the political activism of Detroit Indians, he did not place it within its proper context: within the larger cultural and political arena of Detroit during the post World War II period, including deindustrialization, white flight, and the Black Freedom Struggle. Second, while he did represent the voices of women (in fact he mentions my family), he did not articulate how they were the key advocates for Indigenous sovereignty within a rapidly changing city. While mentioning women, he did not take seriously gender as a category of analysis. Nor did he tease out what an indigenous conception of Detroit might look like.

The theses and dissertations written on Detroit's Indigenous population has centered on understanding the maintenance of culture or the experience of children in the Detroit Public Schools. Although not intentional, these studies have viewed Native peoples as outside of modernity, as migrants to the city. They focus on coping strategies of living in the city, and avoid articulating an indigenous conception of urban space. This perspective is exemplified by the following quote: "Many Indians wrestled with the technical aspects of city life: crossing busy streets and riding buses and juggling checking accounts."⁵⁶ Although true, this ignores other

⁵⁶ Danziger, *Survival and Regeneration*, 32.

potential ways of viewing Indigenous experiences in cities, and avoids any recognition of Indigenous conceptions of Detroit. We must ask important questions regarding Detroit's history in particular, and urban indigenous history more specifically: is it that Native peoples are estranged from the urban space, or is the urban place estranged from Indigenous people, especially given the fact that this was Indigenous land?

Indigeneity, Modernity and Method

Modernity

Indigenous people in Western literature have been used historically by white people as a foil for either critiquing their own societies at particular moments, using such slogans as the “noble savage,” or for legitimizing their bloodthirsty ambitions for Indigenous land and resources.⁵⁷ Beginning with the work of Roy Harvey Pearce, we can begin to trace the contradictory ideas of “savagism” and “civilization”—the dichotomy used under the broader realm of modernity. Dialectic in nature, these ideas have proven timeless—timeless in the sense that it is reinvoked at least once a generation. White people have used Indians as a medium through which to critique their contemporary societies or to illustrate their progress from nature's “savage” past to modernization's contemporary “progression.” During the European Enlightenment of the 18th century, European philosophers and intellectuals such as Rousseau

⁵⁷ We can begin a discussion on “savagism” and “civilization” with Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Press, 1979); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Hartford: Yale University Press, 1998).

and Locke utilized the “Noble Savage” to “criticize European institutions of the period.”⁵⁸

However, with the triumph of the U.S. and French Revolutions, this need changed. The “Noble Savage” became a romantic “savage” with little reason and needed to be overcome by liberal ideas of progress. This happened in literature and U.S. policy. The shift from “Noble Savage” to a trope for explaining the United States’ rapid expansion and dispossession policies were exemplified in historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s now infamous “frontier thesis.”

Since Pearce, authors Robert Berkhofer and Philip Deloria have written on these ideas as ideologies across time. Although differing in many ways, a major link has been how Indigenous people have been used as a foil in western thought and literature. They have also illustrated the link between the construction of nation-state ideas. Deloria departed significantly by showing not only how White Americans constructed national identities with Indians as the backdrop, but also the complicated agency of Native peoples who also “played Indian” for economic or other gains. “Indians, it is clear, are not simply useful symbols of the love-hate ambivalence of civilization and savagery,” writes Deloria, “rather, the contradictions embedded in noble savagery have themselves been the precondition for the formation of American identities.” Deloria’s argument could also be applied to how elite Detroiters imagined their own city. Deloria continues, “To understand the various ways Americans have contested and constructed national identities, we must constantly return to the original mysteries of Indianness.”⁵⁹ In the case of Detroit, we must return to the actual processes of Indigenous erasure in the City, coupled with the development of the modern city.

⁵⁸ Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979,) 77.

⁵⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 4.

Any discussion of urban Indigenous history is also a discussion of modernity. Usually this conversation is rooted in a deficit perspective: what Indigenous people are not and what they cannot do in an urban area as well as the idea that they came mostly at the behest of Federal Indian Policies in the postwar era. More specifically, the urban—representing modernity—and the Indigenous—representing pre-modernity—are incompatible. But that should not be the case. Indigenous peoples and modernity—urban spaces—are not in fact incompatible. As Scott Richard Lyons writes, “Indian space is never defined by tradition or culture alone because Native people migrate in modern times as well.”⁶⁰ It is not enough to mention that the urban and the Indigenous are compatible. It requires a leap into the unknown, or rather imagining histories of Indigenous people where there might not be “evidence.”

Similar to White Earth Ojibwa historian Jean O’Brien, I want to suggest, “The *local* gave particular valence to the twinned story of non-Indian modernity and Indian extinction.”⁶¹ Although she writes on the erasure of Indigenous presences through New England’s history writers, her conceptual work is useful for my analysis of Detroit. Though elite white Detroiters did not spend as much time writing Indigenous people out of their history, at particular moments, they did make sure that everyone knew that while Detroit was becoming modern, the only thing indigeneity was useful for was at a symbolic level, used to shift from savagery to civilization.

In Detroit, settler modernity emerged along with Indigenous *non*-modernity in the form of gendered discourses that valued white men’s domination of space and their seeding of Detroit. These discourses were used to erase an Indigenous presence and highlight the emergence of

⁶⁰ Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 21.

⁶¹ Jean O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xiv.

Detroit's (or settler) modernity. Settlers were after a uniquely white or at least non-Indigenous origins story to Detroit that they could call their own.

In using modernity, I utilize the recent work of Anishinaabe scholar Richard Scott Lyons. In *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (2010), he writes convincingly that Indigenous studies scholars should embrace the great diversity that makes up Indigenous communities and nations. His work challenges the idea of "traditional" which myopically place Indigenous people into boxes that ignore how they actually live. He advocates for the concept of indigenous modernity. He writes, "As for modernity, I have in mind a general sense of the new, a feeling regarding one's life in 'modern times' that can be distinguished from 'the way we used to live.'"⁶² In writing about Indigenous people in the development of urban spaces, my aim is not to make uncritical assumptions about tradition or indigeneity that is "authentic" to Detroit. Instead, like Lyons, I want to underscore the uniqueness of Indigenous people, but also critically examine how they actually exist in urban areas. As Lyons writes, "To embrace modernity is to usher in other modern concepts." However, "Indigenous modernity requires" also "a different relationship to the past, one that does not seek to go backward but instead attempts to bring the past forward."⁶³ For urban history, a different relationship to the past requires that we embrace the idea that we analyze indigeneity as a category analysis that is not bound by the unreal standards of "authenticity."

Métis scholar Chris Andersen's recent essay "Urban Landscapes of North America" presents an interesting point for understanding the urban and indigeneity. Andersen's essay

⁶² Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 11.

⁶³ Scott Richard Lyons, "Actually Existing Indian Nations: Modernity, Diversity, and the Future of Native American Studies," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 305.

considers the urban Indigenous experience and scholarship in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S., framing his analysis through Coll Thrush's "ghosting" concept and Renya Ramirez's Native hubs. Though he admires Thrush's work, he does believe that the ghosting concept is dangerous because it is a colonial understanding that presupposes the idea that the urban and the Indigenous are incompatible (he is quick to point out that this is not what Thrush is doing!). Instead, he prefers Ramirez's Native hubs, which he believe better illustrates a positive approach to analyzing the urban Indigenous experience.

Andersen writes that "Native hubs" is more useful because "it requires only (!) that we presuppose the legitimacy of urban Indigeneity and document that 'livedness' of its complexity and the ways in which urban areas serve to connect Indigenous peoples inside and out of those locales."⁶⁴ Andersen suggests that we might use interculturality, based upon the work of Ramirez, to understand the urban Indigenous experience. "To speak of indigenization of urban space," writes Andersen, "is to speak of interculturality."⁶⁵ He is quick to point out that he is not referring to "interculturality as a diminished offshoot of the 'authentic' culture of rural spaces but, rather, interculturality produced in terms of distinctive constellation of power and social relations *specific* to urban spaces."⁶⁶ The idea of interculturality is useful because it suggests that urban indigeneity is a thing that already exists, and our job as scholars is to understand the process, or how urban Indigenous people make meaning of indigeneity. Yet, the history of indigeneity in Detroit does not fit so easily in this framework, for it involves both processes of

⁶⁴ Chris Andersen, "Urban Landscapes of North America," in *The World of Indigenous North America*, ed. Robert Warrior (New York: Routledge, 2014), 150.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

“ghosting,” perhaps better termed erasure, and the urban space as a Native hub. In other words, it is perhaps best to understand both perspectives, especially as they relate to Detroit.

Indigenous space in Detroit is constructed under two narratives. First, we must understand how various actors—Native, white, and black—used indigeneity throughout the city’s modern history. A major part of understanding space in Detroit is erasure and revitalization. As elite whites built, both literally and in their cultural imagination, a city upon a hill, they used the histories of Indigenous people, as cultural symbols, to construct a space of their own creation. Thus, how Detroit is built, again, in the cultural imagination, and how that impacted Indigenous people were not necessarily constructed through the built environment, but through elite white men’s cultural imaginings and how they deployed indigeneity. Native people had to respond to that cultural framing—in addition to others, though simply being acknowledged in a city based upon erasure and then the Black-White binary made it doubly hard to assert their presence as Indigenous people (though many fought for their rights in the city!).

Second, we must understand Detroit, as a space, in the cultural imagination. While the built environment in a place like Detroit is important, I place little emphasis on it because it was the cultural imaginings and the deployment of indigeneity that were crucial to the city’s modern development and its relationship to indigeneity, though the building being cast as modern. Indeed, the city was a space created by white men, a modern place, where they could be “indigenous,” and Indigenous people, for most of the twentieth century, were invisible, erased, no longer there.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Indigenous people and cities are incompatible in modern history. Yet, I want to emphasize that Indigenous people throughout North America did have cities, such as Cahokia and the cities built in the Aztec and Inca empires. However, modernity and indigeneity, post 1870s, were seen as incompatible in the U.S. because whites believed that Indigenous people were disappearing. For work on Cahokia see Timothy Pauketat, *Cahokia: Ancient America’s Great City on the*

I have spent a considerable amount of time outlining the scholarship of both Detroit and urban Indigenous history. I am mostly interested in how various actors deploy and employ indigeneity in Detroit within the cultural imagination. Therefore, I do not focus explicitly on the built environment of the city. The built environment does impact where and how people live, what choices they make, and how they understand themselves, but that is not a major focus in this dissertation.

Yet, I find the work of public intellectual Lewis Mumford useful for thinking about the city, and what it means. Mumford writes, “the essential physical means of a city’s existence are the fixed site, the durable shelter, the permanent facilities for assembly, interchange, and storage.”⁶⁸ He continues, “the essential social means are the social division of labor, which serves not merely the economic life but the cultural processes.”⁶⁹ Most recently, narratives of Detroit historically has been dominated by discussions of urban decline, which include a heavy focus on abandoned buildings and vacant lots; those stories, while important, are not my focus.⁷⁰

Mississippi (New York: Penguin, 2009). See also C. Matthew Snipp, “American Indians and Alaska Natives in Urban Environments,” in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, ed. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 173–192. Though he focuses on 20th century in urban areas, he does mention that Native people and cities are not new. The modern formation of settler cities without Indigenous people is new.

⁶⁸ Lewis Mumford, “What Is a City?,” in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard LeGates and Frederic Stout, 5th ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 93.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Below are a few examples of current scholarship on (contemporary) Detroit. See, George Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *The Ruins of Detroit* (Steidl, 2010). The authors’ website has pictures that signals what once was a thriving city to a city of ruins. <http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit/index.html>; for another contemporary reading of Detroit’s current state see, journalist Charlie LeDuff’s, *Detroit: An American Autopsy*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2013). John Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining*

Mumford further states that a total understanding of the city is “a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, an aesthetic symbolic of collective unity.”⁷¹ There has been no sophisticated analysis of Detroit, its Indigenous inhabitants, and how the actual physical spaces impacted their lives. One reason might be that, for the most part, Native people were not segregated as systematically as, for example, Black Americans. They were rendered invisible. Future scholarship on urban Indigenous history, especially Detroit, might consider focusing on how the built environment impacted Native people—and not in a stereotypical way, such as, because they are Native therefore they have a mysterious connection to land.

Methodological Approach

My research is grounded methodologically in the idea that settler colonialism, race, gender and culture are important categories for understanding the experiences of Indigenous people in urban areas. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has remarked, “The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism--the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft.”⁷² I rely on social and cultural approaches to history; those that understand race, gender, and culture as socially constructed ideologies that are at the core of a settler society. These approaches take care to explore race, colonialism, and gender as processes that not only impact,

an American City (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010). See also, Joe T. Darden and Richard W. Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013).

⁷¹ Mumford, “What is a city?,” 93.

⁷² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 2.

but are also shaped by everyday people in history.⁷³ My dissertation is a cultural and social history of race and urban development in modern Detroit. The project is situated at the nexus of urban history and Native studies, where they meet; my project is an attempt to explain where they meet, and where we might go. I largely write it from an urban Indigenous studies perspective. That is, while I acknowledge other cultural, ethnic, and racial groups, my project is firmly situated at the intersection of urban history and Indigenous studies, with a focus on the long history of Indigenous people in cities, and how various people deployed indigeneity in modern Detroit.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes that culture is “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic norms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”⁷⁴ I use Geertz’s definition of culture as a maneuver into defining cultural history. Cultural history is used to broadly capture the varying symbols of meaning embedded in the cultures of people, and the interaction of said peoples at particular historical moments. For my dissertation, though, cultural history is also about conflict, or how settlers have tried to culturally reimagine Detroit as a space of their own but were confounded with the very presence of actual Indigenous people. Within these conflicts emerge symbols of meanings and competing notions of historical memory that are played out on stage in the urban theatre that is Detroit.

⁷³ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Cornelia Dayton and Lisa Levenstein, “The Big Tent of U.S. Women’s and Gender History: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 3 (December 2012): 793–817; Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

⁷⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

Indigenous representation (and invisibility) is a key component of Detroit's cultural history. How Indigenous people are represented or not represented within these symbols of meaning impact how historical memory in Detroit is constructed. Indigenous people were never passive in the creation and imagining of these symbolic meanings, however. Throughout the 120-year period of this dissertation, Indigenous people challenged how they would be represented and what that might look like. By the latter part of the 20th century, they were able to more explicitly challenge—if not change—how they were represented in the white cultural/historical imagination. The process of cultural history in Detroit and its impact on Indigenous people are by nature, also constructed and embedded in social meanings and processes.

A cultural and social history of Detroit is both required in helping unpack the dynamic processes of how power and everyday forms of colonialism operate within the urban place. I think to do a quality urban Indigenous history requires the utilization of more Indigenous-centered sources to see how historical subjects understood their time in a certain urban place. And it allows for them to evolve in the swiftly changing tides of history. To solely do a cultural (urban) history of Indigenous people in a city we run the risk of perpetuating the idea of Indigenous peoples as relics of the past. To only do a social (urban) history, specifically one of migration, perpetuates the idea that Native peoples are immigrants to the city. But finding how Indigenous peoples make meaning of the literal place Detroit also lends itself to a social and cultural understanding of place, and people's relationship to that place. The style-shifting

between the two helps better reimagine Detroit as an Indigenous space and the role that Indigenous played in shaping its modern development.⁷⁵

In addition, I conducted 8 oral histories with members of Detroit's Indigenous community. I used a variety of methods to solicit potential interviewees. First, I asked family members of mine (who played an important role in postwar Detroit Indigenous activism) to tell me about potential interviewees. I also utilized my connections to social media, including Facebook to solicit potential participants. This method allowed me to connect with other people who had participated in the cultural and educational activities of the postwar Indigenous community.

A Note on Episodes as a Framework

Indigenous Detroit is like a play. There are a multitude of actors and stages. I am the director and producer of these moving parts. This dissertation is organized around episodes. In order to do the cultural and social history, and to illustrate how Indigenous people were central to the development of modern Detroit (and race relations), its necessary to do this. First, the sources have led me to writing such a dissertation. Two, covering a longer time span without losing focus on the major themes of modernity, race, and representation (i.e., cultural and social history) requires a honing in on specific—indeed crucial—moments in Detroit's history. In other words, my aim is not to write a long, chronological narrative about the Indigenous experience in Detroit. Instead, I want to capture the moments where Detroit is changing significantly, and the role that

⁷⁵ I am taking this linguistic term coined by H. Samy Alim, as described in his co-authored book with Geneva Smitherman titled, *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Though the book is about President Obama's linguistic choices, I use the term here to suggest that, in doing urban Indigenous history, you cannot do solely cultural or social, you need both, in order to illuminate the deep relationship between people and place, between indigeneity and claims to space.

Indigenous people played and how various actors used the rhetoric of indigeneity in order to make claim to Detroit and modernity.

A major aim of this dissertation is to understand how indigeneity is deployed and employed by both Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people. The use of indigeneity goes beyond Indigenous people. As I argue throughout the dissertation, indigeneity, or representations, were crucial to the development of modern Detroit. Therefore, to look at indigeneity as a “transit”⁷⁶ helps us to further combine indigeneity and Indigenous people within the contours of urban development—not outside of it. As a result, I utilize episodes as a framework in order to understand how various actors deploy indigeneity and to explore the processes and impact of that deployment.

⁷⁶ Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii. Though I use Byrd’s definition not necessarily to see how U.S. empire and elites deploy indigeneity. I think it is useful as a concept and phrase to explain how and why it is used within the confines of a settler society.

Chapter 1: Between Past and Presence: Settler Imaginings, Indigenous Disruptions, and Other Encounters in Waawayyaattanong (Detroit), 1871-1922

During the post-Civil War Era, U.S.-Indigenous relations began to rapidly change. Historian C. Joe Genetin-Pilawa writes of this period, “emerging late-nineteenth-century conceptions of progress and modernity could not include a place for Indigenous political identities because, to the federal government and the American nation, such identities directly opposed progress, rationality, and the state.”⁷⁷ Though federal policy impacted tribal nations in different ways, at least two most ardently affected Indigenous-federal government relationships during the time.

In 1871 the United States Congress stopped all treaty making with Indigenous tribes. In 1885, congress passed the Major Crimes Act. The bill defined seven crimes, which gave federal jurisdiction over Indigenous nations. The crimes were: murder, rape, larceny, arson, assault with the intent to kill, manslaughter and burglary.⁷⁸ In line with further eroding tribal sovereignty was the passing of the Dawes Act (or General Allotment Act of 1887). This act effectively parceled out land to individual members of tribal nations, allowing settlers more opportunities to further occupy land. Though the post-Civil War era was the beginning of the nadir for Indigenous nations, cities like Detroit began to quickly modernize.

By the 1870s, Detroit was at its genesis of becoming a leading manufacturer. Though the city still processed raw materials (i.e. paper products from the timber industry) and continued to produce printing and publishing, bread making, and ship building, all very old commercial

⁷⁷ C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight over Federal Indian Policy After the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 25. For the classic study of this period see, Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

ventures, its economy began to shift to a largely manufacturing one. Between 1860 and 1870, the number of manufacturing jobs increased from 1,363 to 10,612. By 1880, those jobs increased to 16,100 and, in 1890, to 34,535. Iron and steel products became the largest grossing. Detroit ranked 17th in value of its among other manufacturing cities. While Detroit was quickly on its way to becoming the Motor City, a previously unacknowledged part of the city's modernization project was the use of Indigenous imagery and people in shaping the city's ascent.

A significant part of Detroit's modernization project triggered a reimagining of its past—a past that included Indigenous representations. Detroit's elite used Indigenous imaginings as a lever to construct ideas about themselves and the rapidly developing city around them. I argue that in a quest to define Detroit's urban standing, elite white men both memorialized and erased Detroit's Indigenous past in order to cast Detroit as the epitome of modernity. In so doing, they created a paradox of settler imaginings. The city's elite efforts were challenged by three Indigenous presences, which all point towards the paradox and tensions of settler constructed narratives of indigeneity and modernity.

In the first Indigenous presence, I examine Hunkpapa Lakota Sitting Bull's visit to Detroit in the late 19th century. Sitting Bull's short visit, as a brief resident of the city, challenged ideas about Indigenous disappearance and their inability to engage with a city cast as modern. In the second Indigenous presence, I analyze elite white men's constructed narratives about Pontiac. A local memorial, Pontiac symbolized elite white men's tensions of constructing a city of their own choosing, one in which they were able to conquer their past by memorializing Pontiac, in their present. In the final Indigenous presence, I examine the presence of Indigenous people from Bkejwanong (Walpole Island First Nations Reserve), and how they were narrated in Detroit's local media. These three presences are important for understanding Detroit's development and its

relationship to indigeneity because they gesture towards the tensions that settlers had not only as they began modernizing the city, but also operating in a larger narrative of Indigenous demise, which was so prevalent in late 19th and early 20th century America.⁷⁹

Indigenous Paradox/Presence Number One: Sitting Bull

Between 1870 and 1910, a low of only four Indigenous people were counted in the U.S. Census; by 1910, forty-one were reported.⁸⁰ Relying on the Census for documenting Indigenous people during a period where they were supposed to have vanished onto reservations. These numbers, though, do not take into account the hundreds, if not thousands of Indigenous people who continued traveling to Detroit. Nor can the census take into account how elite's utilized indigeneity within the settler imagination.

Historian David T. McNab writes that between the years 1884 and 1928, “it is fairly evident that neither the American nor the Canadian governments chose to enforce the boundary

⁷⁹ See Frederick Jackson Turner's, *The Frontier in American History*. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920. Turner is perhaps most famous in formulating the savagery and civilization dichotomy, which had the consequence of telling both historians and everyday people that Indigenous people were disappearing. In pictorial references, perhaps no one better illustrates the point of Indigenous demise more than Edward S. Curtis' *The North American Indian*. This book, romanticized and helped codify the popular idea of Indigenous demise in the early part of the 20th century.

⁸⁰ U.S. Census. For a thirty-year period, the census counted only those Native Americans, whom they called “civilized,” who paid taxes. Though scholars of urban Indigenous history continue to use the census to define how many people came to Detroit. While it is important, it breaks down on two levels. First, the U.S. census does not adequately define tribal belonging and how a tribal community incorporates Native peoples into their community. It ignores kinship ties. Second, for the time period of this chapter, the U.S. census does not take into account Native migratory patterns.

as it pertained to Aboriginal people.”⁸¹ Of the Indigenous travelers to Detroit during this period, performers such as Sitting Bull were one of them. He came to Detroit as a part of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West.⁸²

Buffalo Bill’s Wild West traveled to Detroit for a two-day performance held on September 4 and 5, 1885. The female shooter Annie Oakley came, the Cowboy Kid, and, of course, Indigenous performers were a part of the show. One of those performers was Hunkpapa Lakota Medicine Man, Sitting Bull. Though the local newspapers advertised the event, the actual performance was not well documented. However, a meeting held between Sitting Bull and elite Detroit politicians at Recreation Park was. Although his stay was brief, the encounter between Sitting Bull and elite whites, as well as their representation of him, reveal the larger attitudes that settlers of Detroit had about Indigenous Peoples upon encountering them. Importantly, settlers viewed Sitting Bull through the lens of their own settler masculinity.

It is not surprising that Sitting Bull came to Detroit. Historian Robert Utley explains that during the last six years of Sitting Bull’s life, he traveled extensively.⁸³ Sitting Bull only participated in one season of Buffalo Bill’s show. His travels, though, expanded Sitting Bull’s view of the world, and while he marveled at aspects of modernity, he found it difficult to shake settler imaginings of him.

⁸¹ David T. McNab, “‘Those Freebooters Would Shoot Me Like a Dog’: American Terrorists and Homeland Security in the Journals of Ezhaaswe (William A. Elias [1856-1929]),” in *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borderlands*, Aboriginal Studies (London, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 126.

⁸² For an extensive history of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and the experiences of Indigenous performers see, L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*, 1st. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996).

⁸³ Robert M. Utley, *Sitting Bull: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2008), 265.



Figure 2. Recreation Park was home to the Detroit Wolverine from 1881-1888. Picture in the Public Domain.

Sitting Bull came during the end of the so-called Indian wars on the plains, and five years before the Wounded Knee Massacre and his own death. It was during a time where whites for the most part no longer feared armed Indigenous resistance. Simultaneously, settlers began memorializing Indigenous peoples of centuries past.⁸⁴ Yet, Sitting Bull was one of the few Indigenous people lauded by settlers before he died. He was praised—in an ironic and twisted way—for his resistance to U.S. aggression and expansion. As a result, his coming to Detroit, and the magnificent way in which he was received, was not surprising.

On September 4, at one in the afternoon, a train left the Russell House to head to Recreation Park to meet the infamous “chief” Sitting Bull. Recreation Park was a baseball field home to the Detroit Wolverines who played in the National League from 1881-1888. It was demolished in 1894. Those who came to meet Sitting Bull at the tent erected for him were government officials and businessmen of Detroit; they included: Mayor Stephen Benedict Grummond (served from 1884-1885), President Kaiser of the Lower House, Senator Thomas W.

⁸⁴ See for example, James Joseph Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

Palmer (an descendant of early pioneer Detroit families), Michigan's Secretary of State Harry Conant (1883-1887), and Councilmen H.E. Champion and Theodore Rentz.

The meeting was an afternoon lunch break, which included beer and lemonade for drinking, along with snack foods and a rib roast. After the meal, introductions were made. Crow Eagle, who stood to Sitting Bull's left, also Lakota, and to his right Bill Halsey, the interpreter, accompanied him. While smoking his cigar and looking around, Sitting Bull greeted each man with the masculine Lakota greeting, "hau." The visitors were eager to speak with the Lakota medicine man.

Sitting Bull was greatly admired and well respected by his visitors. Their words reveal so. "Tell Bull that he is one of our law-makers," said Senator Palmer. "We hope soon to place the entire Indian question in the hands of the War department, and...when we do the Indians will be honestly and liberally dealt with." They even seemed to seek his approval. Councilmen Rentz added, "the good time coming for the Indians, as predicted by our Mayor will be due to the honest and fairness of a good democratic institution." Pleased to hear such responses, Sitting Bull responded, through Halsey, the interpreter, "The Bull says that he believes he is going to do the fair thing by the Indians." He further said, "he says that President Grover Cleveland sent Sheridan out to see the Cheyennes, and that action shows that the Democratic administration are bound to see fair play for the Indians." After making this brief dialogue, Secretary of State Conant was introduced to Sitting Bull and he said, "Hau! Big brave! Big, good brave!" Apparently Sitting Bull's approval made Conant the most talked about person at the reception, besides, of course Sitting Bull.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ "The Indian General, Buffalo Bill's Company and Sitting Bull Reach Detroit. Sitting Bull "Receives Mayor Grummond and Other Dignitaries," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI, September 5, 1885).

Sitting Bull was not a passive object simply stuck under the settler imagination. Although he spoke through an interpreter, Sitting Bull was able to subtly critique Detroit and the society he saw growing around him—both in the Lakota and Indigenous societies and white, settler society. Because he spoke through an interpreter, we surely have to be careful in how his words were expressed, even if genuine. However, what we have record illustrates the reality of Indigenous people during the day: brokering what little political leverage they could gather. Like other performers in Wild West Shows, Sitting Bull's encounter was a "contact zone" between Indigenous culture and performance and settler cultural expectations and a gaze of expectations.⁸⁶

A young boy asked Sitting Bull if he was at Custer's last stand at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Sitting Bull replied, "Yes he was near there, but not in the fight." Dissatisfied with the simple response—illustrating that settler imaginations reached even boyhood—the young boy asked, "Did you kill Custer?" Sitting Bull replied, "I did not. I do not know who killed Custer." A reporter for the *Detroit Free Press* followed with an entirely different question, "What shall you say to your people when you go back to them, about white people?" This was a curious question, and Sitting Bull looked puzzled. But then his eyes opened wide, he changed his posture, and although his Lakota was unintelligible to everyone in his tent except for he, Crow Eagle, and the interpreter, he said eloquently:

⁸⁶ Linda Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012). McNenly argues, "Wild West shows were also nation-building projects in that that shaped the construction of American identity and attempted to define, situate, and justify the place of Native peoples in America" (71).

I have seen the white people and their great chief. I have seen how they live and my eyes opened. I shall tell my children that the whites are as the leaves of the forest, and that to them we are but as the single berry left on the bush to wither and die in the winter. I shall tell them that the whites are our friends and will keep us and protect us, and that the white chief has given promise to do so.⁸⁷

Based upon his extensive travels and many conversations with elite whites over his lifetime (especially after violent resistance did not seem to be a legitimate course of action), Sitting Bull saw the writing on the wall. But did he actually believe that Lakota and other Indigenous peoples were simply a single berry left on the tree, rapidly withering away? His statement was not simply one of despair. He realized that settler society did not care very much for Indigenous peoples, and they were determined to impose their own conception of civilization upon Lakota and other Indigenous communities by further stripping them of land and resources. But he shifted quickly, telling his audience that whites would protect his people. Although this statement was rooted in hope, it was also a brilliant and common rhetorical strategy used by Indigenous people during the time.⁸⁸ With the intention of laying to rest white fears of Indigenous peoples, he told them what they wanted to hear: that Indigenous peoples would place their well-being with settlers.

Sitting Bull's time in Detroit was good. He was able to make some money and push forward his agenda for Lakota rights, even in a minor way. Yet his reception by Detroit settlers is difficult to understand. On the one hand, they might have respected his past exploits as an "Indian brave," a common trope during a period in popular discourse in which Indigenous people

⁸⁷ *Detroit Free Press*, September 5, 1885.

⁸⁸ See Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment* and Frederick Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Political Activism and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

were supposed to be a vanishing race. On the other hand, perhaps they respected him in the present, someone with which they could see as a great leader engaging with “civilization” but stubbornly resisting it at the same time. Regardless, these politicians left from Sitting Bull having learned a lot about the man. Yet if elite white men did, the local newspapers did not.

The Detroit area media found it difficult to escape the settler masculine construction of Indigenous masculinity. A newspaper column that discussed Sitting Bull’s reception and performance in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West was disappointed—in what they did not see. The disappointment was not rooted in the performance per se; rather, it was based upon what the author believed was a lack of authenticity—or, what the lack of Sitting Bull the man not appealing to the settler imaginings of the audience. “Beyond doubt, Sitting Bull is brave and has the usual cunning of his race,” read the column, “but there is another and truer side to his nature which all the feathers and other ornaments on earth cannot hide from the man who has been much in Indian country.”⁸⁹ The article expressed disappointment that Sitting Bull, the epitome of Indigenous masculinity, did not fit his understanding because he engaged in modernity.

The author was not satisfied with actual Indigenous peoples; the author wanted Indigenous performers to meet the settler desires of authenticity. The author desired the pristine scene of “squaws chopping wood” or “carrying buckets of water with a papoose or two” on their backs. Indeed the performance would have met the gross desires of the settler imagination if Sitting Bull himself had a “canoe paddle in one hand and a bottle of whiskey in the other.”⁹⁰ Although the performance would not have been as entertaining, “the realism would have been

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

there.”⁹¹ The symbolism of Sitting Bull, the perfect embodiment of a settler construction of Indigenous masculinity, canoeing in a paddle with whiskey is very profound, reflecting the localized understanding of Indigenous stereotypes. Local, Detroit Indigenous history could not escape the actual presence of the Great Lakes waterways, and their experience dealing with actual Indigenous people in Michigan and from Walpole Island. The water perhaps signifying the inability of Indigenous people to move into modernity, especially in Detroit, where one could paddle in the canoe just outside of the city, but cannot quite get close enough. Indigenous people like Sitting Bull could live next to modernity, witness it, feel it, smell it; but they could not partake in it.

It was not enough that “real” Indigenous peoples participated in the performance, played Indian. Their physical bodies were only useful if they appealed to the on-going imaginings of settlers. They looked at Sitting Bull through their own lens—the lens of whiteness, a masculine Victorian whiteness—that limits those in power to imagine real conceptions of Indigenous peoples. This representation also showed the limits of performances as a way to challenge settler gaze.⁹² Indigenous people were imagined in a limited scope, and for them to go beyond that—beyond the realm of their own humanity—they could not escape.

Sitting Bull departed on September 5, and history does not reveal to us whether he returned to Detroit. Yet his name reappeared nearly sixteen years later, with the reappearance of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West performance. Once more, the mention of Sitting Bull was dominated by settler imaginations about their constructed character—not the person. An article reprinted in the *Detroit Free Press* sixteen years later, eleven years after Sitting Bull was murdered titled,

⁹¹ *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI, September 5, 1885).

⁹² McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*.

“Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill: Latter's Big Show Will Exhibit at Detroit Tuesday Afternoon and Evening” showed the infamous picture of Sitting Bull in full regalia standing to the left of William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill). The tone of the article suggests that Native peoples were conquered and no longer presented a threat to settlers, or U.S. progress, as Chiricahua Apache and Lakota Red Cloud were. Geronimo was now a prisoner at Fort Still; Red Cloud was confined to the Pine Ridge Reservation. While they had been conquered, they did no longer fit the masculine imagination. In contrast, “Sitting Bull was a warrior to his death.” Indeed he died “as he had lived, the incarnation of red defiance and independence.” The discourse about Sitting Bull was based upon the history and valorization of Indigenous resistance through warfare. Unfortunately, it illustrated the *Detroit Free Press*’ idealized stories about Indigenous people. They could not appreciate other forms of resistance that had been building up during the last decade of the 19th century. Indigenous people’s presence in Detroit, real or imagined, was largely based upon the past—or what settler imaginations wanted to remember. I now turn to the local history of Detroit, revealing that, settlers also utilized Indigenous people of their past, to construct the modernity of their present.

Indigenous Paradox/Presence Number Two: Encountering Pontiac in Detroit’s Present

Indigenous people have been used in Western literature as the foil for either critiquing their own societies at particular moments, using phrases such as “the “noble savage.”⁹³ Early

⁹³ Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Press, 1979).

British colonists played Indian when dumping British Tea into the Boston Harbor.⁹⁴ Local histories in cities and towns throughout the United States have used Indigenous historical subjects (people, representations, and stories) to construct their sense of belonging to a local place.⁹⁵ Indeed, White Earth Anishinaabe historian Jean M. O'Brien writes, "local stories were leashed to a larger national narrative of the 'vanishing Indian' as a generalized trope and disseminated not just in the form of the written word but also in a rich ceremonial cycle of pageants, commemorations, monument building, and lecture hall performance. They both served as entertainment and they inscribed meanings in particular places."⁹⁶ In the case of Detroit, Pontiac's story served as the "thing" to co-construct settler relationship to Detroit.⁹⁷ Pontiac's story was like a haunting, which reveals, among other things, "salient conflicts and patterns in the history of [the] conquest" of Detroit. In other words, Pontiac's story is "a place's past speaking to its—and our—present."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Hartford: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁹⁵ James Joseph Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

⁹⁶ Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xiii.

⁹⁷ There is quite a bit of scholarship on Pontiac. Beginning with Francis Parkman. *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the War after the Conquest of Canada* (Boston, 1851); Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); William R. Nester, *"Haughty Uprisings": Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000); Howard Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

⁹⁸ Coll Thrush, "Hauntings as Indigenous Histories: Indigenous Ghosts and the Urban Past in Seattle," in *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*, Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush (eds.), 58.

Settlers believed it important to acknowledge and celebrate Detroit's Indigenous past; Pontiac was most prominent in these recollections. Unlike the coming of Sitting Bull, who had a national reputation, modern Detroit held a Pontiac as its local urban Indigenous narrative. The Indian chief Pontiac who took a conspicuous part in the early history of Detroit," read an article, "made himself so prominent that his name will be remembered by Detroiters for a hundred years to come."⁹⁹ Pontiac was important because he was used as the local trope to reimagine Detroit's historical narrative, shifting it away from a place occupied by "savages" to a civilized space. This shift in language was required in order for elite settlers to construct their local narrative of progress: from savagery to civilization. For Detroit, these discourses about Pontiac—mostly illustrated in newspapers—reveal the importance of Indigenous histories and representations of them to the construction of the urban place.

But another key aspect of settler historical narratives is to rewrite the history of these spaces—as settler spaces. The discourse about Pontiac is one example of how this works. It is not enough for them to say that they moved into civilization; settler colonial discourses require a connection with the Indigenous past, as a way for settlers to describe their own modernity.

Joel T. Headley, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, wrote two articles titled, "Pontiac: Or, the Siege of Detroit throughout 1882. Written in an intriguing and mystery style, he carefully wrote the history of Pontiac's "conspiracy." Importantly, these stories reveal also the importance of settler historical reimaginings, a unique type of discourse that helps readers of the present to better understand their current circumstance in relationship to the local history of place. An article Headley wrote on November 26, 1882 was most impressive. What is striking about his construction of the story are the depictions of Pontiac—as if he saw him at the time he was

⁹⁹ "Old Relics: Some Valuable Remembrances of the Indian Chief 'Pontiac'," *Detroit Free Press* (1858-1922) (Detroit, MI, February 4, 1872).

writing the column. Headley began this column by explaining the events that led up to the meeting between Pontiac and Major Gladwin, and what actually occurred at the meeting.

“Pontiac spoke with all that plausibility and deep dissimulation so characteristic of the Indian when plotting treachery.”¹⁰⁰ Every one of Pontiac’s movements were described in a similar way to how western settlers in popular culture had described Indigenous men: brave, stoic, and treacherous. “His features were not regular, but there was a boldness and sternness in their expression which awed the beholder; and his dark eye had a strange fascination in its glances.”¹⁰¹ These descriptions are stereotypical at best, but certainly make for a thrilling story.

After describing Pontiac, he homed in on the meeting between Pontiac and Gladwin. “Never was there a scene more thrilling, absorbing interest. There stood Pontiac—motionless, silent—the arm half extended, on which were fixed the glaring eyes of his chiefs, while the officers before him sat with compressed lips and bent brows, sternly awaiting the next movement.”¹⁰² Even as Pontiac remained calm, Headley relied on stereotypes of Indigenous men to make his point: “beyond the wrathful gleam of his fierce eye there was a troubled look, revealing the intense working of his fierce soul under all that calm exterior.”¹⁰³ But Gladwin, having learned of Pontiac’s plan from an Ojibwa woman, called Catherine the night before, did not budge. Headley also spoke of the boldness of Major Gladwin. When Pontiac went to offer the wampum belt of peace, iron clinked and Pontiac stood there, motionless. Gladwin stood and

¹⁰⁰ Joel Tyler Headley, “Pontiac: The Siege of Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, November 26, 1882).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

looked upon Pontiac, awaiting a sudden move; Pontiac looked upon Gladwin, now understanding that his plan had been revealed, at least the way Headley narrates it. He wrote, “these two men, burning with hatred toward each other, yet wearing the outward guise of friendship, and expressing mutual trust and confidence—while such an unsprung mine of death and slaughter lay at their feet—presented a scene not soon to be forgotten by the spectators.”¹⁰⁴ The story ends after a few days of fighting at the Fort.

The second half of the story, coming out on December 10, 1882, told of the struggles of soldiers during the conflict. Yet it ends with their eventual overcoming of Pontiac’s wrath, and the triumph over him. After learning that the French had made peace with the British, and that he would no longer have a chance to take over the Fort, Pontiac retreated: “he bowed his haughty spirit, and returned to Detroit and accepted the offers of peace.” Though Headley ended the story of Pontiac’s death in Illinois country, suggesting that while white men passed their test into civilization, he imagined what Pontiac could have been in a settler society: “Thus passed away this barbaric chief, who, had he occupied the same relative position in civilized that he did in savage life, with all its advantages of education, would have been one of the greatest men of the world.”¹⁰⁵ Recounting Pontiac’s story was useful because it helped settlers understand their importance to Detroit, and illustrated, in part, how Anglo-Saxons made claim to Detroit, over, also, French settlers. As one person put it: “But Detroit did not fall. It resisted Pontiac’s alternate

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Joel Tyler Headley, Pontiac, Or the Siege of Detroit, Part II *Detroit Free Press*, (December 10, 1882: Detroit, MI).

craft and violence. And was Detroit was the key to the whole situation, the Indians were at least beaten.”¹⁰⁶

Pontiac’s defeat was also memorialized in 1899. On November 28, 1899 at 3 PM, the Michigan Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Society of Colonial Wars dedicated a 27x56 inch bronze tablet to the city of Detroit, recognizing the site where the gateways of Fort Pontchartrain (Fort Detroit) existed. They also highlighted this as the place where Pontiac and a band of Indigenous peoples passed on May 7, 1763. The tablet read:

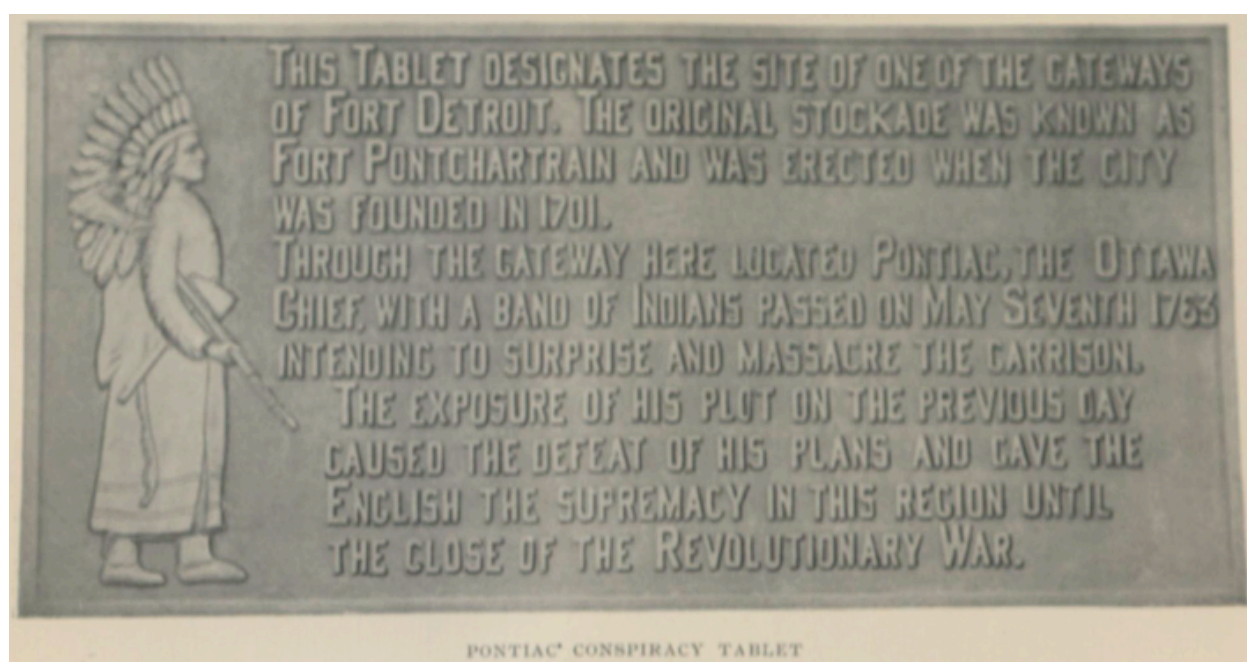


Figure 3. A photo memorializing Pontiac's demise, and the shift from British domination to American. Picture in the Public Domain

On the left side of the tablet was the picture of a tall, Indian “chief,” wearing a headdress, blankets and moccasins. It was said to be an “authentic portrait of the wily chief Pontiac.”¹⁰⁷ Of

¹⁰⁶ Albert Terhune, “Little Causes of Big Wars: To a Savage That Led to the ‘Pontiac Conspiracy’ War,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, April 11, 1914).

course, history has told us that there are no pictures of the real Pontiac. Again, this picture was based upon settler imaginations of him. Later that evening, they held an event with would celebrate the “passing of this territory from French to English sovereignty.” But other stories about Pontiac were also circulating in the late 19th century.

Former Senator Thomas W. Palmer (1830-1913), a prominent citizen of Detroit, was an ardent admirer of Detroit’s Indigenous past, especially that of Pontiac. Palmer was the son of Thomas Palmer, a highly successful businessman who came to Detroit at the close of the War of 1812. Palmer was born in Detroit on January 25, 1830. He served as a Republican senator, from March 4, 1883 until March 4, 1889. Coincidentally, Thomas W. Palmer was the president of the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. In general, he was a generous benefactor to the city of Detroit, helping erect the Michigan Soldiers and Sailors Monument at Campus Martius Park. He was also one of the founders and the first President of the Detroit Museum of Art, now known as the Detroit Institute of Arts. As can be seen, he was dedicated to constructing Detroit as the epitome of modernity. Writing on notable figures in Wayne County and Detroit, Frederick Carlisle wrote, “He cherishes for Michigan a love approaching idolatry.”¹⁰⁸

It is not clear why he was so fascinated with Pontiac. Yet he spent years of his life collecting artifacts and information on the Odawa chief. Palmer laboriously looked for Pontiac’s burial place—in Detroit. Curiously, a memorial of Pontiac already existed near St. Louis. However, Palmer reasoned that like other well-known Indigenous warriors—including

¹⁰⁷ “Unveiled To-Day: Tablet Commemorating Defeat of Pontiac Conspiracy,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, November 29, 1899).

¹⁰⁸ Fred Carlisle, *Wayne County Chronography of Notable Events in the History of the Northwest Territory and Wayne County. Period Embraced, 1531-1890. Together with Biographical Sketches of the Early Explorers and Pioneers.* (Detroit:: O.S. Gulley, Borman & Co., Printers, 1890), 125.

Tecumseh (Shawnee) and Black Hawk (Sauk)—Pontiac, too, should be memorialized locally, near Detroit. Although he could never be sure of the actual resting place of Pontiac’s bones, he took it upon himself to assemble an artificial grave in Pontiac’s honor. “Hence upon this farm, a few miles north of Detroit, he laid out a little plot of ground.” On his farm he surrounded the constructed grave with an iron fence, and above a mound of dirt he erected a monument with an inscription setting forth appropriate historical information concerning the first of Michigan’s warriors and a tribute to his bravery and virtues.” Apparently Palmer’s imitation Pontiac burial place became an intriguing historical spot for visitors.¹⁰⁹

The erection of Pontiac’s grave is striking for at least a few reasons. One, a grave memorializing Pontiac was already constructed, and—if not accurate—simply existed. Second, it was general knowledge at the time that following Pontiac’s failed seizure of Detroit, and especially losing favor among other Indigenous peoples in the area, he departed for Illinois country. These two reasons alone would seem to discourage someone from creating a false grave. However, settlers require Indigenous peoples, or at least a history to connect to in order to move forward. It is not enough to simply recount an Indigenous past—settlers need also the most barbaric, savage historical accounts possible in order to justify their own existence as modern subjects.¹¹⁰ Pontiac’s grave was not simply a reimagining of history; but Pontiac’s grave was

¹⁰⁹ William Curtis, “Pontiac’s Grave: Wm. E. Curtis Tells of Senator Palmer’s Mound,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, August 8, 1901).

¹¹⁰ For an example of this perspective in early American history, especially as it relates to Thomas Jefferson, see, Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). Wallace writes of Jefferson’s perspective, “Ever in his thoughts (and to a great degree in reality) there were enemies—always the British, at times the French and Spanish—just outside the expanding circle of the American nation, threatening to block that ‘final consolidation’ of the American world he sought to achieve. And in this view, all too often allied with these spoilers of the American dream, were the Indians, the ‘merciless savages’ who had fought throughout his lifetime to block

supposed to serve as the local monument to connect settlers' present, to their Indigenous past. In short, Palmer entangled settler imaginings with the indigenous past, in order to advance a narrative of progress. Furthermore, it was about implanting white male settler origins to the urban place. Pontiac was dead, because white men stopped his violent advances, and now they could celebrate this historical deed by publicly acknowledging Pontiac's grave. This preoccupation with Pontiac was about the construction of Detroit's urbanity—through an Indigenous past.

The burial of Pontiac's bones in a grave is not just a metaphor for dominating Indigenous male bodies. The use of a grave represented the finality of Indigenous dominance in contemporary life of settlers. It helped foster—in a cultural-ideological way—elite White men's attempt to more clearly delineate modernity, or modern Detroit, from times past. In other words, Pontiac's story, one that had long dominated the local folklore of settlers' development, could be permanently buried, finally, where he once tried to recapture Indigenous land. Indeed the ghost of Pontiac, the personification of Indigenous manliness, was once and for all, conquered by an elite white man. Settler masculinity also plays a part. The erection of Pontiac's grave illustrates how white men desire to have control over Indigenous male bodies in order to construct their present. In other words, by making claim to Pontiac's metaphoric, memorialized grave and erecting such a thing on his farm, was an enactment of settler masculinity. By acknowledging the Indigenous past through Pontiac, and entangling his imagining about Pontiac, the Indigenous,

the westward march of the American folk" (19). This perspective is important because settlers like Palmer, though not having to literally deal with the actual "violent" presence of indigenous people, still engaged with the conflicts of coming to terms with a violent past, in this case Pontiac's seizure, in order to justify their own sense of self, showcasing how they overcame this past.

warrior brave, and his own sense of a settler masculine subject, he was able to advance a certain narrative of progress, in order to further solidify white men's claim to space—and history.

Even during the 211th celebration of Cadillac's landing near Indigenous territory, Pontiac was used again. Two "tribes," "smeared with warpaint, full fighting accoutrements, weird head-dress and tomahawks" were set to attack Detroit on the evening of April 23, 1912. Going down Woodward Avenue, these two "tribes," led by "Pontiac," were to "menace Cadillac and his men until they man who is responsible for Detroit's existence succeeds in disarming them."¹¹¹ This was an obvious example of settler imaginings. Of course they likely knew that Pontiac had nothing to do with Cadillac. Importantly, the Indian attack was a part of the growing Detroit, in celebration of the city's automotive success. An estimated \$25,000,000 worth of automobiles, close to 10,000 cars were going to be lined up on Woodward Avenue.¹¹² The city's elite needed Indigenous representation, namely Pontiac, to simultaneously reauthenticate themselves as the original settlers.

Elite white men were not the only ones to beckon Pontiac's presence to grace their present. White women, too, did a similar thing. On January 23, 1909, the Detroit Women's Club, a group of elite middle class white women, held a meeting at the home of a Mrs. W.H. Holden in order to celebrate Detroit Day. After roll call, Mrs. Wicks read a paper on Pontiac's conspiracy. This story, told many times before, was not unique in detail or tone. Indeed, it was remarkably similar to that written by Parkman and later, Headley. "Pontiac exemplified at once the best and worst qualities of the American Indian, that he was a natural orator, who could sway his people

¹¹¹ "Indians Will Assail Detroit: Attack by Pontiac and His Redskins Will Be Feature of Cadillaqua Celebration," *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, April 23, 1912).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

at will by his picturesque imagery and wild allegory.”¹¹³ Continuing her pursuit of knowledge of Pontiac’s traits, Mrs. Wicks suggested that he was a “master of the treacherous statecraft of his race...perhaps surpassing any chief of his time.”¹¹⁴

It is difficult to understand why Pontiac was a useful story for a white women’s club. Perhaps it reflects how settler patriarchy works. While Detroit’s middle class (white) women had several women’s clubs throughout the city, women were still unable to vote. As a result, their civic clubs served as one of the few means to participate in life outside of the private sphere. Perhaps to compensate for their lack of political engagement, white women saw Pontiac as a familiar story through which they could connect with their white male counterparts. Settler imaginings infected white women, too.

Even as Detroit was rapidly changing, settlers returned to a familiar story. On December 9, 1917, Charles Ward, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, searching for an image to evoke the dynamism of the rapidly transforming city he saw going about him, wrote an article entitled “If Pontiac Should Come to Detroit in 1918.” He looked back to Pontiac, the Odawa leader who had dominated the region 150 years earlier. “The difference between the Detroit of 1763 and the Detroit of 1917,” argued Ward, “is not to be measured by years.” Rather, the difference is “between this idyll of the Old World transplanted in the new and the last word in the twentieth century high pressure urban efficiency.” Ward continued, “should he now return to the scene of his ambitious exploit he would find in the immediate locality of his long protracted siege concentrated the nerve cells of the industrial activity of more English-speaking people than

¹¹³ “Women’s Clubs. Detroit Women’s Club,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, January 24, 1909), sec. B.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

inhabited the whole American continent.”¹¹⁵ This passage, like the discourses and representations about Pontiac, reveal also the complications about settler modernity in Detroit.

There are several takeaways regarding Pontiac’s image in Detroit. Similar to other local histories, it allowed elite white men like Thomas Palmer to place Detroit as the epitome of modernity. In order to define themselves as modern, white men needed a foil, and Indigenous representations were the medium. However, local narratives play an important role. To have a local Indigenous image makes the story more authentic, not only for the local place, but as a message to the rest of the country. The urban space becomes legitimate when it has not only removed and conquered its Indigenous people literally, but also figuratively—through discourses and narratives about the Indigenous past.

These representations also illustrate something about gender, especially white masculinity. Gender historian Gail Bederman writes, that, “manliness was the achievement of a perfect man, just as civilization was the achievement of a perfect race.”¹¹⁶ Settler masculinity in Detroit was about asserting a white, masculine sense of place. This cultural and ideological process occurs at the local level through illustrating that Indigenous bodies, land, and stories were conquered. In the local lore of Detroit, being able to share with present day citizens about how settlers of the past overcame a fierce warrior such as Pontiac could only bolster their sense of self and their perception of the urban place. Though local histories were important, elite Detroiters had to also deal with actual Indigenous people as they encountered them in the everyday.

¹¹⁵ Charles Ward, “If Pontiac Should Come to Detroit in 1918?,” *Detroit Free Press* (1858-1922) (Detroit, MI, December 9, 1917).

¹¹⁶ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 27.

Paradox/Presence Number Three: Engagement and Modernity in Waawayeyaattanong and Walpole Island

In the summer of 1867, the Walpole Indigenous community decided to hold a meeting on their land, a celebration that would invite settlers to come and see them perform. About 500 people boarded the Morning Star steamer. Riding up the Detroit River to a band playing music, they traveled eagerly to see the “sons of the forest.”¹¹⁷ Upon arriving at Walpole Island, the visitors were greeted by Oshahwahnoo, described as an “ancient Indian chief,” who allegedly fought alongside Tecumseh, gave a welcoming speech in Anishinaabemowin. This appeared to be an encounter between Detroiters (and surrounding areas) and the Walpole First Nations community. The visitors saw their Indigenous performers play games, dance, and race; they saw a foot race between a James Elgin, who placed in first, and Shagoquot, who placed in a close second. They also witnessed a performance by Sahguck, Negonsa, and Menoomene. Settlers thoroughly enjoyed watching these games and performances, laughing and cheering throughout. They enjoyed seeing the nearly 800 Indigenous people living on the Island. In addition to seeing the festivities, the writer mentioned the activities that illustrated some form of “civilization” for Indigenous people in the 1860s: farming. The 500 visitors left around 3:00 PM, boarded the Morning Star, and headed back to Detroit.

These types of encounters occurred many times over several decades, often beginning on a ferry docked in Algonac, Michigan, approximately 50 miles (80 KM) northeast of Detroit. The encounters between Walpole First Nation and settlers occurred on their reserve and in Detroit. These interactions reveal the various ways that Indigenous people and settlers interacted in Detroit. More than this, they reveal the paradox of a settler constructed indigeneity, one in which

¹¹⁷ “Excursion on the Morning Star: Walpole Island and Its Inhabitants,” *Detroit Free Press* (1858-1922) (Detroit, MI, June 20, 1867).

they attempt to create a space of their own doing, and the actual presence of Indigenous people from Walpole Island, for they challenged ideas about the “vanishing Indian” and the settler belief that Detroit had conquered its Indigenous past.

Between the late 1870s and early part of the 20th century, Walpole Indians were prominent headlines in the *Detroit Free Press*. Dozens of newspaper articles reveal that residents of the Walpole First Nations reserve were frequent visitors to Detroit, and were a major source of recreational entertainment for settlers who visited their land. Detroit’s settlers and Indigenous peoples proved that cultural interactions were not one way; indeed the Walpole First Nation example illustrates how settlers and Indigenous peoples understood Detroit as both an ideological construction and a geographic space. In sum, settlers believed themselves to be visiting an Indian reserve; Indigenous peoples were simply doing business as usual, coming and going, reclaiming space from which attempts to ban them were plenty. Upon seeing Walpole Islanders, settlers tried to box them into their settler imaginings—based upon their desire to see Indigenous people as remnants of the (savage) past. Moreover, depictions of Walpole Indigenous peoples were mostly criminals or social outcasts; either they were drunk, thought to have committed some crime, or simply coming to Detroit to see the wonders of civilization. Walpole Indians disrupted this narrative, and at other times outright challenged it. They laid the groundwork for later Indigenous people to shape the meaning of indigeneity in Detroit, both who belonged and how it would be represented.

Other settlers found Walpole Island intriguing. And they visited often. Although the Island was only miles away, they wrote of them as if they were thousands of miles away and centuries away. While the Walpole Indigenous community lived near a great commercial highway—seeing ships pass by often—a doctor, George Stanley wrote, “the island is as

“secluded, and almost undisturbed by the white man as though still beyond the invasion of civilization.”¹¹⁸ Traveling from Algonac, Stanley and other Detroiters came to the Island to see how they lived. He told the story of two Indigenous men who became Christian converts: George Knaggs (whose Indian name was Kewadennugshkum) and Peter Wekeshig.¹¹⁹ These two men were representative of the wonders that Christian civilization could do; however, descriptions of their reaction to certain stories suggest that they were deeply saddened about the encroachments and so-called advancements of western civilization. However, they were also asserting Indigenous humanity by sharing their stories of perseverance and remaining.

Wekeshig, eighty-seven years old, was the oldest resident on the Island. He was a leader among the Peoples of the Three Fires. He was said to be a son of a chief, and had influence among the people. He traveled to London to meet the Queen of England in his fifties, in order to secure land for his people on Walpole. He succeeded, and thereafter became a very respected medicine man on the island. At one moment Wekeshig began to tell a story to the visitors about hunting near Toledo long ago. Apparently during this trip he shot six deer within an hour. The writer said this was his most cherished moment, even more important than visiting the Queen of England. After telling this story to the visitors, a deep sadness suddenly came over him like a

¹¹⁸ George Stanley, “Home of the Ojibways: An Account of Visits to Walpole Island,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, September 22, 1895).

¹¹⁹ Apparently Peter’s name meant “In Between Dawn.” He was hereditary chief. He lived from 1817-1926. See, David T. McNab, “‘Those Freebooters Would Shoot Me Like a Dog’: American Terrorists and Homeland Security in the Journals of Ezhaaswe (William A. Elias [1856-1929]),” in *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borderlands*, Aboriginal Studies (London, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 120.

dark cloud. With a faint smile he said, “But it’s all gone now.”¹²⁰ He pointed to the sky, hoping for something more positive for his people—in the future.

Stanley’s description seems probable. Why would he not beam with pride, reminiscing about how he could go back and forth across borders, and hunt and roam around his people’s territory? Though he realized, like many Indigenous peoples of the time, that their Indigenous way of life was no more. Yet he still remained hopeful. Yet Stanley wrote of these peoples through his own lens, a lens that kept the Indigenous population just outside of modernity, but enough to say that they could almost be civilized, through Christianity.

Stanley and the visitors were fortunate to see twenty-five school children sing for him. Stanley told the story of Albert Z. Sahguj (Zhagonabi), who had converted to Christianity and became a teacher of young people in one of three schools funded by the Canadian government on Walpole Island. Zhagobani was trained at Sault St. Marie. He taught twenty-five students. They sang for the visitors at their school. Stanley was very impressed with the language acquisition of the students, as well as their near perfect behavior, remarking, “it would be difficult to find a white school where the children behaved themselves nearly as well.”¹²¹ Native children could not just be well-behaved children who behaved well. The settlers’ lens sees them as settler versus indigenous, those who are so far from outside of modern Detroit society yet so close. This challenged what Stanley and the others around him about how the reality of Native lives, as Christians, disrupted their preconceived notions of Indigenous peoples. Walpole Indigenous peoples did not simply confine boundaries between them and settlers as easily as whites. Indeed

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

during particular moments, some used the encounters to challenge who could make claim to space—indeed Detroit.

Reclaiming Space: Walpole First Nations Claims and Travels to Detroit

From the time the French explorers came to the Detroit area, there were competing narratives of who “owned” Belle Isle, the island right across from the city, owned by the city since 1879. Frederick Olmsted, the designer of New York City’s Central Park, also designed Belle Isle.¹²² The island was a getaway resort for the city’s elite. Before European exploration, the Anishinaabek no doubt occupied this island. The French called Belle Isle “isle au cochon,” translated in English as “hog island,” signifying the island being overrun with livestock, especially hogs. The French never secured a title. Following the Seven Years War, the British took control of the Island. In 1769, James McDougall purchased the island allegedly for eight barrels of rum, six pounds vermilion and a belt of wampum; all of this was valued at \$1,000. McDougall’s heirs sold the Isle to William McComb, confirmed by the United States in 1809; the McComb heirs sold it to Barnabas Campau for \$5,000. In 1879, the city of Detroit bought the island from Campau’s heirs at the \$200,000.¹²³ Yet, Indigenous people persisted in their occupation of the island.

Belle Isle, like other islands, was said to be a favorite summer campground for Pontiac and other Indigenous persons. However, settler histories of this island virtually ignored Native histories of this space. On May 31, 1896, an article in the *Detroit Free Press* stated, “In the authenticated history of Belle Isle there is fruitful material for romance, varied in the lights of

¹²² Witold Rybczynski, *Clearing the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the 19th Century*. (New York: Touchstone Press, 2000), 350.

¹²³ Silas Farmer, *All About Detroit: An Illustrated Guide, Map, and Historical, Souvenir, with Local Stories* (Detroit, MI: Silas Farmer & CO., 1899), 11-12.

humor and the deepened shadows of tragedy.”¹²⁴ It continued, “wrested from the aborigines, it has been more than two centuries dominated by civilization and owned respectively by three of the great powers on earth.”¹²⁵ Settler histories acknowledged Indigenous presence on the island, but only to the extent that it becomes occupied by Europeans. Belle Isle was designed to become a get away for the city’s elite, and to serve as a space to be admired by its inhabitants. It would be a pristine, nature themed park, full of recreation, a city park, but a replication of nature’s beauty and peace. In spite of this constructed narrative of Belle Isle, and perhaps ironically because when, as I shall show later, Indigenous people attempted to make claim to Belle Isle, the elites quickly shifted into modern discourses, those that demarcated Belle Isle’s modernity, and the Indigenous peoples supposed non-modernity. Indigenous people continued making claim to this space, long after settlers wrote histories, assuming their ownership of the island.

Walpole Islanders made precise claims to the island, using it as a recreational spot and making actual claims to the spot. On August 17, 1892, some 700 Walpole Islanders traveled to Belle Isle. Labeled an “Indian Invasion,” likely attempting to humorously play on settler fears of an Indigenous attack, they held a series of games on the island, performed in front of about 50,000 settlers. The park and boulevard commissioners decided to allow the Native peoples to occupy Belle Isle for a day full of games. They played lacrosse, shot arrows, played games of baseball, and performed dances. The brief celebration was—for a moment—a brief occupation of a traditional piece of their homeland.

While the previous moment was for celebration, Thomas Sands had a very different idea. Indeed in April 1906, Sands, a Walpole Indian, sent a letter to the *Detroit Free Press* in order to

¹²⁴ “Beautiful Belle Isle,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, May 31, 1896).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

protest the occupation of Indigenous land—Belle Isle. He asserted a claim to the isle. The article began with a series of rhetorical questions, hinting to the reader that a Native occupation Belle Isle would turn the elite’s playground into a place without civilization.

How would Detroit’s pleasure-loving thousands like to see Belle Isle, the city’s brightest playground, revert to its primal state of savagery?” What would all these young men and maidens to whom Belle Isle is the Mecca of their delight, and those older Detroiters to whom it is the one loved spot that my infancy knew think of this bright particular star in the city’s crown jewels should go into the possession of the descendants of its original Indian owners?¹²⁶

Continuing the demarcation between white civilization and Indian savagery, the author wrote,

Just think of it! That new casino, the finest in the land, would become the tepee of the chief; the club houses of Detroit Boat Club and the Detroit Yacht Club, the resort in the golden summer time of Detroit’s incest beauteous and most brave, would become the wigwams of Chippewa braves: those joyous band concerts would be replaced by the monotonous beating of the tom-tom and the walls and furry and feathery inhabitants of the menagerie and the aquarium the petted of thousands, would end their squaws; and all those dear, delightful pleasures of moonlight nights and wildwood strolls would pass away forever. Tis a dismal prospect.¹²⁷

The author created a stark difference between civilization and savagism, between settlers and modernity, and Indigenous people and their non-modernity. Belle Isle as a space, the epitome of modernity, was used as the mechanism to further these dichotomies. It was also a space used to

¹²⁶ “Claim Island: Walpole Chippewas Declare That Detroit’s Famous Playground Belongs to Them.,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, April 8, 1906).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

construct settler ideas about the relationship between indigeneity and space. While they could acknowledge the “original Indian owners,” they asserted their own version of indigeneity as it pertained to being civilized, or modern, especially how Belle Isle was constructed from its ‘indigenous,’ natural state. And yet, Native people still made claims to the Isle, in spite of how it had changed from the time their ancestors had occupied the space.

However, Thomas Sands found these claims false. First, unlike the French and English, the Indigenous name to place was found in how other Indigenous peoples described them. Other Indigenous peoples called the Isle’s occupants *suhswajewononenewug*, which translated into “People owning and residing on the territory where the big waters are divided into small channels;” they were also called *memeshawenenewug*, or “people occupying and owning a number of islands.” Sands further said that his people “used to fish and trap on the upper islands, but Belle Isle was our camping ground.” Indigenous claims to Detroit were not rooted in simply what they called it; it was how other people described them. Indeed the validation of the Anishinaabek claim to Belle Isle was not the product of European conceptions of owning land through a written title; it was through how you were described in relation *to* the said land. In furthering his point, he made a claim to space and critiqued Christianity,

We never have surrendered these islands to any government whatever. We can prove it without any difficulty and we intend by legal means to reoccupy those islands ourselves. And then the whole civilized world will know how shamefully we have been treated for many long years by people who call themselves 'Christians.'¹²⁸

Sands’ claims were based upon his interpretation of the 1807 Treaty of Detroit. “All the islands in St. Clair River and lake north of the east and west tribal boundary line, including Belle Isle,

¹²⁸ Ibid.

fell to our hands, and we, today, are the legal owners of those islands.” This changed, he said, in 1823, when “some greedy white people moved the legal boundary line from the north channel to the south channel, thus swindling us out of our ownership of all the islands West of Walpole’s Island.” Towards the end of the article, prominent Detroit historian—without portfolio—Clarence M. Burton said that Sands’ claims were completely false and that he could easily disprove such claims.

In Sands’ conception of space and indigeneity, he could make claim to Belle Isle in 1906 because his people had never relinquished the isle nor had they given up the idea that they, too, could live in modern times. Their indigeneity and conception of space, as exemplified by Sands, was not tied to stereotypical views of early 20th century Indigenous people who were so tied to the land; settlers could change the landscape, but Native people did not change their relationship to place, and their deep seated histories near and on Belle Isle and Detroit.

The attempt to claim Belle Isle was unsuccessful. Though it is not the point to simply ponder the outcome or what could have come. Instead, we should consider this temporary moment a time of resistance, a time when people continued making claims to Detroit, long after settlers believed they were removed. But even as Indigenous contemporaries challenged settler claims to Detroit, others, though, were not so lucky. They came to Detroit from Walpole simply for entertainment or to buy goods; yet most were criminalized or portrayed as drunks.

“Chiefs,” “Drunks,” and “Squaws”: Petty Crime and Representation of Indigenous People

On Saturday March 11, 1888, two Walpole Indians came to Detroit. The “Observations around Town” headlines stated that these two Native persons came to Detroit wearing coon-skin

caps with tails in order to “see the sights of civilization.”¹²⁹ These two came to Detroit apparently to see the wonders of the city. Upon entering City Hall, they finally reached an elevator. They experienced a dramatic moment where an elevator conductor rapidly sent them up. It frightened them. The conductor found this humorous.¹³⁰ Other depictions were not so flattering, if it can be called that. On October 3, 1908, in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, about twenty four miles northeast of Detroit, a former Detroit resident, H.A. Smeltzer, found two Walpole Indigenous women shoplifting from his store. At a moments notice, the store clerks surrounded the woman; items began to fall. The two women were ordered to leave the place, with assurance that if they ever returned they would be prosecuted for shoplifting. Losses had been reported for months at several of the stores. Apparently with the closing of a ferry that went to the Island, Walpole Indigenous people had began to come to Detroit and surrounding towns more frequently and in greater number. These losses were blamed on “the red men and their wives and daughters, who come to sell trinkets.”¹³¹ Worse, the headline of the article read, “Squaws Detected in Shoplifting: Walpole Indians Cause Merchants Trouble—Two Believed Incendiary.”¹³² From the late 1880s until the 1910s, Indigenous peoples from Walpole were blamed often for many things, and depicted in three ways, all connected: outside of modernity, criminal, or drunk.

On January 19, 1881, a Walpole Indigenous woman and her white husband were forced to stand in front of Judge Campau—a person who was the descendant of one of the oldest French

¹²⁹ “Observations Around Town,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, March 12, 1888).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ “Squaws Detected in Shoplifting: Walpole Island Indians Cause Merchants Trouble--Two Believed Incendiary,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, October 4, 1911).

¹³² *Ibid.*

settler families in Detroit. What crime the court charged them with is unknown, yet they were summoned before Judge Campau. The only records we have are the dialogue between Campau and others:

Judge Campau: “Do you plead guilty?”

Walpole Indigenous woman: “I guilty.”

JC: “What brings you in these parts?”

WI: “Me Injun; b’long to gov’ment’ me come from Bay City; me go West; you say me go; me tame Injun, no hurt whites.”

JC: “Yes,” said Campau. “I’ll give you a chance to go—to the House of Correction for Ninety days.”

Judge Campau also had a conversation with her husband, Michael Dixon.

JC: “Is this woman your wife?”

Michael Dixon: “Yes, sir.”

JC: “Where did you marry her?”

MD: “On Walpole Island, your honor.”

JC: “By whom?”

MD: “By Rev. Jameison, your Honor.”

JC: “Are you a white man?”

MD: “Yes, your honor.”¹³³

This article tells the story of an Indigenous woman from Walpole Island who was arrested along with her white husband. It is not clear with what they were charged with, but John Brinecke brought charges against them, and Justice Campau issued a warrant. This Walpole Indigenous

¹³³ “Springwells,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, January 20, 1881).

woman apparently owned land near Jackson, Michigan. Dixon told the judge that she had succeeded in buying a bottle of whisky from which both of them got drunk¹³⁴. Based upon the circumstances, they were likely charged with public intoxication. This is the last time the historical record leaves their story here, but once more, alcohol and Indigenous persons become linked.

One unique story concerning Walpole Indigenous persons not simply visiting Detroit but living in the city was that of Josephine Kidroe. While we do not know how many Native peoples lived in Detroit—what settlers considered Detroit to be—Kidroe’s story is unique. She was a half Anishinaabek, half Black woman. The historical record does not tell much about her. She was born in 1862. According to her death certificate, she was “colored,” another word for Black at this time. According to her death certificate, she died on October 30, 1906 in her room at 84 Clinton Street, of alcoholism. There is no mention of her mother or father; no information exists on her childhood or what that might have looked like. She died alone.

The *Detroit Free Press* was unique in mentioning her as a woman with both Black and Indigenous heritage. The article suggests that Kidroe had a long police record, probably longer than any other woman in Detroit. The article seems to suggest that she was arrested several times and had a long criminal record. The article said that Kidroe was known for her crimes.¹³⁵ Reading between the lines suggests that Kidroe might have made a living as a commercial sex worker. But what led her to commit so many crimes and to live alone? Why would the *Detroit Free Press* document her death?

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Alcoholism Kills Josephine Kidroe: Negro-Indian Woman Who Held Long Police Record Is Dead,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, October 31, 1906).

Speculation suggests that the cause of her loneliness or criminal record might have to do with being caught between her blackness and indigeneity—and being a woman. We do not know the extent of her parent's relationship, which may or may not have caused trouble for her. Perhaps she was not accepted on Walpole Island or in the Detroit community; neither was she accepted among the settler community. There were few work opportunities for Blacks and Indigenous persons in 1906 Detroit, and surely not many for women—especially a Black and Indigenous woman. Part of her loneliness likely stemmed from being accepted by neither group. She was not simply Black, neither was she solely Indigenous, she was both, at a time when it was hard to be either one.

Historian Richard Thomas writes that the Black elite did not mingle often with the lower class of their race until well into the twentieth century.¹³⁶ There is little to no information about Walpole Indians' position regarding Black folk, and it is too simplistic to generalize about the entire community. Even if they had little contact with Blacks Americans, and even if they were not racists or cared only about their own people, they surely knew that to be associated with Blackness could mean, among several things, Jim Crow racism (even if they dealt directly with the Canadian government), and simply more oppression.

The story of Clarence Thomas, a Walpole Indian, might reveal some insight into Walpole attitudes towards Black people. Thomas came to see a movie involving cowboys and Indians. While traveling on a car, Thomas expressed to a fellow passenger that he wanted to see a moving picture—a fight between cowboys and Indians. This apparently startled the passenger, and the passenger notified the traffic officer. The officer took him off of the car, and he was escorted to

¹³⁶ Richard Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

the detention center for boys on Madison Avenue. The officer then escorted him to the police headquarters. Upon seeing a Black man, he ran over to him and assaulted him. The article does not explain why he attacked the Black man, it simply read, “His antipathy for negroes is rivaled only by his hatred for cowboys and policemen.”¹³⁷ Maybe he was taught to not like Black folk or perhaps he knew the Black man from a previous encounter. History is not totally clear. What we do know is that he explained to the officer that whenever he saw a Black person, a police officer, or a cowboy, he could not help but to fight. However, prejudice is learned, and society produces these reactions in people. Perhaps he did assault him simply for being Black. If this were a typical attitude of some Walpole Indians on the reserve, then Kidroe most assuredly would not be accepted. We are left to wonder why she died of alcoholism at the age of forty-four.

Although no other records exist on Josephine Kidroe, her story gestures towards the historical and theoretical issues we run into in Women’s and Gender history: how do we analyze the live of marginalized women like Kidroe, who are not caught *only* between the Indigenous “world” and the settler “world,” but also a Black world. The study of urban individuals in urban women’s stories of mixed-ancestry women requires a respect of both heritages, which is often ignored in favor of nationalized discourses to protect culture and land, or to promote (Black) nationhood within a nation.¹³⁸ Black and Indigenous feminism scholarship has not dealt well

¹³⁷ “Walpole Island Injun Is Eager to See Real War: Comes to Detroit to See Redskins Battle Cowboys in Moving Picture Show,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, December 20, 1912).

¹³⁸ Trask, Haunani-Kay, “Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism.” *Signs*. Vol. 21, No. 4. Feminist Theory and Practice (Summer, 1996), 906-916. Tohoe, Laura. “There is no Word for Feminism in my Language.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Native American Literature on the Edge of a New Century (Autumn, 2000), pp. 103-110. Though Renya Ramirez is a notable exception. See, Ramirez, Renya. “Learning Across Differences: Native and Ethnic Studies Feminisms.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 303-307.

with stories like Kidroe because of the focus on white women, settler colonialism and white supremacy. Finally, Kidroe's story suggests that Afro-Indigenous histories can often become connected—through the physical body—in ways that complicate looking at one single heritage of a person or groups of peoples.

Alcoholism dominated the narratives about the Walpole First Nations experience in Detroit. For example, on the Wednesday evening November 6, 1913, Austin Beaver, a tall, nineteen year old Walpole Indian came to Detroit. It is not known why he came. However, the article stated that Beaver “imbibed the red liquor that lowered the pride of his forefathers until there was no more under his skin.”¹³⁹ Upon seeing a car, the article suggested that he was reminded of the days of his forefathers who held up stagecoaches of “palefaces” and upset the passengers. He boarded the electric car—perhaps for the first time—and was startled because of the rapid movement. Though the article stated that seeing the car move, a wonder of the twentieth century, “stirred the century-old unrest in the bosom of the visitor.”¹⁴⁰ After this moment he became belligerent. This transformed him from Mr. Beaver to Chief Beaver, a “tribeless but unafraid contestant of the white man's supremacy.”¹⁴¹ After getting off at the next stop on the corner of Catherine and Hastings Streets, he stood in front of one of the cars and held his hand up for it to stop; the conductor stopped the train. He did this to several cars and even exchanged unpleasantries with a group of soldiers. Finally off duty traffic officer Thomas. W.

¹³⁹ “Indian Chief Waylays Palefaces' Street Cars,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, November 6, 1913).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Creedon looked upon Beaver and approached him. Words were exchanged. Beaver became upset and knocked Creedon's apparently new derby hat off of his head. Creedon arrested Beaver and took him to the guardhouse in order to be brought before a judge the following morning.¹⁴²

The brief story reveals a momentary encounter between Austin Beaver, likely white settlers and Thomas Creedon. Importantly, though, this story tells the differences between white civilization and Indigenous civilization. The story relies on examples of the past in order to keep Beaver from experiencing the present growth of Detroit. Perhaps this was Beaver's first time on an electric car, and his experience with settlers might have been worse because he was drunk. But it also points to how settlers sought to control Indigenous bodies and discourses by keeping them in the past, and disseminating to the general public negative stories about Indigenous peoples, and how they could not—likely would never—overcome their past. The presence of Indigenous peoples in Detroit was not welcome, and these stories were used to make sure that continued as a reality. Yet the Indigenous presence disrupted these discourses because the Austin Beaver's of the world stayed and participated in modern cultures. Settlers wanted Indigenous persons to know that they were in an unexpected and unwanted place: Detroit.

Conclusion

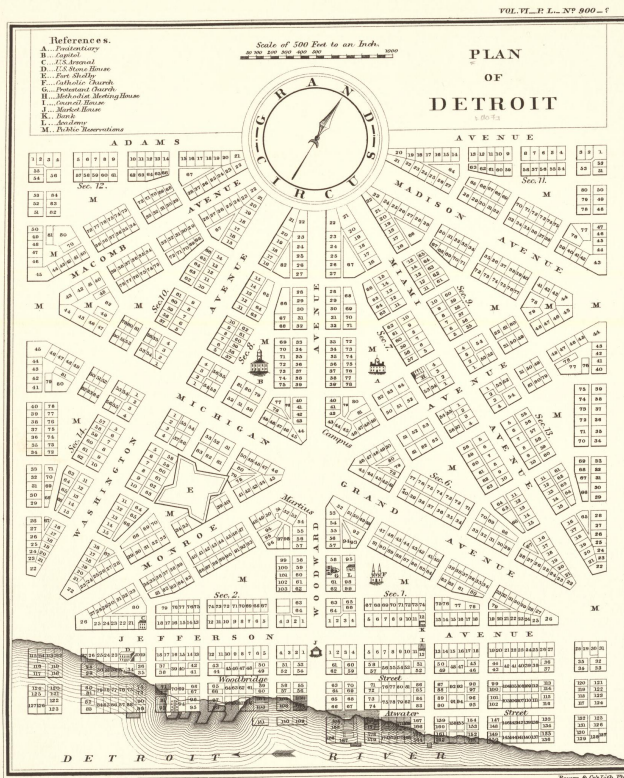
Detroit from the late 19th century until the early part of the 20th century was constructed by three paradoxes of settler imaginings and indigenous presence. They were Indigenous travelers from other parts of the country such as Sitting Bull, taking part in Buffalo Bill's Wild West, the memorializing of a local Detroit past through the story of Pontiac, and the encounters between competing indigenities, of settlers and the Walpole people. These paradoxes and

¹⁴² Ibid.

presences played an important part in helping shape the narrative of modernity in Detroit. Detroit, shifting from savagery to civilization, settlers attempted to weave their interpretation of an Indigenous past into their settler present, which did not work so well because of the actual presence of Indigenous people.

The encounters between Indigenous people and settlers would continue, and the settler imaginings about Indigenous people would continue. Yet, along the way, Native Peoples challenged these representations in hopes of both challenging the idea that they were outside of modernity and also attempting to make claim to it, even as Detroit was changing about them. Though settlers controlled the discourse and mediums through which those discourses would be disseminated, they by no means controlled Indigenous travels to the area nor their conception of Detroit as their place. In the next chapter, I examine how elite white men tried further to cast Detroit as the epitome of modernity, this time through pageantry and masculinity, at Detroit's 1901 bicentennial.

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Figure 4. "Plan of Detroit [map] / Woodward, Augustus Brevort.." <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clarklic/x-000079284/39015091916026>. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. Accessed: March 27, 2015.

Chapter 2: Performing Colonialism, Constructing Modernity: Historical Memory, Indigenous Performance, and the Creation of a Settler Place at Detroit's 1901 Bicentennial

On July 13, 1901, two weeks before the start of Detroit's Bicentennial celebration, George Cortelyou, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, wrote with excitement the coming of between fifty to one-hundred Indigenous people who were coming to Detroit to partake in the celebration. Cortelyou, whose family were early Dutch settlers, was a recent graduate of George Washington University. He would go on to serve as the Secretary of the Treasurer under Theodore Roosevelt from 1907-1909. These were not ordinary Native people; they were performers coming from the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Cortelyou was most excited about seeing the Chiricahua Apache, Geronimo. "The celebrated Indian chief Geronimo, the greatest red man alive to-day, will lead the delegation of Indians."¹⁴³ A White man looking forward to Geronimo's coming to town was ironic. Indeed, only a decade earlier, seeing or even imagining that Geronimo was coming one's way conjured up fear in white America. Yet, after surrendering to General Nelson Miles, Geronimo was no longer a threat.

Geronimo did not attend the event.¹⁴⁴ However, even reference to a "savage," "murderous," Indian coming to Detroit, on the brink of becoming the world's exemplar of modernity, was useful because it showed that America was now on the brink of overcoming its "savage" past. And elite white men could illustrate to the American public that they had conquered their Indigenous population. The important question, though was not simply demonstrating that Indigenous people had colonized the land—a key feature of settler modernity; but they also had to celebrate it, morphing it from a literal fact of colonization to a figurative one,

¹⁴³ George Cortelyou, "Detroit's Biggest Parade," *Detroit Free Press* (1858-1922) (Detroit, MI, July 13, 1901).

¹⁴⁴ See *Geronimo's Story of His Life*. Edited by S.M. Barrett (1906). Digital Reprint.

one in which white men create the conditions, and reimagine the history of colonization into something of their own doing. Thus, they become the new “indigenous” people.

In settler states around the world, and especially in the U.S., expositions, pageants, and world fairs were an important way to cement settler control of history and place, as well as serve as a transmitter for U.S. empire and imperialism.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, as Jane Jacobs writes, “imperialism lingers in the present as the idea of empire itself, as a trace which is memorialised, celebrated, mourned and despised.”¹⁴⁶ Detroit became a spectacle, a place to behold. The grand scale of the performance, the competing visions of indigeneity, offers an imperfect but critical view into the larger processes of empire, gender and racial formations, and historical memory. Detroit was not unique simply as a local place attempting to memorialize its past. These local celebrations had occurred in places like Chicago. But Detroit was unique because, though other places’ pageants were embedded with ideas of progress and modernity, and even showcased Indigenous people as pre-modern (as well as other groups), Detroit’s elites localized their story, and colonization was

¹⁴⁵ There is a host of literature on world’s fairs and how they promoted empire and U.S. cultural imperialism. Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); John E. Findling, *Chicago’s Great World’s Fairs* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle (eds.), *Encyclopedia of World’s Fairs and Expositions* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008); TJ Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn (eds.), *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois, Press, 2010); Jim Zwick, *Inuit Entertainers in the United States: From the Chicago World’s Fair through the Birth of Hollywood*. (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, Co. 2006); Mabel Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). Settlers celebrating their past were also an important part in other settler places such as South Africa. See, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, “The 1952 Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 34, no. 3 (November 1993): 447–468.

¹⁴⁶ Jane Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 159.

the major mechanism through which they understood their past. It was not just about celebrating empire and progress, though that was a part of it; it was about cementing white men's place in the historical reimagining of Detroit by asserting themselves as the original inhabitants. In another way, Detroit was the one place where car manufacturing was quickly becoming the archetype of modernity and progress in the early part of the 20th century.

While in chapter one elite White men attempted to work through the inherent tensions of asserting their version of indigeneity over the actual presence of Indigenous histories and people, by asserting their version of indigeneity, in order to cast Detroit as the epitome of modernity, in this chapter, elite White cemented phase two of their settler project: constructing a historical memory that more firmly placed White men's origins in Detroit—through pageantry, with performance, at the 1901 Bicentennial celebration. In this chapter, I analyze how elite white men constructed a settler memory through performance at Detroit's Bicentennial Celebration. I argue that these constructed memories were used to further usher in a collective understanding of whiteness, and to allow settlers to officially—through performance—claim origins to Detroit. A key component of explaining settler memory is understanding how settlers, especially men, created historical, origin narratives that depict Indigenous people, in the white historical imagination, in the past; I will explain that in the next section. Black Americans were also a part of the process of settler modernity.

Elite Whites were not the only ones to affirm their place in Detroit's past. Black Americans, dealing with the hardening color lines of Jim Crow racism, sought to create their unique contribution to Detroit's past in the Bicentennial. Competing for their own place in Detroit's past, its present, but more importantly trying to have a stake in the city's future, Black folks sought to control how they would participate in the celebration. Though their intentions

were respectable, Black calls for participating in the bicentennial also included—by omission—their participation in the erasure of Indigenous histories of Detroit.

This chapter also highlights the experiences of Indigenous people, mostly Dakota and Lakota, who had traveled as performers from the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Though records are scarce, and they did not control the dynamics of their performance, they did create a sense of meaning by participating in the celebration. If these Indigenous performers did not challenge the notion that Indigenous histories were irrelevant to modern Detroit, they did, at moments, even temporarily, challenge the idea that they could not engage with modernity.

Settler Memory, Settler Origins and Indigeneity, and Settler (White) Masculinity

Since the foundations of the United States, white masculinity was rooted in contradiction. On the one hand it was based upon the belief that rugged individualism and hard work was a thing to strive for. In addition to this, working for the “common good”—for civil society was a thing that elite white men did. As historian Kathleen McCarthy has observed, “the early national and antebellum years” were a time when “philanthropy and voluntary associations played an important role in the social construction and reconstruction of the boundaries of gender, class, and race.”¹⁴⁷ At the same time, early U.S. nationalism was developed through indigeneity.¹⁴⁸ However, by the late 19th and early part of the twentieth century, according to sociologist Michael Kimmel, the major causes of a crises in white masculinity were precipitated by “rapid industrialization, technological transformation, capital concentration, urbanization and

¹⁴⁷ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

¹⁴⁸ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

immigration;” all of these led to what seemed to be the emasculation of white men.¹⁴⁹ How they responded varied.

During the turn-of-the-century, imperial masculinity was perhaps the major gender process of restoring white masculinity. Closely identified with the likes of President Theodore Roosevelt, imperial masculinity was a form of masculinity that utilized imperialism and the subjugation of Indigenous people throughout the Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific in order to expand the global footprint of the United States in both land and as the global power of the world. Imperial masculinity, though, was first perfected on Indigenous people, and though imperial masculinity continued to impact Indigenous people throughout the world, Indigenous people in the U.S. were the medium—the “transit”—through which this ideological process occurred.¹⁵⁰ The restorers of white masculinity however, did consider their “work” as a part of the larger processes of humanitarianism—though how it actually played out was a major contradiction.

For the wealthy, philanthropy was one way to restore white masculinity. The philanthropological male prerogative, or even creating monuments, found earlier roots in Republican ideals that linked giving back to one’s society as a decidedly masculine thing to do. On the other hand, this form of masculinity coincided with the dispossession of Indigenous bodies and land. Then, finally, in attempt to return to earlier forms of masculinity, elite white men began to deploy indigeneity, especially Indigenous imagery, to construct a new meaning of (white) masculinity. This process is similar to how Philip Deloria described the processes of

¹⁴⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 83.

¹⁵⁰ Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); see also Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Shaped the Spanish American War*. (1998).

nation building in the early American republic; however, having “conquered” Indigenous bodies and land, using the Indigenous “other” to construct their sense of masculine self contributed to the development of not only nation building, but also the epitome of modernity: cities.

If indigeneity was the medium through which U.S. national identity was constructed during its formative years, indigeneity—Indigenous bodies and representations—at the turn of the century was the lever that ultimately defined turn of the century white masculinity throughout the country, and also in Detroit. Detroit’s leading white men were invested in constructing a masculinity tied to the development of the city. This form of masculinity is what Thomas Winter called, “masculine civic stewards.” Masculine civic stewards—the wealthy elite—considered it their duty to extend their care and guidance over their workers, fulfilling their obligations to the community.”¹⁵¹ Extending this concept, a part of elite white men’s duty in constructing a form of masculinity was employing indigeneity to control the narrative about the local place, and how that place was to be remembered. Masculinity only partially explains this process. We must also understand settler memory.

Settler memory is an ideological process through which elite white men remember the past of a local place or nation by overstating their own historical relationship to that place. Most recently, Mark Rifkin has written persuasively about how Indigenous histories, in this case the role of Seneca Ely S. Parker in the Civil War, was acknowledged, but mostly as a backdrop to the larger narrative of U.S. historical memory in the recent film *Lincoln* (2012). On the silence of Parker in the film, Rifkin writes that, although the film’s screenwriter Tony Kushner did include Parker for a sense of historical accuracy, “it vacates that fact of any substantive significance,

¹⁵¹ Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Working Men, 1877-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 54.

with Parker functioning more or less as a historical prop.”¹⁵² Rifkin’s analysis of Parker’s silence in *Lincoln* is useful for this chapter for many reasons, perhaps most importantly because of the fact that Indigenous people are used as a historical prop to render settler re-remembering “authentic.” At the same time, these historical props, as in the case of the Detroit Bicentennial, was used to construct a collective, historical memory.

Memory is also about creating a collective history for a particular place or event. Collective memory “sees events from a single committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; and reduces events to mythic archetypes.”¹⁵³ When it comes to Indigenous people, different sets of ideological properties emerge in collective memory—properties that erase Indigenous histories: non-Indigenous people created the space and it became modern with the creation of a white settler origins story. However, this process of origins functions to also erase Indigenous people from the creation of that place as a modern place. Settler memory does its important work. It also demarcates settlers (in this case European) from Indigenous people, with the former being modern and the latter being pre-modern. As White Earth Anishinaabe historian Jean O’Brien writes,

Central to all of this is the construction of an origin myth that assigns primacy to non-Indians who settled the region in a benign process involving righteous relations with Indians...that led to an inevitable and...lamentable Indian extinction.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Mark Rifkin, “The Silence of Ely S. Parker: The Emancipation Sublime and the Limits of Settler Memory,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies Journal* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 1.

¹⁵³ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 3-4.

¹⁵⁴ Jean O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xv.

O'Brien's point is that non-Indigenous people, through historical memory, in re-remembering the past, exclude Indigenous people. Yet, this ideological construction, performed through celebrations, memorializations, and pageants, allows for "the colonial regime [to be] constructed as the 'first' to bring 'civilization' and authentic history to the region. Non-Indians stake a claim to being native—indigenous—through this process."¹⁵⁵ This process—constructing settler memory through the Bicentennial Celebration and re-remembering a past with Indigenous people while simultaneously excluding them—was important for Detroit's elite white men because it allowed them to move forward in their attempt at claiming modernity.

The Planning

Celebrations, pageants, and performances were a distinct part of Progressive Era America.¹⁵⁶ A nation swiftly moving into a great imperial power, pageants, both at the local and national level, were carefully planned to celebrate a place's past. They were also an example of American progress, modernity, and cultural-political projects in support of U.S. imperialism. As scholar Susan Davis has observed, "As dramatic representations, parades and public ceremonies are political acts."¹⁵⁷ Pageants are not simply cultural projects; they are also "tools for building,

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were numerous large scale celebrations of the United States' progress. For example, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893) and the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. For the St. Louis Exposition see, "James Gilbert, *Whose Fair: Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). For an analysis of the experience of Indigenous people at the St. Louis Exposition see, "Danika Medak-Saltzman, "Transnational Indigenous Exchange: Rethinking Global Interactions of Indigenous Peoples at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (September 2010).

¹⁵⁷ Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.

maintaining, and confronting power relations.”¹⁵⁸ Amidst the social angst of urban life, the uncertainty of Americanness and masculinity, Detroit’s elite White men carefully planned a celebration to remember their past, celebrate their present, and prophesy about their future.

On February 21, 1901, Mayor William Maybury called together Detroit’s most prominent white men to discuss the possibility of having a grand arrangement to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of Detroit. The Mayor, ever so a politician of the people, sent out a special invitation to the city’s most prominent citizens to begin planning for what would be one of the city’s most important moments. Of the dozens of invitations sent out to people to assist in the planning of such an extraordinary event, he enlisted the services of one of Detroit’s most important citizens, former Senator Thomas W. Palmer, who served as president of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. At the first meeting, held February 28, 1901, the Mayor opened his address by outlining his goals and suggestions for hosting such an event. At the behest of a Reverend C.L. Arnold, they decided to create an executive committee that would be responsible for the plans.¹⁵⁹ Others agreed, and this ended the first meeting. At the second meeting, held on March 4, they announced the executive committee; on March 11, the Common Council allocated \$25,000 for the program.¹⁶⁰

On March 19, the executive committee reported to the rest of the group with a plan about how to move forward to celebrate the city’s birthday. They suggested the dates of Wednesday July 24th through Thursday July 25th. They also recommended certain guests who should be invited to partake, including, “all the descendants that can be found of those who were the first

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Detroit Bicentenary Celebration. 12.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 14.

settlers of Detroit.”¹⁶¹ In addition to the first settler families, they also believed it to be a good idea to invite President William McKinley, his cabinet; governors from Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Michigan; the Governor-General of Canada; the mayors of Quebec and Montreal, and other Canadian city officials who preside over cities within close proximity to Michigan. McKinley did not attend, but it does point towards their ambitions for placing Detroit within the larger framework of large scale celebrations.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.



Figure 5. Mayor William Maybury Monument in Grand Circus Park in downtown Detroit. Photo taken by the author.

Two other individuals were central to the development of the bicentennial, especially showcasing Detroit's past: Clarence Burton and Silas Farmer.

Clarence Burton was a prominent historian of Detroit. Born in 1853, his family moved to Michigan in the 1850s. No other individual was more important to the development of Detroit's

local history than Burton. He entered the University of Michigan in 1869, and there studied law, graduating in 1874. After graduating, he began practicing law, working for Ward and Palmer. He became City historian in 1908. He was also the first president of the Detroit Historical Society in 1913, a position he held until his death in 1932. He developed an interest in local Detroit history while a student at the University of Michigan, but he began collecting many book manuscripts regarding early Detroit history and the Old Northwest. Burton's collection became the Burton Historical Collection. Before the 1901 bicentennial, he had published widely, especially works on Cadillac.¹⁶² He also published numerous books documenting in great detail Detroit's history.

Silas Farmer was named city historian in 1882. He was the son of John Farmer, a well-known publisher of a map of Michigan. He died suddenly on December 28, 1902.¹⁶³ Though there is little information about him, he was one of the city's most important historians, writing religiously about the history of Detroit, including, most notably, *All About Detroit: An Illustrated Guide, MAP, and Historical, Souvenir, with Local Stories* (1890) and *The History of Detroit and Michigan: Or, the Metropolis Illustrate* (1884).¹⁶⁴ His influence in shaping the history of Detroit

¹⁶² For more information about Burton see, Patricia Owens Burton, *Clarence Munroe Burton: Detroit's Historian*, (Detroit: Conjure House, 1953). For example, Burton published, *A Sketch in the Life of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, Founder of Detroit* (Wilton Smith Co., 1895); "Cadillac's Village," or *Detroit under Cadillac* (1896); *In the Footsteps of Cadillac* (Wolverine Printing Co., 1899).

¹⁶³ <http://nightraintodetroit.com/2010/01/20/who-was-silas-farmer/>. [Accessed February 18, 2015].

¹⁶⁴ Silas Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan: Or, The Metropolis Illustrated; a Chronological Cyclopaedia of the Past and Present, Including a Full Record of Territorial Days in Michigan, and the Annals of Wayne County* (Detroit, MI: S. Farmer & Co., 1884); Silas Farmer, *All About Detroit: An Illustrated Guide, MAP, and Historical, Souvenir, with Local Stories* (Detroit, MI: Silas Farmer & CO., 1899); See also, Silas Farmer, *Detroit Past and Present, or 1870 Vs. 1890* (Detroit: Preston National Bank, 1890).

was paramount, including serving as the lead editor of the book that documented the events of the bicentennial.

The executive committee met weekly from February to May 1901. In the bicentennial's initial executive summary, which outlined their programming plans, Indigenous people were mentioned only a few times. The summary mentioned that they wanted a group of Indigenous people participate, who once occupied the Great Lakes area. They also believed that they could get at least "100 Indians of different tribes to be present on the occasion," because the "government has agreed to the transportation of 600 Indians to Buffalo, where they will be encamped at this time."¹⁶⁵ It is not clear how they heard about the Native people performing in the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York (which I shall discuss further below), but they clearly thought it was possible to get an Indigenous delegation, stating, "we believe no difficulty will be found in having a detachment here to take their part in this celebration."¹⁶⁶

An early, important conversation was choosing who would perform the role of Cadillac. In fact, the Society de Jean de Baptiste, a French Society founded in Canada that later spread to the U.S., refused a person for the role of Cadillac because his French speaking was not up to par.¹⁶⁷ The committee finally settled on Daniel La Ferte, a medical doctor who was fluent in French. If the executive committee made sure that a fluent French-speaker was important, having actual Indigenous performers take part in the bicentennial was just as powerful in order to make

¹⁶⁵ *Bicentenary*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "Men to Arrive with Cadillac: Frenchmen Selected Them for Bicentenary Celebration." *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)*, (Detroit, MI, June 5, 1901). For more information on the Societe de Jean de Baptiste, see <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/st-jean-baptiste-celebrations-emc/>. [Accessed January 29, 2015].

the performance “authentic.” And Detroit’s elite turned to the Pan American Exposition in order to authenticate their history.

The Pan American Exposition was held from May 1st to November 1st, 1901. The planning began years earlier. On October 2, 1889, in an address at the Pan-American conference in Washington D.C., Republican Secretary of State James G. Blaine under the Benjamin Harrison’s presidency (he also served under James Garfield from March 1881-December 1881) stated,

We meet in firm belief that the nations of America ought to be and can be more helpful, teach to each other, than they are now, that each will find advantage and profit from an enlarged intercourse with the others.¹⁶⁸

Ironically, the U.S. began to more carefully take their imperial agenda abroad having, so they believed, subjugated Indigenous populations within their own borders. At the International American Conference, delegates came from throughout the Americas and toured the United States. This delegation also visited Buffalo, New York. Following a Buffalo Day in December 1895, delegates from Buffalo incorporated the Pan-American Exposition Company in 1897.¹⁶⁹ Though plans were interrupted due to the United States’ engagement in the Spanish American War, by spring of 1900, and backed by \$1,500,000 from its local citizens, \$500,000 from the U.S. Government, \$300,000 from the state of New York, a bond issue of \$2,500,000 and an authorized capital of \$2,500,000, this idea became a fact.¹⁷⁰ They invited people from Central and South America, as well as Canada “to join in commemorating the achievements of the

¹⁶⁸ *Pan-American Exposition Buffalo, Its Purpose and Plan with Illustrations* (Buffalo: The Pan-American Exposition Company, 1901), 16.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

Nineteenth Century” and to “illustrate the progress and civilization of the nations of the Western Hemisphere, to strengthen their friendships and to inaugurate a new area of social and commercial intercourse with the beginning of the new century.”¹⁷¹ The Pan-American Exposition was a showcase not just of cordial relations, but of modernity.

The organizers sought to create a scenario of progress that illustrated both an idea of indigeneity rooted in Americanness, but clearly demarcated from its Indigenous past. In creating architecture, they found nothing more “indigenous” than the “hide of tepee of the Indian,” juxtaposed to the “fifteen or twenty story building of steel construction.”¹⁷² Indigenous people were there, too, though their presence in the official text of the Pan-American Exposition is virtually non-existent. Colonel Fred Cummins was responsible for getting Indigenous people to the Pan-American Exposition.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.,

¹⁷² Ibid., 26.

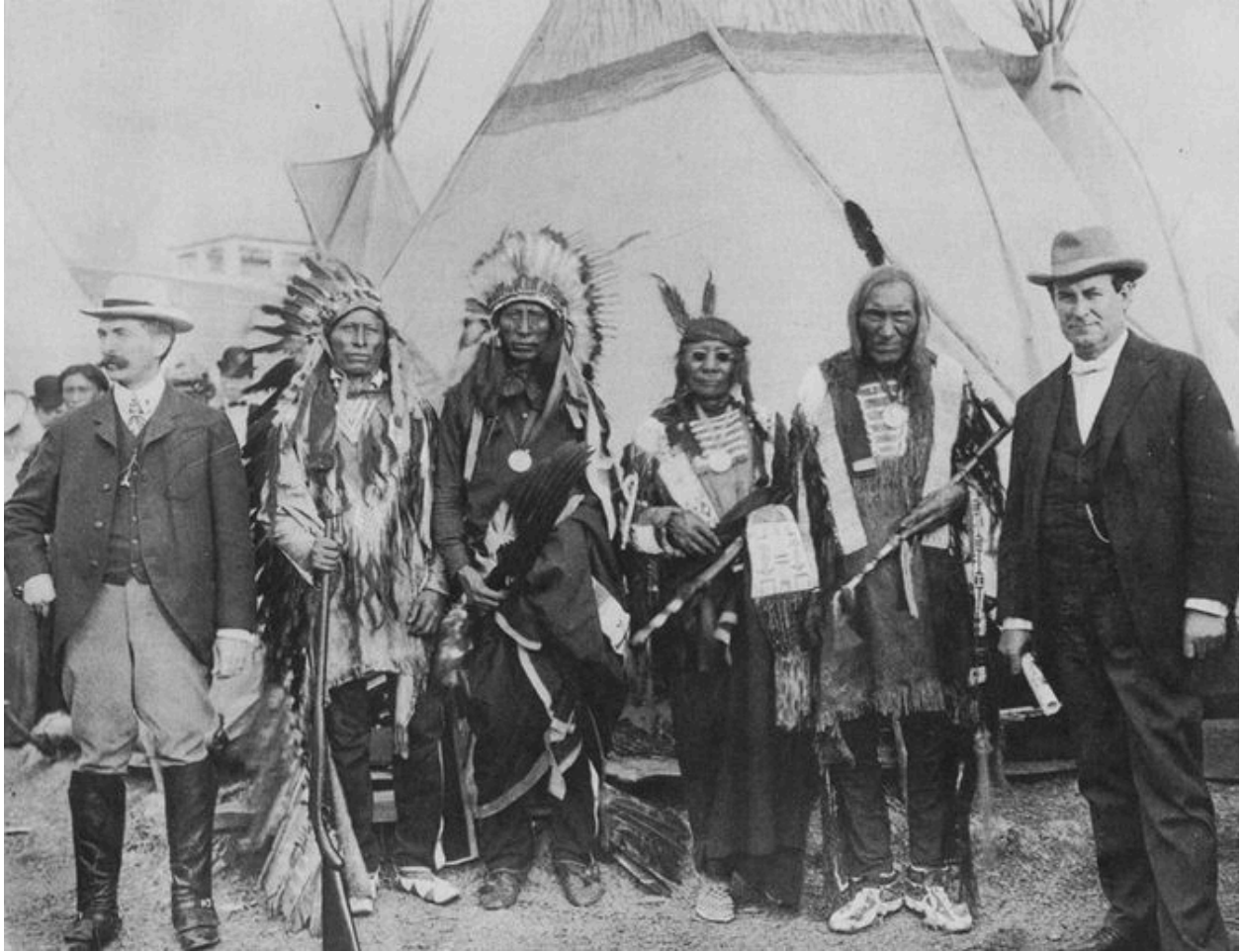


Figure 6. Pictured Col. Fred. Cummins, High Hawk, Jack Red Cloud, Chief Blue Horse, Little Wound, and William Jennings Bryan at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston. Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress. In the Public Domain.

Cummins was in charge of the Indigenous performers at the Bicentennial. The Detroit bicentennial committee paid Cummins \$1,000 for the services of his performers, though it is not clear whether or not Cummins paid the Indigenous performers. Maybury had a meeting with Cummins and at that moment agreed to release fifty Indigenous performers to attend the bicentennial. Cummins brought the Indigenous performers to Detroit. The details of conversations about why Detroit's executive committee sought out those performers are difficult to capture. However, we do know Maybury and a delegation went to Buffalo, New York in early

June to seek out Indigenous performers.¹⁷³ Perhaps Maybury and the delegation also wanted to experience and take notes on the grand structure of the Pan-American Exposition. Whatever these men discussed, Cummins agreed, and on July 22, 1901, fifty Indigenous performers began their journey on the train from Buffalo to Detroit.

In the days before the celebration, religious clergy of all denominations made sure that their parishioners understood the connection between settler origins and Christianity, and how that played a part in Detroit's modern development. Similar to the 17th century "beacon upon a hill" rhetoric, clergy throughout the city preached sermons celebrating the past, and how God gave them the land, and gave them the wherewithal to build up the city. These discourses helped create a scenario in which settlers of different races (European) and religious affiliations were, for a brief moment, one unified group—the indigenous people of the land who got had blessed.

They preached sermons like, "The laying of the city's foundation;" "the gift of the past and our obligation to the future."¹⁷⁴ Clergy throughout the city understood the connection between origins and God. Here, indigeneity became synced under the broad umbrella of religion. God gave the citizens of Detroit the city—and Indigenous people were simply in the way. For instance, Reverend John McDowell of the second Avenue Presbyterian Church remarked, "Our first duty in the celebration," he said, "should be the acknowledgement of God's goodness in the giving of such a city."¹⁷⁵ But it was not simply the religious foundations, but God also helped them build the city.

¹⁷³ "50 Indians for Bicentenary," *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, June 6, 1901).

¹⁷⁴ "Significance of the Celebration of Detroit's Bicentenary Anniversary," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI, July 22, 1901).

¹⁷⁵ "Rich Past Brings a Large Responsibility," *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 22, 1901).

Other sermons focused on the origins of Detroit, and how that city progressed after whites settled it. “It is also a good opportunity to point out a lesson to the old as well as the young,” said Reverend F.W. Frisbie, of the St. James Episcopal Church. He continued, “It is difficult for us in these present days as we contemplate our beautiful with its buildings, its well-paved streets, its business, wealth and commerce, to imagine that it was once a wilderness, inhabited only by fierce Indians.”¹⁷⁶ Another clergy remarked, “It is fitting that we not God’s goodness in the bestowing upon us the advantages of a noble city that we shall continue under God to make it not simply a city of material beauty,” remarked Reverend W.H. Vincent, “but that it shall stand forth as a city of advanced moral beauty.”¹⁷⁷ The work of the priests as represented in these Sunday sermons further illustrated a dimension of settler memory:

The work of the priests was most tedious and unselfish, many of them being called to seal the messages they bore with their own blood. Their work was the uplifting of the wild men, many of whom learned to sing hymns to God instead of their idols. An Indian idol at the lower end of Belle Isle, which the Indians thought decided the destiny of the water and land, was destroyed by the priests.¹⁷⁸

These religious sermons, days before the bicentennial began, were a part of the larger socialization of Detroit’s white citizens so that they would be baptized into the cultural imaginings of white settler memory and origins. These discourses would be validated in the coming days, especially during Cadillac’s return and reclaiming of Detroit.

¹⁷⁶ “Secret of Our Growth and Prosperity,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 22, 1901).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ “Rich Past Brings a Large Responsibility,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 22, 1901.

Nations among Nations: Black Citizenship, Settler Origins, and Constructing Race

A major part of the bicentennial celebration was the Parade of Nations. Chaired by A.M. Seymour, elite white men used the bicentennial to usher in a collective, multicultural, inclusive view of itself. Though the city still dealt with the racial fault lines between Black and White, between White ethnic groups, during hardening color lines caused by Jim Crow, and especially during moments of pageantry, elite White men could create a brief moment of inclusivity that celebrated all nations in Detroit. Their idea was to have each European nation represented (including Indigenous people), in hopes of illustrating to the world the inclusive nature of Detroit. Indeed, an early illustration of multicultural inclusion, elites desired to illustrate that, when it came to race relations, Detroit was modern. In this regard, they even included Black Americans, who held a precarious position within the settler memory/origins story. Yet Black Americans held a difficult position, if not simply because of their difficult relationship in a settler society, but especially because of Jim Crow segregation.

The bicentennial planners constructed the parade of nations so that each nation would be represented in the order of their arrival to Detroit. Each nation would have at least twenty-four representatives. Indigenous people would lead the parade because they were the first Americans. It was an extraordinary affair. The *Detroit Free Press* observed that it “would be the greatest pageant ever held in the two hundred years of Detroit’s existence.”¹⁷⁹ Indigenous people would wear war paint; Swedes would wear brown coats with red sleeves, loose red trousers, trimmed with gold and black riding boots; Polish would be adorned with a uniform from the time of Gustavus Adolphus.

¹⁷⁹ “150,00 People Saw Yesterday’s Parade,” *The Evening News Detroit* (Detroit, MI, July 26, 1901).

The position of Black Americans and their arrival to the city, and how they would be portrayed within the settler memory was much more difficult because, quite simply, they were not white and not “vanishing”: they were caught in a settler regime. By settler regime I mean the construction of race in the United States predicated on both white supremacy and settler colonialism. Although they go hand in hand, they, at particular moments, operate differently for Black Americans and Indigenous people, even though both groups are impacted by the same social structure. And within Detroit’s settler memory, this colonialist and racialized practice was exemplified.

The bicentenary executive committee invited Detroit’s Black elite to participate in the planning of the celebration, hoping to highlight Black peoples’ unique contribution to the city’s history. According to historian Richard Thomas, many of the Black community migrated from Virginia, from cities such as Fredericksburg, Petersburg, and Richmond in the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁸⁰ The majority of these migrants were mechanics and tradesmen who sought to escape from the increasingly harsh realities of Black Codes in Virginia. Many of the free Blacks, who would go onto become active in the abolitionist movements in the mid-19th century Detroit. For example, William Webb’s home was the venue where Frederick Douglass and John Brown met on March 12, 1859.¹⁸¹ By the 1890s, Detroit’s Black community, which had enjoyed a bit of political power, quickly waned.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Richard Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

¹⁸¹ “Colored Men Suggest Tablets: Mark the House in Which Harper’s Ferry Raid Was Planned,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, May 26, 1901).

¹⁸² Wilma Wood Hendrickson, ed., *Detroit Perspectives: Crossroads and Turning Points* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 255. This excerpt is from Forrester Washington,

Though the bicentennial executive committee invited the Black community to participate, the Black community wanted to participate in a way that avoided the resultant problems of Jim Crow segregation: the drawing of the color line. They sought to challenge ideas of citizenship and belonging. Importantly, though working on behalf of themselves, they also participated in the larger settler historical memory, virtually subjugating Indigenous people within their historical imagination. For example, members of the Union League, an elite group of Black males, protested, and desired nothing more than to be treated as U.S. citizens, without their color being a barrier for protest. Their stance to be treated as American citizens was rooted in late 19th century politics where Black folks were increasingly under pressure to conform to the barriers of white racism. Writing on the rapidly changing conditions of Detroit's Black community in the late 19th century, sociologist Forrester Washington observed, "beginning with 1890, there developed an increasing rift of cordial relations which had existed in the white and colored races in Detroit."¹⁸³ According to Forrester, what caused the change in social relations was the increasing number of Black folks migrating to the state. Still, the Black community met several times in the month leading up to the bicentennial.

The first meeting was held on May 19th at Cole's Hall on Gratiot Avenue. It was here where they planned just exactly how they would participate so as not to be subjugated to the color line. "After the meeting, members decided that they would not participate in the parade of nations program. A.W. Hill president of the Union League stated, "It is not that we do not want to partake in the celebration, he said, "we do not want with to countenance drawing the color

"History" in *The Negro in Detroit: A Survey in the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center during the War Prosperity Period* (Detroit: Associated Charities, 1920).

¹⁸³ Ibid., 255.

line.”¹⁸⁴ By May 22, the Union League decided that they would refuse the executive committee’s invitation to participate. Upon hearing the news, A.M. Seymour, chair of the parade of nations, responded by explaining the logic behind the structure of Black Americans in the event: “they were told that they would be assigned to the place in line they belonged to them; corresponding to the date of their coming to Detroit.”¹⁸⁵ The Black community protested this characterization. From their perspective, creating a scenario where they were told exactly where they were to line up by a white man must have been troubling, if not outright disrespectful, especially because the event was premised on the idea of inclusion—not segregation. Seymour continued his justification stating, “The French and then the English. Others have not objected because their race was given its appropriate place in the line, and if any of the peoples object to taking the place where they belong in their chronological order they can stay out of the line.”¹⁸⁶ Seymour’s version of historical memory was rooted in the ideas of colonization and empire.

While Hill disagreed with Seymour, he inserted his own version of history, one rooted in the confines of settler memory. “If the French and Indians are to be kept separate, I suppose our objection will hardly hold good,” stated Hill.¹⁸⁷ He further commented, “we ought to be classed as citizens of Detroit and not as colored people.”¹⁸⁸ Hill’s memory of Detroit’s early history represents how racialization and settler memory worked in early 20th century Detroit. He

¹⁸⁴ “Colored Men Protesting: Will Not Take Part as Such in the Bicentennial. Union Men Withdraw from Committee. Allege That the Color Line Has Been Drawn,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, May 23, 1901).

¹⁸⁵ “Courteous to State Officials: Bicentenary Committee Will Not Return. Colored People Not Slighted.” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, May 24, 1901).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ “Courteous to State Officials,” *Detroit Free Press*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

understood that Indigenous people and the French co-created Detroit, but also only understood Indigenous history within the confines of settler colonialism. Hill continued his comments within the Detroit Black perspective that desired inclusion into the American mainstream. “We came here long before there were any American born people on the ground,” he said, “and are as much American citizens as they are.”¹⁸⁹ It is unclear as to who were the “American born” people. Hill, though, seems to suggest that whiteness, likely English or French whiteness, equated with Americanness. Another reading of Hill’s comment suggests that Indigenous people were not a part of his conception of the original Americans his understanding of belonging and citizenship. Hill, perhaps not knowingly, participated in the part of settler memory that erases an Indigenous relationship to being indigenous to the land. Hill ended his comment stating, “When they divide the Irish and the French, and the Germans, then we will be willing to be separated from others, but until then we want to be considered as citizens of Detroit.”¹⁹⁰ This passage points to the complications that the parade of nations caused for Detroit’s history and the elite settlers. In attempt to create a sense of belonging to Detroit’s past, Black folks also participated in the erasure of Indigenous histories to Detroit.

This problem was resolved. On May 25, Mayor Maybury invited Union League members to his office in order to meet about the issue, and to clarify to them what their role in the bicentennial would be.¹⁹¹ He explained to them his vision for the bicentennial, and the role that

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ “Colored Men Protesting,” *Detroit Free Press*.

¹⁹¹ “Colored Men Suggest Tablets: Mark the House in Which Harper’s Ferry Raid Was Planned,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, May 26, 1901).

Black Americans could play in it. The mayor was successful, and convinced his Black citizens that they were indeed a part of Detroit's past, present, and future.

Detroit's Black elite desired to only showcase the best of their race.¹⁹² The last records of Black participation were the subsequent memorial plaques erected. They wanted to structure their participation in a way that highlighted the community's achievements in art, literature, and national affairs. They commemorated two important sites. The first site was William Webb's house and the second site was where white abolitionist Seymour Finney had his barn, which served as a key site for Blacks escaping slavery in the South.¹⁹³

Black participation in the planning of the bicentennial, or at least protesting their position in the parade of nations is a simple act, but important one. While they found themselves in a difficult position—Jim Crow—they made it known that they did not want to be subjugated to the effects of white racism. Still, though careful to protect themselves as best as they could, Indigenous histories to Detroit were necessary only to the extent that it allowed them to construct their own niche in the settler regime of Detroit. It remains difficult to know how much Black Americans in Detroit accepted the larger narrative that Indigenous people were a vanishing race. While Black Americans dismissed Indigenous histories, whites wanted to make claim to Detroit through Indigenous peoples—using them to authenticate their claims to Detroit.

The Bicentennial

Leaving Buffalo, New York on Monday evening, July 22, the Indigenous performers sang songs all night, enjoying each others company, even keeping up their fellow passengers on the train. At least eleven tribal communities came to Detroit, mostly Dakotas and Lakotas, a few

¹⁹² "Highest Type of Their Development: Colored Men Will Depict It at the Bicentenary," *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, June 4, 1901).

¹⁹³ "Colored Men suggest Tablets," *Detroit Free Press*.

Blackfeet, Crows, Winnebagos, and Arapahoes. They arrived on July 24, at 6:00 AM, pulling into the Wabash Depot station, and were greeted by Mayor Maybury. The mayor stated with pride that “Noble Order of Red Men are always welcome” in his city. Following this very brief introduction to the mayor, the Indigenous performers loaded on to two local streetcars, and a Walpole Indigenous person transported them to Palmer Park, which is about nine miles from downtown Detroit.¹⁹⁴

As mentioned in chapter one, the 140-acre park was designed for Lizzie Merrill Palmer, the wife of esteemed Senator, Thomas Palmer, so that she could escape the congestion and loudness of the city. But importantly, this park designed to demarcate the urban and nature, was the home of Indigenous people. The park was used to dichotomize, both for the thousands of people who would watch the event and the Indigenous performers, savagery and civilization. The fact of them coming down from nature, the “savage” past and moving into the city during the coming parade was perhaps the best illustration the contradictions of urban angst at the turn of the century, for Indigenous people became the mechanism through which modernity was constructed. At the park, they lived in tents, and were served food, catered by Emil Imhoff, who owned a restaurant on Belle Isle.

The first act of the bicentennial was having Cadillac paddle down the Detroit River onto the banks of Detroit—a reenactment of that which occurred in 1701. For the bicentennial, white men made sure to celebrate the relationship between memory and the environment rooted in modernity. For example, at sunrise, on July 24, Cadillac and his party traveled down from Peche Island. Peche Island is one of many islands in the Detroit River at its opening in Lake St. Clair, a little over a mile east of Belle Isle. The reenactment of Cadillac’s travels from Peche Island all

¹⁹⁴ “Indians Wednesday A.M.,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 23, 1901. This person name is B. Baptiste and was said to have worked for the U.S. railroad.

the way to the banks of Detroit was a part of the bicentennial processions because the travels through the waterways further authenticated the colonization of Detroit. In this part of the program, the Detroit presses placed emphasis on the authentic version of everything. Unlike the 1701 landing, Cadillac would see the changes in land, from a virgin soil to a thriving, modern metropolis.¹⁹⁵

An article in the *Detroit News-Tribune*, remarked that Cadillac and his party “beheld the grandeur that nature has there prepared and which civilization has now utilized for an outing place for the tired and wear toilers of the city which Cadillac founded.”¹⁹⁶ As he paddled down the river, Cadillac was paddling from the pre-modern, where Indigenous people would meet him, to the shores of modernity. He would pass the “arches of the bridge at Belle Isle, where civilization has replaced the wild beauty with beautiful clubhouses.”¹⁹⁷ Cadillac would no longer see the river lined with trees; he would no longer see the possibility of land—a potential rooted in colonization of Indigenous land and bodies. He would see that potential realized in the form of modernity—the complete change in the landscape, including yachts moving on the river. He would even hear “huge steamers laden with the products of the great northwest” that “would plow by on the opposite side of the river.”¹⁹⁸

The local media made sure that the relationship between savagery and land were apparent, which were both ripe for colonization and dispossession. Paddling to the shore, Cadillac would be met by the Indigenous performers, who would “again rush down to see the

¹⁹⁵ See “Map Appendices” at the end of the document.

¹⁹⁶ “The Landing of Cadillac,” *Detroit News-Tribune* (Detroit, MI, July 24, 1901).

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

visitors and the guides will jabber to them in their wild tongue, but the scene will be far from real.”¹⁹⁹ This performance segment of the bicentennial represented the movement of time and space, though it was not “authentic” because “years ago those dusky warriors were driven away from their lands by Cadillac and those who followed him until the few now in Detroit are among the last of the fast fading race.”²⁰⁰ The history presented here of Cadillac’s landing and domination of Detroit is curious, especially given the fact that Cadillac beckoned several Indigenous groups to live by him for protection and survival. As historian Helen Hornbeck Tanner has noted, “Knowing that his isolated fort was insecure without Indian allies, Cadillac issued an invitation for midwestern tribes to settle in Detroit.”²⁰¹ The reenactment of Cadillac’s landing assured the citizens of Detroit that the initial founding of their city fit into the American, settler narrative of founding a place with sheer determination, and one in which Indigenous people played only a minor role.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, “The Location of Indian Tribes in Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio,” in *Indians of Northern Ohio and Southeastern Michigan* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), 327.



Figure 7. Cadillac's Flotilla, which paddled down from Belle Isle. Photo taken from the Bicentenary publication, 1902. In the public domain.

When the processions began, The Fessenden, a ship, took Cadillac and his bateaux to Peche Island, where they were taken down to the bridge, and were set adrift, in order to paddle down parallel Third Street. Cadillac and his party landed near the first on Belle Isle. Thousands saw Cadillac's landing at Belle Isle. There he planted a cross. The planting of a cross symbolically placed the origins of the city within the broader narrative of Christian origins of the United States. More than this, the planting of the cross was a sacrament, designed to reclaim Detroit as a Christian space—a space now devoid of its “pagan,” “savage,” past, but civilized and dominated by Christian, white men.

Having gotten off at Belle Isle, he was met by the Indigenous performers. They rushed down to meet Cadillac at the shore. They began to chant a song, allegedly welcoming Cadillac to

Detroit. An unnamed Indigenous performer went up to Cadillac, shook his hand welcoming Cadillac, as “perhaps one of his ancestors had done to the real Cadillac.”²⁰² Apparently performing as told, they stood in a semi-circle and Lone Bear, a Lakota grabbed his Tomahawk and displayed it. The way the newspaper portrayed it, “all the Indians couldn’t be glad that the white man were here, and so Lone Bear was cast for the part of the dissenter.”²⁰³ Having been taken behind the Indigenous, they loaded everyone on both the Fessenden and in the flotillas, the party paddled to the banks of the city, and there, Cadillac, joined by his Indigenous comrades, paraded through the streets of downtown Detroit.

²⁰² “Cadillac Receives Keys to of the City: Mayor Maybury Bids Him Again to Resume His Rule Over the City He Founded,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 25, 1901).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*



Figure 8. The delegation of Indigenous people walking down Woodward Avenue at the Bicentennial in 1901. The description suggests that there were at least 50 Native people who participated. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress. In the Public Domain.

With Chief Long Horse at the head, the Indigenous performers led the march. They wore their war paint. The newspaper observed that they walked stoically, and paid close attention to the crowd.²⁰⁴ The parade began at Atwater Street, then west to Woodward Avenue, ending at Jefferson. Two marshals mounted on horses, escorted Cadillac up Woodward Avenue, and then ended at the Russell House, then Detroit's most prestigious hotel, across from Campus Martius Park, where Mayor Maybury, giving the 1901 Cadillac the keys to the city, made speeches. In dramatic fashion, Cadillac drew his sword from its holster, hoisted it up to the sky, and stated,

²⁰⁴ "Nations Passed in Review," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI, July 26, 1901).

“In the name of the King of France, I take possession of this land.”²⁰⁵ He also planted the French flag, symbolizing the colonization of the land. Having done his duty of colonization, Mayor Maybury gave a speech that authenticated the history of the area, wedding both French and U.S. colonization together, a moment of uniting both racialization, masculinity, and colonialism. “One other evidence remains to remind you of the past in the presence of children of the forest,” remarked Maybury, “and who have come to salute you as their ancestors did of yore.”²⁰⁶ Yet, Maybury quickly turned to the Progressive Era belief of the “vanishing Indian” stating, “but we grieve to say that they are a sad remnant of the powerful race that first extended to you a friendly hand, and then the sole and undisputed owners of the soil.”²⁰⁷ He began to explain to “Cadillac” what happened to the Indigenous people, ironically ignoring the Indigenous population(s) that remained in Michigan:

[Indigenous people] have followed the course of the sun westward, and as its rays of brightness fade at its decline, so are they fading from the land where once they ruled. Your first welcome was by comparatively few, but now you are welcomed by many. Your first welcome was by one race of people only, while those who welcome you to-day hail from every clime and creed and nation. We beg you to tarry with us as our honored guests, while we manifest in every progress of the centuries, coupled with our delight at your return. We would have you believe that we have not been unfaithful stewards of the

²⁰⁵ “Cadillac Receives Keys to of the City: Mayor Maybury Bids Him Again to Resume His Rule Over the City He Founded,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 25, 1901).

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

trust committed to our care, and that our endeavor is to be patriotic, progressive and peaceful. Again I greet you and extend to you a cordial welcome.²⁰⁸

Mayor Maybury's speech was an important moment in which racial formation, settler memory, and masculinity collided. Elite white men were in a quest to define masculinity and reenact historical memory by showing how one man was able to define and found a city with such sheer force. And, for a brief moment, the differences between white ethnic communities could be subjugated simply because settler memory needs a collective founding of a place, especially when dispossessing Indigenous people from both land (literally) and its historical memory. This speech illustrates that Maybury used indigeneity to construct Detroit as a white masculine space.

Mayor Maybury gave Cadillac the keys to the city, so that Cadillac could "resume again his the rule over the city [he] founded."²⁰⁹ Maybury overstated Cadillac's founding of Detroit. However, the Mayor's presentation of Detroit's history to the public, allowed for the collective history of the area—one with little Indigenous contribution—to be "authentic." Cadillac also gave a speech, which further authenticated the history of the area. His contribution was to explain the connection between the past and present, something that Cadillac of 1901 could appreciate:

This village of Detroit, Mr. Mayor, has undergone a marvelous transformation. Were it not for its natural surroundings on land and water, while time has not changed their original outlines—the stream through which flow the waters of the great lakes above on their way to Lake Erie and the Atlantic Ocean; the shores and islands, rendered, perhaps, still more attractive during the progress of civilization, and the beautiful bay on whose

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

western shore the modern city has been built—we should have had some doubts that we should have reached the locality we sought.²¹⁰

Cadillac connected the link between geography and modernity. The original French settlers came to Detroit because of its geographic location, its proximity to waterways. And after Cadillac manipulated and changed by settlers—, or civilization—modern Detroit became better for it. The landscape was a virgin soil, able to change drastically only when white men came to settle it. Indeed, as gender scholar Anne McClintock writes, “By flamboyantly naming ‘new’ lands, male imperials mark them as their own, guaranteeing, thereby... a privileged relation to origins.”²¹¹ The city and this celebration was a monument, a myth, a ritual, that allowed the ideas of memory and colonization, constructed through white male origin myths, to circulate.²¹² To further engage in the celebration and ideological processes of settler memory and implementation of settler masculinity, they also dedicated a chair in Cadillac’s honor.

Settler Origins: Seeding Settler Masculine Origins

The second act of the bicentennial was the dedication of Cadillac’s chair. Called the stone chair of justice, it was unveiled at Cadillac’s Square. The chair was symbolic for many reasons. Though Cadillac’s story had been told by city historians for some time, the dedication of Cadillac’s chair, and the surrounding performance symbolically affirmed white men’s masculine origins to Detroit. Though they had literally claimed the space long ago, this act clearly claimed the space for Detroit’s elite white men as they tried to firmly place the symbolic form of white masculinity in Detroit.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 29.

²¹² Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 24.

Silas Farmer, while revealing the chair proclaimed, “A chair is a place in which to sit—it suggests occupancy.” Farmer continued explaining the importance of a chair dedicated to Cadillac, the founder of Detroit: “When Cadillac and his colonists seated themselves here, the settlement—the colony of Detroit—began.”²¹³ But in Farmer’s re-remembering the past for this broad audience, he asserted historical inaccuracies to usher in a collective sense of unity for Detroit:

It is especially appropriate that a memorial to Cadillac be erected on the square named in his honor, and it is singular coincidence that in this year, when for the first time, we have ‘one-man’ boards in several city departments should dedicate this chair to the memory of the founder of the city who most emphatically illustrated ‘one-man’s rule. Louis XIV., who then held the scepter of France, said: ‘I am the state.’ He was absolute in France; Cadillac so at Detroit.²¹⁴

Farmer overstated Cadillac’s absolute rule over Detroit. But he was reflecting a white masculine perspective, an ideology that could insert a historical narrative into the present in order to usher in a collective history of a local place, Detroit. Farmer continued, though, commenting on the absolute rule of Cadillac, stating,

Let us imagine in his chair of justice two hundred years ago. He had the power of life and death. Practically the only restriction upon his acts was the fact that harsh treatment would weaken the settlement and thus injure himself.²¹⁵

²¹³ Silas Farmer et al., eds., *The Bi-centenary of the Founding of Detroit, 1701-1901: Being the Official Celebration of July 24, 25, 26, 1901. Issued Under Direction of the Common Council of the City of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Chas. M. Rousseau & Sons, 1902), 292.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

History reveals another narrative about Cadillac's so-called absolute rule and power in Waawayyaattanong (Detroit), however.

Cadillac invited various Indigenous communities, including the Huron, Ottawa, and Huron-speaking Tionontati to live near the fort. He needed their protection from the British and Iroquois, and needed them to provide furs so that France could remain competitive in the fur trade. Moreover, Indigenous people provided food for the settlers because they were largely incapable of feeding themselves.²¹⁶

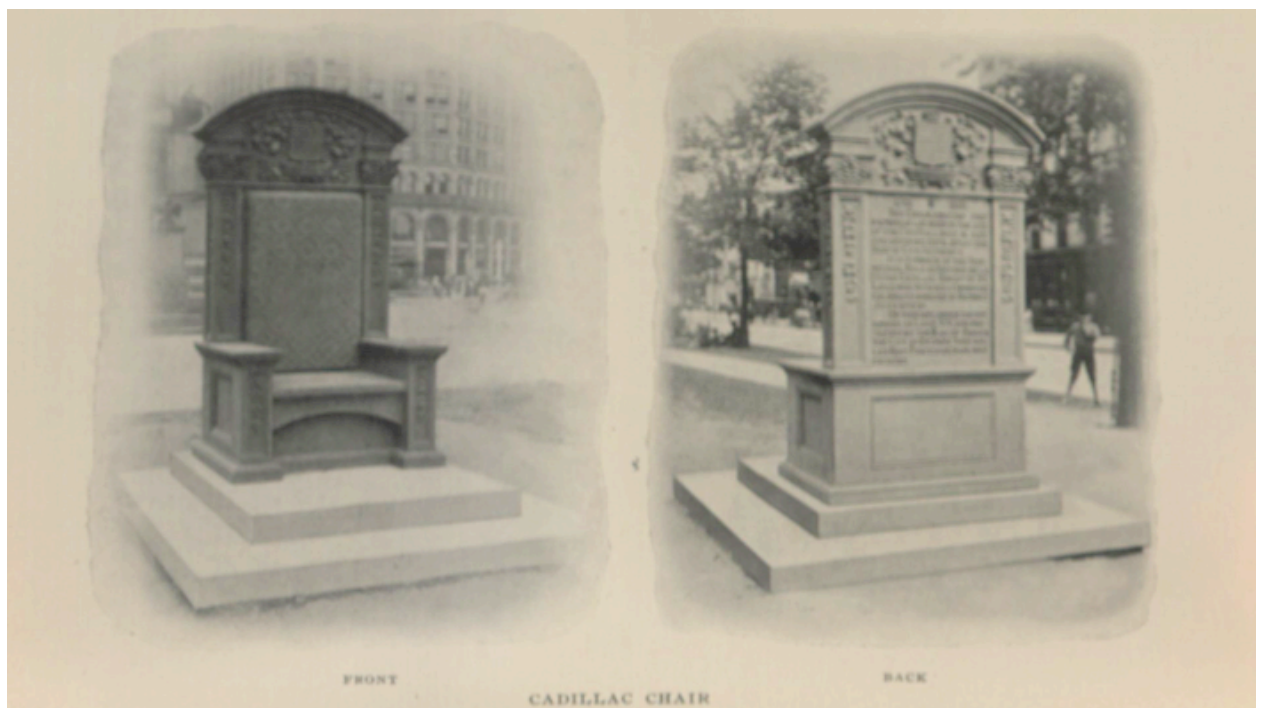


Figure 9. Picture taken from the Bicentenary book, 1902. In the public domain.

The chair served as a symbolic marker of erasure. It illustrated that Cadillac created the colony, but with little help from Indigenous people. The seat meant that that the land was unoccupied, ready to be settled, only giving birth because, after all, civilization began when white men turned a virgin soil into something that could be built upon, civilized. As literary

²¹⁶ Hornbeck Tanner, "The Location of Indian Tribes in Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio," 326, 327.

scholar Anne McClintock argues, “imperial men reinvent a moment of pure (male) origin and mark it visibly with one of Europe’s fetishes: a flag, a name on a map, a stone, or later perhaps, a monument.”²¹⁷ The narrative of Cadillac founding Detroit without Indigenous people dismissed the role Indigenous people, allowed for Detroit’s 1901 citizens to be ushered into a collective form of modernity, one in which both masculinity and whiteness—not yet fully formed—could thrive.²¹⁸

Mayor Maybury’s gift of the keys to the city to Cadillac and the dedication of Cadillac’s chair were symbolic for settler masculinity. They were important gestures that represented the necessity of performing colonialism in a way that validated white men’s claim to space. As a part of the larger celebrations and pageants occurring during the time period, the local were important too. Like other celebrations, elite white men used Detroit’s bicentennial as a mechanism to clearly demarcate savagery from civilization. Perhaps most importantly, though, as seen through the two aforementioned acts, was the authentication of settler masculine origins in Detroit. By reconstructing this memory, connecting Cadillac from the past and reenacting (and overstating) his role in the present, Detroit’s elite could gloat and imagine what they had done and, more importantly, think about what they wanted to do in the future. Unfortunately, history does not reveal to us what the Indigenous performers thought about this the entire processional. Perhaps they wondered among themselves about the performance of this history. Though it is not known what they thought about these two acts, they did engage in their own performances at Palmer Park in which they had more control over their representation, albeit on a limited basis.

²¹⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 26.

²¹⁸ John Hartigan, Jr., *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Indigenous Experience at the Bicentennial

The local media documented Indigenous performers' experience at the bicentennial. Though documenting what we might call Indigenous modes of resistance is quite a task, because their experiences are explained solely through the settler gaze. Still, not having the voices of Indigenous performers at the bicentennial is not a reason to ignore their experience, even, perhaps, their agency at the bicentennial. As Danika Medak-Saltzman has observed, "it is about recognizing Indigenous resistance as a continual part of Native negotiations with colonial regimes and about considering how moments of colonial celebrations of empire inadvertently served anticolonial purposes."²¹⁹ In this section, I explore the experience of Indigenous people at the bicentennial in an attempt to capture their experiences at the bicentennial. I argue that though they had little control over how they would be represented, they did all they did use this moment to engage in at least challenging how they would perform.

The Detroit media documented the Indigenous performers' time engaging with modernity, the city. They lived in tents made of large pieces of canvass and wood. There was also a larger tent in which many slept and socialized. As mentioned earlier, upon their arrival to the city, the Indigenous guests met Mayor Maybury and then had breakfast, catered by Emil Imhoff—the owner of a restaurant on Belle Isle called the Casino. The executive committee paid him to take care of the meals of the Indigenous guests. He cooked a large meal of eggs and ham. Upon serving his patrons, he was encountered with disappointment and grumbles. David Arapaho, an Arapaho who also served as the group's interpreter, explained to Imhoff why his

²¹⁹ Danika Medak-Saltzman, "Transnational Indigenous Exchange: Rethinking Global Interactions of Indigenous Peoples at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (September 2010): 593.

group was unhappy: they did not want to eat ham; they preferred beef. Imhoff did not budge, and his guests were forced to eat what he had provided for them.

This brief moment suggests that Indigenous people were used to being treated a certain way during their time at performances. Indeed, from Sitting Bull to Geronimo, they were treated with both a curiosity and respect, and a healthy dose of settlers exoticizing them at fairs and pageants. Though many other performers did not have the same amount of notoriety, they were still forced to engage with the circulating discourses of indigeneity at the turn-of-the-century.

While Detroit's citizens saw Indigenous people through their own settler gaze, they also described their interactions within capitalist exchange terms. Indeed, while settlers viewed the Indigenous performers through their own version of modernity, they were confounded also with how Indigenous people engaged in modernity. Charging whites money to see them perform was perhaps one of the early signs of a version of Indigenous modernity in 20th century Detroit.²²⁰

The newspapers observed Indigenous people engaging in capitalist exchange by charging viewers money to see them perform at Palmer Park. More than this, it was Indigenous peoples' attempt to resist the settler gaze during the bicentennial celebration. Several photographers went with excitement to visit their Indigenous guests at Palmer Park. The article titled, "Big Chiefs Here for Cash, Not Glory," underscored the contradictions of settler imaginings. "No longer are they the innocent braves of the forest who know naught but woodcraft," read the article, "if the

²²⁰ Brian Hosmer, *American Indians in the Market Place: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakans, 1870-1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009). See also, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). I am not suggesting that these performers became rich off of their performance, but I do think it is important to underscore that they understood how U.S. economic exchange occurred, and they took advantage of it, disrupting white ideas of Native non-modernity.

white man wants a picture he must pay for the privilege.”²²¹ According to this logic, Indigenous people should only operate in the role assigned to them by settler modernity. Yet, the Indigenous performers found moments of resistance, including shooting an arrow at a photographer.

A set of photographers came to Palmer Park because they thought that Indigenous people were going to perform a ghost dance, and also perform a dog feast. A photographer, identified as “Paleface” Charley, attempted to take photos of this group; he was mistaken. He set his tripod up as close to the tents as possible. One of the performers named “Eagle Eye,” ran over to him and said, “Stop! You go!” As Charley turned to get his box, he noticed that an arrow was pierced through the tripod. Eagle Eye grimaced at him and snatched the camera from him. David Arapahoe, the interpreter, told Eagle Eye that Charley wanted to take a photo; Eagle Eye conceded that this was okay—as long as Charley paid five dollars.²²² Indigenous people charging money should not be a big surprise.

Generally, speaking, the Indigenous performers appeared to enjoy their time engaging with modernity in Detroit. Apparently they very much liked riding on the streetcars, smiling, waving, and singing songs as they traveled back and forth from downtown Detroit to Palmer Park during their three days there.²²³ These brief encounters were the only ones documented. Yet, Indigenous people likely enjoyed seeing Detroit, and participating in the bicentennial in spite of the settler gaze.

²²¹ Big Chiefs Here for Cash, Not Glory: 40 Indians who take part in the bicentenary shot arrows at Photographers who visited their camp at Palmer Park.” Scrap book.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ “Indians Preferred Beef, But They Ate Ham,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 25, 1901).

Parading Through History: The Allegorical Parade and Pontiac's Return

The last event was held on Friday July 26, around 8:15 PM. It was an allegorical parade. Covering some sixteen mile of streets, the newspapers said that it would “surpass anything of the kind ever given in this country.”²²⁴ Though slightly exaggerated, the article did express the unique function of parading through history at the local level. A part of settler memory, these floats allowed for the citizens of Detroit to see the development of Detroit’s history, and how indigeneity was erased from that history. Comprised of twenty floats, they represented the past, present, and future of Detroit. The floats were brightly erected on electric motor cars.

The floats were a panorama of Detroit’s history. Once more, Pontiac’s attempted seizure of Fort Detroit was a recounted event. Float seven labeled, “Conspiring Pontiac,” showed Pontiac holding council with his followers, encouraging them to rebel against the British occupation. It is there that Pontiac revealed his plans to take over Fort Detroit; this float was a continuation of elite white men demonstrating the shift from savagery to civilization, in an attempt to construct their sense of a masculine self, as I documented in chapter one. Perhaps the most important float to demonstrate the settler memory of Detroit, also showcasing the settler origins of Detroit could be scene on float eighteen.

Three flags illustrated both settler origins and settler memory, and how elite’s erased indigenous history. The float carried the British, French, and U.S. flags. These flags represented both the narrative of white settler origins, and the colonization of the area. It also offered a misleading view of Detroit’s history, one in which Indigenous people played very little. Indeed, once Pontiac failed to capture Fort Detroit, indigeneity was no longer necessary—at least that is

²²⁴ Detroit’s Bicentenary Celebration Programme:” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, July 20, 1901).

how the story was portrayed. Yet the last float titled, “Future of Detroit, 2001,” pointed to how elite white men wanted to see the future of the city:

As an appropriate ending to this magnificent parade the last float represented a beautiful triumphal arch, illustrative of the industrial progress of the city. Statues represent Detroit, Art, Science, and commerce were seen at one end, and one industry at the other.²²⁵

Mayor Maybury found the bicentennial a great success. Speaking to the City Common Council about the previous year, Maybury remarked, “In the last year the celebration of the founding of the city in its two hundredth anniversary was carried out in a manner which I believe met the commendation of all.”²²⁶ For Maybury, though, the best cultural artifact left by the bicentennial was the book, edited by Silas Farmer, “With the completion of the official book...this pleasant event will take its place in the history of the ongoing of our city.” The book, as a cultural artifact, was important because it could further allow the future citizens of Detroit an opportunity to go back in time and recount a moment when settlers were able to celebrate the official history of the city, when it was on the brink of greatness. In fact, they even set a box which would not be opened again until 2001.²²⁷

Following the bicentennial, Silas Farmer wrote, “if any city on the American continent deserved an elaborate memorial on reaching its bicentenary, Detroit is that city. He further

²²⁵ Farmer, *The Bi-Centenary of the Founding of Detroit*, 17-19.

²²⁶ William Maybury, *Fifth Annual Message of William C. Maybury Mayor of Detroit to the Common Council* (Detroit: The Thos. Smith Press, 1902).

²²⁷ In 2001, Detroit celebrated the 300th year founding of the city. Legendary singer and songwriter Stevie Wonder headlined the event. The Detroit Institute of Arts had fifteen artists create exhibitions that illustrated some history of Detroit [<http://www.dia.org/exhibitions/artiststake/>].

explained, “its history in many particulars is so unique, its age for an American city so remarkable,” that no other city deserved to be celebrated in such a magnificent way.”²²⁸ He was correct.

On Friday July 26, the Indigenous performers began to board the train that would take them back to Buffalo, New York. Following the celebration, only a few mentioned the experience of the Indigenous people. One stated the “Indians ate up \$142 worth of victuals during their stay in the city.”²²⁹ The other encounter occurred between Indigenous men and white women. While the few Indigenous women attended were loading everyone’s belongings onto the train so that they could prepare for their journey.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the Bicentennial celebration, as an attempt to come to terms with understanding white male settler origins to the local place. In the construction of modern Detroit, within white men’s cultural imaginings, Detroit needed to be celebrated because of its great contributions to the world. The celebration and the subsequent publication of a book that documented the entire scene, illustrated how indigeneity was a lever to both bolster white masculinity and ideas of their relationship to Detroit. In the posthumously published book, the importance of the celebration was summarized for the city residents in this way,

Those days of celebration were crowded with the events of two centuries of the city’s life. Like a panorama the two hundred years sped by, and all their varied history was told again and most vividly reproduced. It is a privilege to claim citizenship in Detroit in this

²²⁸ Farmer, *The Bicentenary*, 9-10.

²²⁹ “Money Left Over: Probable Financial Result of the Bicentenary,” *Detroit Free Press* (1858-1922) (Detroit, MI, July 28, 1901).

beginning of a new century of the world and of our city's life, and certainly this generation of our citizens has the highest inspiration to civic pride in the worthy celebration of the city's birthday, in the midst of her greatest glory of natural beauty and civil prosperity.²³⁰

The city's elite white men had great reason to be optimistic, for they were on the verge of great technological breakthrough with the coming of the soon-to-be-booming car industry. The bicentennial itself was a great feat, for it not only had the ability to reimagine and perform the past for its contemporary citizens, but it also allowed for Detroiters to reflect on their present condition, and imagine where they wanted to go. But the contradictions embedded in settler memory were not easily overcome. Settlers could use indigenous histories to erase an actual Indigenous presence in the area—and they could imagine the city's future using indigeneity as the mechanism to construct their future, again, first by narrating out Indigenous histories, and then, without an actual Indigenous presence. Black Americans sought to assert their presence in Detroit's constructed historical memory, but did so at the expense of Indigenous people and their role in Detroit's history.

These stories also allowed for elite settlers to imagine a history without Indigenous people in the present, as they could imagine them in the past. Yet, in the coming years, Indigenous people began to reemerge politically, and began to challenge longstanding ideas about their disappearance and demise. In the next chapter I analyze brief moments where Indigenous people began to assert their presence in Detroit, hoping to reclaim indigeneity.

²³⁰ *Detroit Bicentenary*, 11.

Chapter 3: A Changing of the Guard: Charles Eastman, the Society of American Indians, and the Genesis of Indigenous Political Culture in Detroit

The relationship between indigeneity and modernity in Detroit between 1910 and the 1940s was complicated by a resurgence of Indigenous peoples' visibility in the city. In three decades, Detroit was wrapped in dramatic change and limitless possibilities. Detroit's population blossomed to nearly two million people. The major impetus of change for Detroit was the auto industry. Business was booming. Henry Ford's Model T vehicle allowed for rural Americans, especially farmers, to gain access to cities and move their goods more efficiently; Ford also helped raise the minimum wage in his plants to \$5 a day. The auto revolution also affected the city of Detroit greatly. As Arthur Pound wrote in 1940:

But the [auto industry] as a whole grows more fascinating and intriguing, especially to those who study its social implications, aware that every turn of a screw is part of the fatefully process of history, and that neither men nor cities can escape the consequences of what they manufacture, or dodge the effects of the tools and systems they gladly or grudgingly use.²³¹

The auto industry's impact on Detroit's modern development is undeniable. However, as in times past, indigeneity was still *the* mechanism through which both Detroit's—cultural past and its future—were imagined. For example, in the final chapter of his history, Pound recounted the now familiar history of settlers conquering both Detroit's land and Indigenous population. "In the early days, when Detroit contended with Indians and wild beasts, the forest hemmed in a small community of narrow streets. However, having conquered both Indigenous bodies and

²³¹ Arthur Pound, *Detroit: Dynamic City* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1940), 304.

land, Detroit could look ahead to its future—based upon the reimagined history of Indigenous possession.

“If a brave, new world is in the making, dynamic Detroit confidently expects to be its proving ground, chief station on the road to great to-morrows. Standing these rivers of art and literature flow from the once discordant present, one feels the miracle in process by which the dauntless nature of man pins that which endures out of that which passes.”²³²

Though elites could use indigeneity for their own purposes, it was once more actual Indigenous people who came to challenge how indigeneity would be deployed and for what purpose. Other changes, though, also helped alter the city in important ways. This chapter analyzes the roots of Indigenous political culture, specifically documenting the Society of American Indians’ meeting in the city, Charles Eastman’s residency, and the formation of the North American Indian Club (NAIC). These Indigenous political actors/organizations, who had long been on the forefront of Indigenous political activity, came to Detroit in order to continue challenging the depiction of Indigenous people in the settler imagination. And though there is no known direct link between the SAI and Eastman and the NAIC, the former set the stage for ushering in a new political context in which a new generation of Indigenous people could begin to assert themselves in a city that had long rendered them invisible.

This chapter makes two main arguments. First, it argues that the SAI attempted to reform itself as a trans-indigenous organization because it was on the decline.²³³ Members billed themselves as an “international convention” in order to tap into Detroit’s unique geographic location, a city close to the Canadian border where First Nations people could cross the border

²³² Ibid., 372.

²³³ Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

and attend the meeting. Moreover, Detroit was a place squarely in modernity because of its burgeoning auto industry and because of its limitless potential to be the most exciting, technologically advanced city in the world. Indeed, as noted Detroit geographer Joe T. Darden has observed, “the automobile assembly line and burgeoning automobile industry turned Detroit into a modern metropolis.”²³⁴

I also argue that the second to last meeting and Eastman’s last years spent in the Motor City represent an end to an era to late nineteenth early twentieth century Indigenous politics. These Indigenous political actors, long deploying a 19th century version indigeneity in order to gain respect for Indigenous political rights as sovereign people and to halt their depiction in the settler imagination, were fading to black. For them, this was their last opportunity to challenge U.S. colonialism. For Eastman in particular, living in Detroit allowed him to stay connected with modernity—with Detroit, including its auto industry and rapid development representing the quintessential aspect of modern American life—in order to fulfill his destiny of challenging settler imaginings while also presenting an alternative vision of Indigenous modernity to the White world. Before exploring these Indigenous political actors, I now turn briefly to an important aspect of Detroit’s change: immigration.

Detroit was shaped by the massive influx in population based upon two migrations. Indeed, by 1930, about one-quarter of the city’s population were of foreign-born heritage or had at least one foreign born parent; one-third of those migrants were from Canada.²³⁵ Before World War I, general White sentiments about European immigration were in ambivalent. For instance,

²³⁴ Joe T. Darden et al., *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 3.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 247. One has to wonder how First Nations people were counted. Were they counted as “Indian” or as “Canadian”? Did the census workers understand the difference?

an article published in the *Detroit Free Press* expressed general disgust because of the changing racial demographics caused by Southern European immigration to Detroit. In contrast, an article published in the *Detroit Free Press*, detailed what the Protestant churches around Detroit could do for immigrants. They also documented what immigrants could do for the city. “This immigrant question is one of the nation’s greatest and most of the foreigners make excellent citizens once they are taught our ways,” read the article. It further stated that, “Not only do immigrants coming to this city bring a lot of money in their pockets in the aggregate, but a splendid brawn and muscle to perform our work as well.” Immigrants from Europe not only used brawn and muscle to contribute to Detroit, but other facets of American life but could also contribute to “churches and industry, to government and to all people already here...”²³⁶

There was another strand of thought, which was not so kind to the idea of more immigration to the city. “If our immigrants were still coming largely from Great Britain, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, or even from Poland, the situation would be less threatening” the article reasoned because “in that case we would be welcoming the blood of the kin of the founders of the nation, people who hold essentially the same ideals with them and with us.”²³⁷ The article left the reader with only two options to deal with the immigration “problem.” One, increase the (white) races mentioned above and to make sure to conserve them. The second option, which the article understood to be happening around it, was to “let [American ideals and American institutions] die out and allow the Asiatics and the people of southern Europe to found

²³⁶ “Education of Foreign Races, Church Plans: Protestants Launch an Active Campaign in Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, November 16, 1913).

²³⁷ “The Extinction of A Race,” *Detroit Free Press (1831-1922)* (Detroit, MI, August 25, 1910).

their own empire here.”²³⁸ Though racism was a problem between white and recent immigrant arrivals from Europe, Black American migration from the south also occurred during the same period.

Black Americans came to escape the extreme poverty and racism of the South. In addition to structural issues, others came to live in northern cities where they believed they achieve middle class life—the epitome of American citizenship.²³⁹ According to historian Beth Bates, Detroit’s Black population increased over 600%—from “5,741 in 1910 to 40,839 in 1920.”²⁴⁰ By 1930, Detroit’s Black population reached about 120,000 people—accounting for about eight percent of Detroit’s population.²⁴¹ However, the coming of southern Blacks also created problems for the already established Black community—many of whom had resided in Detroit since the early the nineteenth century.

For example, as early as 1909, members of Detroit’s elite community wrote publicly about the influx of southern Blacks into Detroit. Robert J. Willis, an attorney and representative of Black middle class respectability ideologies of the Progressive Era wrote in a tone that almost assured both Blacks and Whites that Detroit’s elite Blacks did their job in making sure that 2,000 recent migrants understood Black middle class respectability. “Most of those coming in are educated people from the South,” wrote Willis. He also emphasized that, “they are migrating into all northern cities, seeking places where they may secure schooling for their children and where

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Jim Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁴⁰ Beth Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 16.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

they may develop their manhood and womanhood.”²⁴² He further reassured everyone that Detroit is probably “freer from race prejudice” than other northern cities and that the Black elite, “have organizations whose object is to instill into the minds of the colored people the necessity for good citizenship.”²⁴³ Indigenous migrations to Detroit were not very well documented or even mentioned. However, Indigenous people lived in and did come to the city.

Detroit’s interwar Indigenous population is difficult to document because the U.S. Census records placed them under the broad category of “Other Races,” which included Chinese and Japanese. However, in 1940, there were approximately 5,794 Indigenous people living in the state of Michigan, and 1,323 Indigenous people living across urban centers throughout Michigan. Because Detroit was the home of a booming car industry, it seems likely that many of those 1,300 Indigenous people lived in Detroit. For example, Ralph West a Cherokee Indian from Oklahoma. He came to Detroit to study law and found a job working at the Ford Motor Company.²⁴⁴ However, Indigenous political actors such as members of the SAI used the meeting to champion their cause for citizenship in the U.S.

It is important to note that the SAI came to Detroit under a political ideology that elite whites used to both eschew racial segregation—at least in rhetoric—and at the same time uphold structural racism. During interwar Detroit, elite whites promoted what historian Karen R. Miller calls “Northern racial liberalism.” Miller describes this racial ideology as “the notion that all Americans, regardless of race, should be politically equal, but that the state cannot and indeed

²⁴² “Southern Blacks Flock to Detroit: Attorney Willis Estimates 2,000 Arrivals in 30 Months; Seek Education for Children,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)* (Detroit, MI, November 10, 1909).

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Ralph West, “The Adjustment of the American Indian in Detroit: A Descriptive Study” (Wayne State University, 1950), (Wayne State University).

should not enforce racial equality be interfering with the existing social or economic order.”²⁴⁵

This racial ideology shaped both social relations and economic and political framing. Thus, when the SAI came to Detroit, they entered a political situation in which they could be embraced as both embraced (on the surface) and still be treated as anything but modern.

The Society of American Indians

The Society of American Indians (SAI) was a prominent American Indian group that emerged during the Progressive Era.²⁴⁶ Though general histories suggest that the SAI was conceptualized in October 1911 with the first meeting in Columbus, Ohio, others suggest that conversations about an all-Indigenous political organization had begun much earlier.²⁴⁷ For example, on January 9, 1904, Fayette McKenzie, a white sympathizer for Indigenous causes who would in 1915 become president of Fisk University, wrote with enthusiasm to W.E.B. Du Bois. He believed that if he “could persuade 50 or 100 or 200 Indians to combine for the good of their

²⁴⁵ Karen R. Miller, *Managing Inequality: Northern Racial Liberalism in Interwar Detroit* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015), 4.

²⁴⁶ Historians generally describe the Progressive Era as a period of reform. It is also characterized by the mass migration of Eastern Europeans. See, Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Glenda Gilmore (ed.), *Who Were the Progressives?* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002); Maureen Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Robert D. Johnston, “Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Political Historiography.” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, (2002) Vol. 1, No. 1: pp: 68-92; Michael McGer, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁴⁷ D. Anthony Tyee Clark, “At The Headwaters of a Twentieth Century ‘Indian’ Political Agenda: Rethinking the Origins of the Society of American Indians,” in *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (eds.), Loretta Fowler & Daniel Cobb (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2007), pp. 70-90. Clark illustrates this through conversations between brothers Charles and John Eastman.

race into an association which stood for the unity and solidarity, the intelligence and progress,” those American Indian intellectuals would “guide the whole race to a higher civilization.” It is not known whether Du Bois took active steps to assist McKenzie; however, seven days after receiving McKenzie’s letter, Du Bois sent a short response: “Dear Sir: I think your plan most excellent,” he wrote, and; “[I] would be glad to aid it in any way.” Du Bois further stressed, “The uplift must always come from the top and the training and unification leaders is the great thing.”²⁴⁸ Yet, many Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks came to Columbus, Ohio on October 1911 to create a platform for an all-Indigenous group.

The SAI formed officially in October 1911, meeting in Columbus, Ohio at Ohio State University.²⁴⁹ Original attendees at the first meeting included Charles Eastman (Dakota), Carlos Montezuma (Yavapi Apache), Arthur Parker (Seneca), Sherman Coolidge (Arapaho), and Zitkala Sa (Lakota), and many more. They were able to form an organization under a broad spectrum because of their common relationship with the White world. Those experiences included their time at boarding schools, which also resulted in the formation of a common lingua franca (English). In addition, many took advantage of expanding educational opportunities within the white world.²⁵⁰ For example, Carlos Montezuma was the first known Indigenous

²⁴⁸ Fayette McKenzie to W.E.B. Du Bois, January 9, 1904 in Aptheker, 71-72.

²⁴⁹ Kyle T. Mays, “Transnational Progressivism: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Universal Races Congress of 1911,” *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 253. See also, D. Anthony Tyeeeme Clark, “At the Headwaters of a Twentieth Century ‘Indian’ Political Agenda: Rethinking the Origins of the Society of American Indians,” in *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* eds. by Loretta Fowler and Daniel Cobb (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), pp. 70-90. Clark explores conversations between Eastman and his brother, the reverend Jacob Eastman prior to the 1911 meeting.

²⁵⁰ Hazel Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 303.

person to graduate from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1885.²⁵¹ This was not all. They were middle class professionals who were among the first Indigenous people to live in “two-worlds.”²⁵²

Though the SAI was never a unified political organization, though it did share a broad desire to be the leading voice on Indigenous concerns in the U.S. A major part of their platform was to protect Indigenous lands and to appeal to U.S. officials so that Indigenous people could be ushered into one of the major hurdles that impeded their progress as modern American subjects: becoming U.S. citizens. Historian Frederick E. Hoxie has observed that early members of the SAI believed that “securing U.S. citizenship for all Indians would empower their members to become forceful actors in the nation’s democracy.”²⁵³ Thus, using their ‘citizenship gun,’ they could also “counter the Indian Office’s authoritarian bureaucracy.”²⁵⁴

The original executive board members were Sherman Coolidge, Thomas Sloan, Hiram Chase, Henry Standing Bear, Lauren Cornelius, and Arthur Parker. Working diligently, these board members drafted a broad platform from which they would attempt to create change for the future of Native Americans. The SAI hoped to challenge whiteness and U.S. colonialism by placing Indigenous people within the center of (settler) modernity. However, it was a tricky

²⁵¹ Peter Iverson, *Carlos Montezuma and the Changing World of American Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

²⁵² See also the co-edited volume by James Joseph Buss and C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, eds., *Beyond Two Worlds: Critical Conversations on Language and Power in Native North America*, *Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014). In this volume they attempt to challenge the fundamental idea that Indigenous people were caught between two worlds.

²⁵³ Frederick Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Political Activism and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 226.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

game in which they played. They often used the words of the colonizers on the settler's platform, attempting to fulfill a white (19th century) conception of what Indigenous people were supposed to be. For example, in the official constitution, the SAI used the rhetoric of the time, including social evolution, enlightenment, and the Progressive era language of race.

1. To promote and co-operate with all efforts looking to the advancement of the Indian in enlightenment which leaves him free as a man to develop according to the natural laws of social evolution.
2. To provide, through our open conference, the means for a free discussion on all subjects bearing the welfare of the race.
3. To present in a just light a true history of the race, to preserve its records and to emulate its distinguishing virtues.
4. To promote citizenship among Indians and obtain the rights thereof.
5. To establish a legal department to investigate Indian problems, and suggest and obtain remedies.
6. To exercise the right to oppose any movement which may be detrimental to the race.
7. To direct its energies exclusively to general principles and universal interest, and not allow itself to be used for any personal or private interest.²⁵⁵

The SAI's platform expressed two perspectives. On the one hand, they used a discourse that they learned from their interactions with the elite whites; it was a condition of their survival and appealing to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous constituents. On the other hand, they utilized a nationalistic racial rhetoric, one that focused on their rights as a race of Indigenous people, even as they were well aware of the great diversity within Indigenous America. Their platform was

²⁵⁵ Society of American Indians, *Constitution and By-Laws: The Society of American Indians* (Washington DC, 1916). Lawrence Revision, 3-4.

also indicative of their broad desire to usher Indigenous people into modernity. Based upon their own experience, they had hoped that education and more carefully engaging in the white world would assist Indigenous communities at large. Yet, these individuals and organization were not concerned with the myopic politics of assimilation. Instead, their politics of Indigenous modernity, which they would bring to Detroit over later, was to challenge the representation of Indigenous people in mainstream popular culture and to abolish the Office of Indian Affairs. One of the most well known figures in the SAI, even as he was in and out over the course of a decade was Dakota Charles Eastman.

Towards the end of the 1910s, Charles Eastman could be considered “the best known Indian in the country.”²⁵⁶ He was born Ohiyesa near present day Redwood Falls, Minnesota on February 19, 1858. As a teenager he reunited with his father who had converted to Christianity and adopted the name Jacob Eastman. The young Ohiyesa, following in the footsteps of his father, perhaps reluctantly, also converted to Christianity and adopted the name Charles Alexander Eastman. He then attended missionary and preparatory schools. He would then go on to graduate from Dartmouth College in 1887, and later attend medical school at Boston University where he would earn a medical degree in 1890. Following his collegiate and medical degrees, Eastman engaged in a number of activities, including practicing medicine. Eastman also saw the cold-blooded nature of U.S. military aggression, with killing of children, men and women during the Wounded Knee Massacre in December 1890. However, perhaps the most important part of his career was his time on the lecturing circuit, in addition to his writings.

Eastman authored numerous books, including *Indian Boyhood* (1902), *The Soul of the Indian* (1911) and *From Deep Woods to Civilization* (1915). He also lectured extensively

²⁵⁶ Fayette McKenzie to Arthur C. Parker, October 31, 1911. Papers of the Society of America Indians.

throughout the U.S. and abroad. In July 1911, as a transnational progressive, he attended the Universal Races Congress in London, presenting a paper titled, “The North American Indian.” He presented his paper with an intellectual giant in his own right: W.E.B. Du Bois.²⁵⁷ Du Bois would go on to become an associate member of the SAI.²⁵⁸ Because he was so well known, he was asked to participate in the very first meeting of the SAI in October 1911. Eastman had long been dedicated to the uplift of Indigenous people, which was his life’s work:

My chief object has been, not to entertain, but to present the American Indian in his true character before Americans. The barbarous and atrocious character commonly attributed to him [was] dated from the transition period, when the strong drink, powerful temptations, and commercialism of the white man led to deep demoralization. Really it was a campaign of education on the Indian and his true place in American history.²⁵⁹

Eastman’s major goal, as a part of his ambition to present a counter-narrative to U.S. colonial imaginings of Indigenous people, was to also help usher in Indigenous modernity so that Native people could be accepted in both the Indigenous and settler worlds, while still maintaining core ideas of what it meant to be Indigenous. And he tried to do this through his lecturing and writings. Eastman, though, never played a major part of the SAI for most of its existence. Still,

²⁵⁷ Mays, “Transnational Progressivism.” As Mays points out, they participated in the same session. Du Bois presented a paper on the state of Black Americans.

²⁵⁸ Mays, “Transnational Progressivism.” Arthur Parker, ed., “Proceeding of the Second Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians,” *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 1.2 (1913): 251. According to the SAI Constitution, associate members “shall be persons of non-Indian blood interested in Indian welfare.” Society of American Indians, *Constitution and By-Laws: The Society of American Indians*, Lawrence, KS revision (Washington D.C., 1916), 4. Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

²⁵⁹ Charles Eastman, *From Deep Woods to Civilization*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1916,) 187.

his popularity and reputation was still impressive and, by 1918, members of the SAI voted him president in 1918.

Eastman was reluctant about accepting the position as president of the SAI because he had not formally participated in the SAI since the first meeting in 1911. Yet, he appreciated the vote of confidence from his peers, and found that the SAI was another venue through which to advocate for the rights of Indigenous people. Eastman gave an impassioned speech at the 1919 meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Eastman's address at this meeting dovetailed both his own belief in the ability of Indigenous people to engage with modernity and illustrated how he understood indigeneity, even during his time in Detroit.

Eastman began by offering an apology for not attending the previous meetings; he mentioned that he was quite busy, and working on behalf of Indigenous people in his own way, especially amongst his family. However, he quickly moved into documenting core elements of indigeneity, themes later picked up and utilized by SAI members during the Detroit meeting: indigeneity as the core component of American democracy, equality and freedom. "We Indians started the whole basis of Americanism," said Eastman.²⁶⁰ Indigenous people, according to Eastman, created the concepts of "freedom and equality and democracy long before any white people [came] here and those who came took it up, but they do not give us credit."²⁶¹ Eastman carefully crafted a response that placed the foundations of early American republicanism in the hands of Indigenous epistemologies and histories. He began his speech this way to suggest that Indigenous people were not entering into white civilization without morals; instead, the root of any form of modernity in America was Indigenous based and conceived.

²⁶⁰ Charles Eastman, "Opening Address" (American Indian Magazine, October 2, 1921), 145.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

However, he also employed indigeneity to claim that those concepts were inherent to Indigenous people before settlers came to the country. This idea was important, for he not only wanted to correct misnomers about the Indigenous past, but also sought to explore how Indigenous people were represented in the present—ultimately—to advance Indigenous people’s ability to operate in modernity. Eastman challenged ideas about American modernity with concepts such as democracy and freedom, placing them within the context of the pre-contact Indigenous world, and helping contemporary Indigenous people and settlers see how those concepts were developed—through indigeneity.

Though he placed American modernity in Indigenous cosmologies, he swiftly sought to illustrate why Indigenous people could be brought into modernity, and that Indigenous modernity was not an unrealized version, incompatible with the idea of Americanism. “We are a part of this great American Nation,” said Eastman, “and we must be some good to this country.” After making the case that Indigenous people must engage with settler society, including making money, Eastman believed that Indians would in affect hold America to its ideals of liberty and justice—for all: “The day an Indian becomes leader of this country will be the day when civilization may come on a more stable foundation.” Here, Eastman’s move was not simply a rhetorical one; he really believed that an Indigenous person as president would restore the ideals of American democracy not only for the benefit of Indigenous people but also America at large. Within the same speech, though, Eastman also presented what might be considered a xenophobic stance against white ethnic immigrants coming from Europe. For them to be included in American democracy and Indigenous people be excluded was a travesty.

Eastman portrayed Indigenous people as patriotic to the war effort. After mentioning how various white ethnic groups had their own political organizations, he created a distinction

between Indigenous people and those white ethnics, whom many Anglo Americans considered undesirable: “During this terrible time of the last three or four years, the North American Indian is the only one who has not been challenged for seditious work against the Government or in spy work in favor of the enemy across.”²⁶² Eastman’s comment was uncritical, however. During a moment of war, and following decades of “vanishing Indian” discourse, the U.S. government would hardly be concerned with Indigenous spies; after all, many had assumed they were generally placed on reservations, left to die. He exhibited a deep xenophobia that other members of the SAI also illustrated. “The Indians stand staunch and when he was called to arms in defense of this country,” said Eastman, “our boys, like their fathers, needed no urging. They knew their patriotism and they did their work because they loved their country.”²⁶³ The words this and there are important here, for they signify Eastman’s careful discussion as to why Indigenous young men went to war; many went to war—as Eastman subtly alludes to—to protect their own lands.²⁶⁴ In other words, they went to protect their tribal lands, not necessarily because of their patriotism in fighting democracy at home and abroad for the United States. This perspective on fighting in World War I (and later World War II) for their people, as separate nations living within the United States, holding treaties that dictated the government to government relationship between Indigenous nations and the United States was something that no other group within the U.S. could claim.

One of the last claims Eastman made in his opening address was in regard to the link between patriotism and masculinity. Eastman was in the business of also trying to resurrect

²⁶² Ibid., 147.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Indigenous manhood—something that had been demonized and ridiculed since the first contact between Indigenous people and Europeans. Eastman believed that revitalizing Indigenous manhood was imperative to the future of the race. His activities throughout his life were involved in illustrating the virtues of Indigenous manhood. For example, in *Indian Boyhood* (1911), Eastman spent a considerable amount of time discussing the specifics of what it was like growing up to be a Dakota (and more broadly Indigenous) man, which served to create a clear distinction between white masculinity and Indigenous masculinity, while also using keywords such as patriotism and chivalry (core components of early 20th century white masculinity). For example, in discussing warfare, Eastman articulated an Indigenous conception of masculinity through warfare. “Warfare we regarded as an institution of the “Great Mystery,” he wrote, “an organized tournament of trial courage and skill, with elaborate rules and ‘counts for the coveted honor of the eagle feather.’”²⁶⁵ He continued that warfare was “held to develop the quality of manliness, and its motive was chivalric or patriotic, but never the desire for territorial aggrandizement or the overthrow of a brother nation.”²⁶⁶

Eastman was writing during a time following the United States’ great thrust as a world power through imperialism and the conquering of other nations. But Eastman continued to create a dichotomy between these two competing masculinities:

His own conception of bravery makes of it a high moral virtue, for to him it consists not so much in aggressive self-assertion as in absolute self-control. The truly braveman, we

²⁶⁵ Charles Eastman, *The Soul of the Indian* (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), 105-106.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

contend, yields neither to fear nor anger, desire nor agony; he is at all times master of himself; his courage rises to the heights of chivalry, patriotism, and real heroism.²⁶⁷

Reading between the lines suggests that Eastman was also criticizing the alleged virtues of white masculinity. The virtues of Indigenous masculinity were not based in fear, which led to trying to conquer others; nor was it about the perverted desire for land. Indigenous masculinity was about self-control. Self-control, Eastman contended, was the highest form of manhood—Indigenous manhood. Eastman was not immune, though, to participating in white masculinity projects, either.

He was a part of the development of YMCA's throughout Indian Country.²⁶⁸ The YMCA's, both as a space and the literal buildings were a concrete example of white, middle class, protestant manhood during the Progressive Era. Indeed as architectural historian Paula Lupkin argues, "...YMCA buildings in the nation's cities were aimed primarily at bolstering the hegemony of middle-class Protestant men."²⁶⁹ Of course Eastman helped build YMCA's on reservations. He did believe that the physical body needed to be tended to. Eastman continued explaining the connection between indigeneity, masculinity, and the origins of Americanism.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 114-115.

²⁶⁸ According to Wilson, Eastman worked with the YMCA from June 1, 1884 until April 1, 1888. He served as "Indian Secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA. Wilson, *Ohiyesa*, 83.

²⁶⁹ Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 182.

“We are the original American,” said Eastman, and “still stand by this country as we have always done.”²⁷⁰ He then shifted into a discussion of the difference between Indigenous civilizations of past and the current American civilization:

The Indians hate no people. Indians have never hated any race. European races hate each other, but we could fight because the next time we met, we would give each other everything we had, we would take the shirt from our back and hand it to our brother enemy. This was the habit and characteristics of our ancestors—manliness.²⁷¹

Eastman’s appeal to masculinity as a unique virtue of Indigenous people is interesting.²⁷² His version of Indigenous masculinity was very different from the Victorian version of his time. Masculinity at this time was an ideological process. Indeed as gender historian Gail Bederman has argued about Progressive Era masculinity, “just as manliness was the highest form of manhood” “so civilization was the highest form of humanity.”²⁷³ In addition, Manliness was the achievement of a perfect man, just as civilization was the achievement of a perfect race.²⁷⁴ Eastman stripped white masculinity of its virtue, and replaced it—rhetorically—with Indigenous

²⁷⁰ Eastman, *Opening Address*, 149.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² There is virtually no scholarship on Indigenous masculinity. The most recent publication edited by Sam McKegney opens up the conversation significantly. See Sam McKegney, “Into the Full Grace of the Blood of Men: An Introduction in *Masculindians: Conversations About Indigenous Manhood*, ed. Sam McKegney (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 1–13. McKegney writes, “*The goal of this volume, then, is to honour agency and creativity so that Indigenous masculinities can be theorized as both discursive phenomena and lived clusters of meaning that function in relation to, but are not predetermined by, either the biopolitics of settler colonialism or traditional cosmologies of gender (with traditional here meaning the ongoing lived embodiment of culture rather than something static and historically remote*” (5).

²⁷³ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 27.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

masculinity. In the context of white masculinity being tied to imperialism abroad and the continued subjugation of Indigenous people in the U.S., Eastman presented an affront to settler masculinity by replacing it with the kindness of Indigenous men.

Eastman's version of Indigenous masculinity as juxtaposed to white masculinity shifted the gaze of settler imaginings from one myopically focused on Indigenous "barbarism" and "savagery" to one of compassion and love. Eastman did not tie modern Indigenous masculinity to colonialism, even as it is through that historical process from which it emerged. He sought to shift into something much more compatible with his own understanding, rooted in the histories of Indigenous people for contemporary times. Indigenous masculinity had to be fluid enough to be its own thing and coexist (and at times preempt) white masculinity. This version of masculinity was very different from the one rooted in aggression and conquering happening in an imperial, settler nation.

Finally, Eastman desired that Indigenous people be proud of who they were, once more returning to their virtues as Indigenous people. "You, an Indian, be proud!" he implored his audience. "It was our fathers who faced the elements, slept in the now, on the ground, we stood on our merit, we were men, we were what the world honors now, the world respects, we were that original American character."²⁷⁵

Eastman's address offers a window into the general sentiment of SAI members: that Indigenous people and indigeneity (including for Eastman masculinity) were not incompatible with modernity. American ideals such as democracy and freedom were constructed out of the "Original Americans"—not developed solely by European settlers. They believed that citizenship was imperative for Indigenous people to be able to live squarely in modernity, which

²⁷⁵ Eastman, "Opening Address," 146.

would enhance the ideals of Americanism. They also wanted the Indian Office to be destroyed. Eastman ended his address by suggesting that three things happen. He argued that the Indian Bureau be abolished, that Indian treaties be honored, and that Indians be granted U.S. citizenship.²⁷⁶

Eastman would resign his post as president of the SAI a year later. Following his resignation, he would never have the opportunity to be a part of the SAI because they disbanded. Eastman, though not attending the Detroit meeting in 1921, would return to the Motor City in the twilight of his life, hoping once more to usher in Indigenous people into modernity.

The SAI in the Motor City

By the time the Society of American Indians came to Detroit in October 1921, they were near the end of their existence. Membership had been on the decline for years; political differences disrupted the larger goals of the organization. Yet they came to Detroit to continue their mission of challenging the idea that Indigenous people could not participate in modernity. The SAI continued a practice of Indigenous people visiting Detroit for political reasons. Though, in modern Detroit, this was perhaps the first visit of Indigenous people coming to Detroit as a unified political organization—not to perform under the settler gaze for performances.

They came, like Hunkpapa Lakota Sitting Bull, nearly forty years earlier, to join in promoting Indigenous sovereignty. They also deployed indigeneity to challenge settler imaginings of them as a romantic, dying race. Their performing of indigeneity was an overtly political act.

Detroit as the SAI's meeting place, presented a unique opportunity. The SAI was always careful in choosing the places where they held their annual meetings. Seeking to avoid the

²⁷⁶ Charles Eastman, "Opening Address" (American Indian Magazine, October 2, 1921).

potential stigma attached to holding a meeting on reservations, they held all of their meetings in off reservations where Indigenous communities could travel. They sought to extend the conversation of Indigenous rights in Detroit to a larger audience—a transnational indigenous audience—tapping into Detroit’s unique geographic location near First Nations communities in Canada. Their meeting in the Motor City, even for a few days, was one of their last opportunities to challenge settler imaginings as a political organization. But it is important to understand the SAI in the context of World War I.

The United States entered World War I in April 1917. People of Color also supported the war effort. For instance, W.E.B. Du Bois, who had long challenged both U.S. racism at home and colonialism abroad, supported the war effort. “This is our country,” wrote Du Bois, “and if this is our country, then this is our war.”²⁷⁷ Du Bois believed that if Black Americans showed their support for the U.S. war effort, they would come back into a country more accepting of Black folks and give them their rights as citizens who had fought bravely for democracy. “Negroes,” wrote Du Bois, must “fight it with every ounce of blood and treasure.”²⁷⁸ In a similar vein, members of the SAI also supported the war effort. Though they believed supporting the war effort would offer them the first steps of U.S. democracy: citizenship.

Yavapi-Apache Carlos Montezuma, a medical doctor, supported the idea of Indigenous people fighting in the War. He believed that fighting in the war should grant Indigenous people U.S. citizenship. “We Indians are ready to defend the country of our forefathers as we have been

²⁷⁷ *Selections from the Crisis*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, (Millwood: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), 160.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

doing for five hundred years against all odds,” said Montezuma.²⁷⁹ Montezuma placed the origins of American democracy right in the history of Indigenous resistance to U.S. colonization. For them to fight for the U.S. was also to fight and protect their Indigenous homelands—something, as Montezuma pointed out, they had done for centuries. Yet, he believed citizenship would be a conditional. “Drafting the Indians into the army is another wrong perpetrated upon the Indian,” said Montezuma, though it was a conditional, “without first bestowing his just title—the first American citizen.”²⁸⁰ Zitkala Sa, like Montezuma, shared similar beliefs.

Following World War I, the Allied powers (Great Britain, France, Italy, United States), convened in Paris at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Zitkala Sa remarked, “Paris, for the moment, has become the center of the world’s thought” and the “world is to be made better as a result of these stirring times,” remarked, Zitkala Sa.²⁸¹ However, she also understood this “Wilsonian moment” to advocate for Indigenous citizenship.²⁸² “There never was a time more opportune than now for American to enfranchise the Red Man.”²⁸³ Though she understood that other colonized people might be represented, she asked “Who shall represented [the Indigenous]

²⁷⁹ Frederick E. Hoxie (ed.), *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (New York: Bedford St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 126. By this time, Montezuma had left the SAI in 1917, forming his own organ the *Wassaja*.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁸² Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

cause at the World's Peace Conference?"²⁸⁴ Indigenous people understood that the end of the war could benefit them. However, by the time they came to Detroit, they had only a glimmer of hope in U.S. democracy. Still, they maintained their ideal belief in the foundations of U.S. democracy to include Indigenous people in modernity.

The Detroit newspapers documented the SAI's convention. On Monday October 24, 1921 several members of the SAI arrived in Detroit. "The continent's foremost survivors of the ancient tribes," read the column, "including prominent attorneys, physicians and churchmen," would attend or be speakers.²⁸⁵ The attendance was low. Attendees included "Thomas Sloan, Carlos Montezuma, Sherman Coolidge, Thomas Bishop, and Reverend S.A. Bingham, a pastor of the Episcopal Church on Walpole Island. These people were all expected to give speeches at the convention. Even Reverend Red Fox attended, who invited President Harding. Harding declined, but wrote, "I want your organization to know of my strong and continuing interest in the Indians and in their full rights and immunities."²⁸⁶ Although not well documented, another group who attended, coming over from Canada, was the League of Indians of Canada. Frederick Ogilvie Loft, a Mohawk from Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve and World War I veteran, founded The League of Indian of Canada in 1919 as a response the unfair treatment of First Nations communities following World War I.²⁸⁷ They shared similar desires to be enfranchised and gain the vote as well.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ "Indians Open Big Pow-Wow: International Convention to Ask U.S. to Educate Reds with Whites," *The Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, October 25, 1921).

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aboriginal-heritage/020016-4102-e.html?PHPSESSID=svfj8k70jme0mr64nsptgu27f5>.

The convention was held at the YMCA and began with a pipe smoking ceremony with Mayor James “Jim” Couzens. Couzens initially became famous in Detroit because of the enormous wealth he had gained due to an investment in Henry Ford’s Motor Company, where he also served as second in command. Couzens served as Detroit Mayor from 1919 to 1922, and would later serve as Republican Senator of Michigan for a fourteen-year period, following his resignation as Mayor. He was apparently one of the more well-regarded Mayors in the city’s history, advocating for a honestly run political machines. One of his claims to fame as mayor was gaining municipal ownership of the electric railway. Couzens was ecstatic to have the SAI hold their convention in the city.

Couzens welcomed his Indigenous guests warmly. “The citizens of Detroit, always on the alert for advanced ideas in sociology and the betterment of the citizens of the entire nations,” said Couzens; “We welcome you.”²⁸⁸ He noted that this was the first time that modern Detroit had officially “received a convention distinguished forefathers of the land.” Though the Mayor’s welcome was a nice symbolic gesture, the SAI did not avoid confronting the major issues of the day, including how Indigenous people were represented.

The first item on the SAI’s agenda was to challenge the portrayal of Indigenous people in the settler imagination. Unfortunately, their presence alone was not enough to challenge colonial depictions. For example, while the Detroit media documented the SAI’s convention, they also published a poem about the SAI’s convention, filled with stereotypes:

The Indian, the Indian,
 Convening in Detroit,
 Sees with dismay the movie play

²⁸⁸ “Indians Open Big Pow-Wow,” *The Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, October 25, 1921).

His noble race exploit.

The tommyhawk, the tommyhawk
 No longer does he wield,
 But doth assert he turns the dirt
 And plows the fertile land

The whoop of war, the whoop of war
 No more it sounds in dread,
 But sweet refrains and jazzy strains
 He uttereth instead

The Indian, the Indian,
 He once was nature's child,
 But now he gets a grouch and frets
 When someone calls him wild.²⁸⁹

The poem, while acknowledging Indigenous people, mocked their attempts at challenging colonial imaginings. While Indigenous people fought against these stereotypes, the poem was also a reminder that no matter how hard they tried, the SAI could not totally disrupt ideas about them. Still, people like Carlos Montezuma tried.

It would be interesting to know if Montezuma read that poem because his critiques suggest he might have. Carlos Montezuma was most powerful in his stance. "The general public is indifferent as to Indians," he said.²⁹⁰ He had no reason not to make this statement, given his extensive involvement in the "white world." He continued,

They are more versed in the blood-curdling stories they have read. They can tell you what they saw in the movies. An Indian took revenge upon a white man who did him wrong

²⁸⁹ "American Indians, Convening in Detroit, Object to the Way They Are Characterized in the Movies and Say They Are Not Wild," *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, October 28, 1921).

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

many years before, or attacked some innocent people in a regular Fennimore Cooper stockade.²⁹¹

Montezuma understood that one of the most important ways to challenge settler imaginings was to try and offer a different picture of Indigenous people in popular culture. Challenging centuries old stereotypes about the wild “savage” would hopefully alter settler views—and the depiction of Indigenous men as wild and warmongering individuals. Montezuma continued, “We do not eat people. We have no tomahawk concealed under our coat. We do not hold a scalping knife between our teeth.”²⁹² Montezuma spoke plainly about the ridiculous stereotypes about Indigenous people because he wanted them to be embraced as human beings, opening up an avenue where they could successfully move into modernity without the burden of pre-modern settler imaginings. In order to dispel these colonial myths circulating in the U.S., the SAI planned to run a national campaign and send pamphlets to both “Indians and friends.” Unfortunately, the campaign did not take off.²⁹³ While not able to change perceptions about Indigenous people in popular culture, the SAI maintained their desire to advocate for something that appealed to both their members and the League of Indians of Canada: an end to the colonial bureaucracy of settler state offices. Thomas Sloan spoke specifically about the Office of Indian Affairs’ grip hold on Indigenous communities.

Sloan, a longtime member of the SAI, gave an impassioned speech that challenged the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ handicapping of Indigenous communities. “The Indian is under a double government that has developed every autocratic symptom present in Russia under the rule

²⁹¹ “Indians Open Big Pow Wow,” *Detroit Free Press*.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

of the Czar, he said.”²⁹⁴ The comparison between the Russia and the U.S. was an important rhetorical move by Sloan, for it internationalized the Indigenous cause in the U.S. Sloan’s rhetorical moved shifted swiftly into why he used it: to advocate for Indigenous citizenship. “There should be no reason why an Indian, whose land was taken in the first place by the white men who now thrive on it,” he said, “should not be granted the privileges of citizenship which are granted within five years to any foreigner who came to our shores.”²⁹⁵ Sloan’s words echo that of Charles Eastman’s opening address at the Minnesota meeting. He also used similar xenophobic language, using the recent immigrants as a foil to advocate for Indigenous citizenship. Sloan’s appeals to U.S. citizenship might have been useful for a number of reasons, perhaps most important to allow Indigenous people to make further grievances, whatever they may be, to the United States. He also made connections with giving Black Americans citizenship. Sloan argued that President Harding was “given as great an opportunity in establishing the Indians on the rightful basis of citizenship that in theirs, as Lincoln was given when he freed the slaves.”²⁹⁶ The connection to Black enslavement is intriguing, for it would appear that this is a comparison that might be avoided because Indigenous political realities seemed very separate from Blacks. Yet it made sense, according to Sloan, because “the plight of Indian is the same, for he is the slave of the Indian bureau.” Finally, Sloan emphatically stated that the “Indian reservations must be abolished and an equal citizenship must be established.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

While Sloan made powerful remarks, Montezuma was still the leading voice for advocating for Indigenous citizenship. Speaking on Thursday afternoon in a slot designed for an Indigenous journalist William Madison, who was unable to attend, Montezuma stated, “We want to change our ways and keep up with the growth of the country.” Engaging in a discourse of modernity that was common, he continued, “If leather shoes are more practical than moccasins, let us make leather shoes. We want such privileges and a right to citizenship in our own country.” Montezuma, like much of his life, was caught between seeking to bring Indigenous people into modernity and finding solutions for Indigenous people and doing it through U.S. institutions.

The rest of the convention was not well documented. Perhaps it had an impact on the rest of the city. History does reveal to us that members of the SAI became disillusioned with the idea of promoting citizenship for Indigenous people. Historian Hoxie argued,

Few activists now imagined that extending U.S. citizenship to Indians would empower Native people. The implementation of the Dawes allotment law over the previous three decades had extended citizenship to more than half the American Indian population, but the recipients of this new status were so hampered by poverty and overawed by the power of their federal supervisors that their lives had changed very little.²⁹⁸

Regardless, Dakota Charles Eastman would begin staying in the Motor City only a few years later. And Eastman, sharing this disillusionment with citizenship as a way forward, begin reflecting on his life’s work, hoping to still reign in the negative views of Indigenous people.

²⁹⁸ Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 273.

Ohiyesa in Waawayeyaattanong

Very little is known about Eastman's life after 1928.²⁹⁹ However, there are shadows of evidence windows through which we can explore Eastman's life in Detroit. As briefly noted earlier, Eastman resigned as president of the SAI in 1919, and did not attend the 1921 conference in Detroit. Regardless, the 1920s were a busy time for the now well known Eastman.

On August 28, 1921, Eastman became an Indian inspector for the Office of Indian Affairs. He served in this capacity for two years. Some of his assignments included meeting Great Britain Prime Minister Lloyd George. Eastman, along with a delegation of Cheyenne River Sioux, met him in Minneapolis on October 15. Apparently, it was Lloyd's most memorable meeting.³⁰⁰

Eastman also visited several reservations to inspect the conditions of them and how the people were doing. He visited at least seventeen in the West, as well as one in Minnesota and the Sault St. Marie reservation in Michigan. At Mackinac, Eastman investigated charges against the superintendent who the community believed had mistreated them in dealings with allotments and had allowed a lumber company to illegally enter the reservation. Eastman investigated for three weeks and found that the claims had no basis. The charges were dropped.³⁰¹ Also in 1921, he separated from his longtime partner Elaine Goodale Eastman. They would never see one another again.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Wilson, *Ohiyesa*, 190.

³⁰⁰ Wilson, *Ohiyesa*, 171-72.

³⁰¹ Wilson, *Ohiyesa*, 176.

³⁰² Theodore D. Sargent, *The Life of Elaine Goodale Eastman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 106.

By 1928, Eastman made Detroit his part time home. He lived with his son, Charles Eastman Jr. (also called Ohiyesa), his only son with Elaine Goodman. The elder Ohiyesa built a cabin on the western shore of Lake Huron near Sault St. Marie so that he could spend his summers on the lake. From 1928 until his death in 1939, Eastman split time between both places. It is difficult to surmise why Eastman may have split his time living in a cabin on the lake and in a burgeoning city. Perhaps a reflection of Eastman's life in general, he seemed torn in the latter part of his life between continuing to educate the general public, offering them an "accurate" glimpse into past Indigenous life while also finding solace in living in nature. Indeed, as David Martinez writes, "when one looks at the details of Eastman's work, a different picture begins to emerge, a complicated hybrid of both Dakota and American values but with priority placed on the Dakota tradition."³⁰³ Eastman's time in Detroit, it seems, must be understood not in the dichotomy between savagism and civilization (wanting to preserve indigeneity versus assimilating); rather, it was about finding a way to illustrate Indigenous modernity in the Motor City.

During his time in Detroit, Eastman participated in the community. He had a membership at the Detroit Public Library. He also continued what he did best: lecturing to the local community. One such incident was documented in 1932.

The headline of the *Detroit News* read "Sitting Bull's Follower who Won Paleface Wisdom: Raised to Hate Whites, Now is a Doctor Here." Russell Gore, a writer for the *Detroit News*, wrote that Eastman had graduated from Dartmouth, Boston, and Columbia Universities. Gore wrote of Eastman's journey from savagery to civilization. "Until he was 15 years old," wrote Gore, "Dr. Eastman lived as a savage and did not even speak the language of the race he

³⁰³ David Martinez *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), 6.

had been trained to hate and despise.”³⁰⁴ This inflammatory rhetoric was useful for an audience who, even in the 1930s, remained fascinated with the idea of Indigenous resistance in their imagination—even as it was not a realistic means of change. Yet, Gore could then shift into how Eastman abandoned his “savage” past of hating the white world to becoming a part of it. Yet, Gore was more fascinated with illustrating how Eastman engaged with a group of adolescent white girls.

Indian Scout Talks (1914) was a book dedicated to the Boy Scouts of America and the Campfire Girls of America. The first chapter of the book is titled, “At Home with Nature,” encouraged young people to be one with nature. He juxtaposed the virtues of living within modernity (i.e., cities) and in nature (the Indian way). “In civilization there are many deaf ears and blind eyes,” wrote Eastman. Because the average boy in the town has been deprived of close contact and intimacy with nature, what he has learned from books he soon forgets, or is unable to apply. All learning is a dead language to him who gets it second hand.”³⁰⁵ In contrast, learning from the “Indian way” would allow young people to become better acquainted with nature and their selves. “It is necessary that you should live with nature, my boy friend, if only that you may verify to your own satisfaction your schoolroom lessons,” wrote Eastman.³⁰⁶ This passage was targeted to young men—in line with Eastman’s attempts at recovering Indigenous masculinity (an idealized version) by using it as an alternative to the belief in the general emasculation that white men believed they had lost during the Progressive Era. But Eastman went beyond telling

³⁰⁴ Russell Gore, “Sitting Bull’s Follower Who Won Paleface Wisdom: Raised to Hate White, Now Is a Doctor Here,” *Detroit News* (Detroit, July 17, 1932).

³⁰⁵ Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Scout Craft and Lore (Formerly Titled: Indian Scout Talks)* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), 1-2.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

his young friends what the “Indian way” could contribute to their western education. He believed that young people could contribute something to humanity. “Further than this, you may be able correct some error, or even learn something that will be a real contribution to the sum of human knowledge.”³⁰⁷ While the majority of *Indian Scout Talks* was reserved for young men, he did leave some points of advice for the young women of the Campfire Girls.

On July 17, 1932, Eastman spent time at Camp Ohae speaking with nearly a dozen young white women. The young women, dressed in Plains Indian costume, sat eagerly at each side of Eastman, holding onto his every words as he told them stories about Indigenous life of the past. The Campfire girls lived in wigwaams, answered to “Indian names,” and lived under “tribal organization.”³⁰⁸ Eastman spent a significant time explaining Indigenous peoples’ connection to nature. “Man is a part of nature,” he said. He springs from Mother Earth and belongs to her. The Indian realized therefore that he must attune himself to nature, study nature’s laws and obey them.” While appealing to their desire to understand Indigenous people as inherently part of nature, he dropped in another comment that suggests something different: when he grows up, though winds may bend him, when the winds cease he will spring back, straight and tall.” The words here suggest that Eastman was in fact not speaking about nature per se; he explained how Indigenous people learned strong character and virtue by simply looking at nature. In this sense, Eastman was explaining a metaphor for building character.

Eastman also challenged the inherent belief in the virtues of American life: the Christian Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism, or the tie between religion and success in a capitalist economy. “This Jesus you tell me must have been an Indian,” proclaimed Eastman, for “he was

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁰⁸ Gore, “Sitting Bull’s Follower,” *Detroit Free Press*.

opposed to material acquirement and to great possessions.”³⁰⁹ He continued, arguing that white civilization was not based upon these principles, but, like his speech in Minneapolis, rooted in Indigenous epistemologies,

[Jesus] was inclined to peace. He was impractical as any Indian and set no price upon his labor of love. These are not the principals upon which the white man founded his civilization. It is strange that we could not rise to these simple principles that were commonly observed among our people. We owned nothing. Food was free, land free as sunshine or rain. Who has changed all this? The white man. And yet he says he is a believer of God! He does not seem to inherit any of the traits of his father, nor does he follow the example set by his brother Christ.³¹⁰

Eastman found it “strange that [whites] could not rise to these simple principles that were commonly observed among our people.”³¹¹ Again, though speaking with a group of young women, Eastman spoke very candidly about the inadequacies of white civilization, which was also tied to masculinity. The virtues of Indigenous people—Eastman using Jesus as the medium—represented the ideals professed in a white masculine society, but something that that society could not live up to. Eastman ended his commentary by stating, “While I have learned much from civilization, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice.”³¹² Eastman’s sense of justice, it appears, was avoiding capitalist accumulation of wealth and the basic virtues of Indigenous people and Indigenous manhood: compassion and love for humanity while

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

avoiding self-aggrandizement. The newspaper did not document the girls' reaction to Eastman's criticism of Christianity and civilization.

Though Eastman was critical of western civilization, he was not immune to the ways in which settlers continued to portray Indigenous people. On April 15, 1937, Eastman was the subject of a *Detroit News* article with the headline "Indian Chief to Dance." The newspaper article utilized familiar discourses of the day to authenticate Eastman's indigeneity for the white audience. "Dr. Charles Eastman... a full-blooded chief of the Sioux Indians, whose name is Ohiyesa, will perform an authentic Indian war dance and other Sioux rituals at the annual camp Ohiyesa reunion at the North Branch YMCA Friday night."³¹³ Apparently, 200 young men were attending the camp.

Though there is little information about what Eastman may have actually did at that meeting, the usefulness of understanding the space of the YMCA—both the building and as a site of performance—should not be ignored. At the turn of the century, as landscape scholar Paula Lupkin argues, the YMCA was not simply a place where masculinity was shaped; the buildings were also an important component of modernity. "The YMCA building, with its leisure spaces, dormitory rooms, and educational facilities" writes Lupkin, "was a key element of a complex, spatially segmented system of class, race, ethnicity, age, *and* gender identity that helped define and maintain a culture of corporate capitalism."³¹⁴ The YMCA in the case of Eastman, was temporarily not just used to maintain "corporate capitalism" but it was also used to collapse for young (white) men their perceived understanding of Indigenous masculinity in order to find a path to better white masculinity. Indeed, Lupkin further argues that even the

³¹³ "Indian Chief to Dance," *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, April 15, 1937).

³¹⁴ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, xvi.

“conception, design, construction, and reception of a YMCA building were important processes in the development of a new physical and social order for modernity.”³¹⁵ The YMCA was a space—temporally—to use indigeneity to construct a sense of self for young men. And Eastman was the medium—a willing medium—through which white masculine fantasies of indigeneity were performed and imagined. Only a few years later, the Detroit newspapers would tell the Motor City about Eastman’s time performance of indigeneity in the city—again, at a YMCA.³¹⁶

On December 31, 1939, Jackson D. Haag, a writer for the *Detroit News*, wrote about Eastman’s visit to a local YMCA. The article was headlined, “Chief Ohiyesa Visits Detroit: Sioux Leader a Doctor, his Son a Detrouiter; Indian Race Changing.”³¹⁷ Haag wrote of the demise of Indigenous culture and people. “The distinctive full blood American Indian will,” wrote Haag, “in a comparatively few years be a rarity.”³¹⁸ Apparently Haag had missed this familiar rhetoric which had been around and recycled for years. Continuing the eugenics rhetoric of the day the author wrote, “The one reason for [the disappearance of Indians] lies in the fact that intermarriage with those of other races is producing a type of marked distinction,” wrote Haag. Though the author did not clearly define what “races” he was referring to, it is more than likely the white race from western Europe. He continued, that distinction was “particularly

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ I have yet to access the broad collection of YMCA documents at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. The collection is titled, “YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit, Metropolitan Offices Records,” and includes the dates 1877-2012. I would imagine that they would have if not extensive, further coverage of the SAI’s visit as well as Eastman’s frequent visits and performances at the YMCA. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-90124?rgn=main;view=text>.

³¹⁷ Jackson D. Haag, “Chief Ohiyesa Visits Detroit: Sioux Leader a Doctor, His Son a Detrouiter; Indian Race Changing,” *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, December 31, 1939).

³¹⁸ Ibid.

strong in individual characteristics in which great physical strength is combined with mental alertness.”³¹⁹ The masculine language used here, combining physical statures and smarts, were something that white men were trying to achieve at the time—something Eastman apparently had and advocated for. However, Haag could only imagine Indigenous men with familiar narratives of savagism.

Eastman in his old age understood that times had changed, and perhaps his lifelong dream of maintaining Indigenous customs may not work out the way he had imaged in his youth. While “Indian lore, traditions, handicraft” were “passing,” Eastman could discuss how Indigenous people during that day were able to perform tasks such as farming which were key to understanding modern (white) masculinity. “Some of the best Western farmers and cattlemen are Indians,” wrote Eastman. And Indigenous people were not an exceptional case in drinking: “some drink” and “some are lazy,” but “show me a race that doesn’t produce such [people].” He also made it known that he had always participated in modern masculinity projects including being an active member of the Detroit YMCA and the Boy Scouts of America. Unfortunately, this would be Eastman’s last time public comments. Only seven days later, the snare of death would grab Eastman’s heart; he suffered a heart attack.

On January 7, 1939, Eastman entered Grace Hospital after suffering cardiac arrest. He became comatose; he died a day later at the age of eighty-years-old. The *Detroit News* wrote a long obituary about him. “Dr. Charles A. Eastman, a noted Indian lecturer, and under his Sioux name of Chief Ohiyesa, internationally writer on Indian life and customs,” read the article,”

³¹⁹ Ibid.

“died” Sunday afternoon in Grace Hospital after a brief illness. He was 80 years old.”³²⁰ The article aptly pointed out that Eastman was “One of the best educated men of his race” and “spent much of his life in the advancement of his people.”³²¹

In spite of Eastman’s life-long attempt to portray Indigenous people of both past and present in a complex fashion, bordering on playing to their imaginings of what indigeneity meant and challenging settler stereotypes, in his death, Eastman could not completely change the cultural hegemony of settler imaginings. Though Eastman “played Indian,” he also tried to shape how indigeneity would be deployed and understood by mainstream society. But the currents of settler colonialism were too strong, and even a person so gifted and dedicated to challenging settler colonialism could not fully halt the tide. Though Eastman was unable to shake the settler version of indigeneity, Indigenous people of a new generation would more carefully engage in political activism and challenge the power of settler colonialism in the Motor City—asserting their right to engage with and perhaps even pass modernity. Services were held for him at William R. Hamilton Co. Chapel. He was buried in an unmarked grave at Evergreen Cemetery. His body was later laid to rest in Sioux Falls, South Dakota during the 1960s.

The SAI’s meeting and Eastman’s residency in the Motor City were the beginnings of a renewed sense of political activism that would take place in postwar Detroit. And it was Indigenous women who often led the charge in not only trying to embrace Indigenous modernity and gain respect for Indigenous people, but demanded that their communities would be empowered, by any means necessary. These women created new meanings of indigeneity in a city still predicated on Indigenous erasure and colonialism. Unlike the political activities done by

³²⁰ “Indian Chief Is Dead at 80: Dr. Eastman (Ohiyesa) Was Writer, Lecturer,” *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, January 9, 1939).

³²¹ *Ibid.*

Indigenous groups such as the SAI and individual people such as Charles Eastman, largely dominated by men, Indigenous women, through organization, created cultural and educational institutions to not only challenge settler imaginings and colonialism, but to finally usher Indigenous people into modernity on their own terms by redefining indigeneity.

The Formation of Indigenous Political Culture in Detroit

Just a few years before Eastman's death, Detroit's Indigenous population began to organize themselves through social clubs. For example, *The Detroit News* documented the emergence of an Indigenous organization in January of 1937. It was called the Indian Fireside Council of Detroit, which appeared to be a social club with only a few members, lasting from 1935-1937.³²² While there is little information on the purpose of the organization, it is likely that they formed as recreational clubs to build social relationships outside of the bar scene.³²³ Only three years later, Indigenous people formed the North American Indian Club (by 1966, they changed their name to the North American Indian Association). The purpose of the NAIC was, as written in the Constitution was:

To establish a meeting place for the Indian people in and around Detroit and Canada; to extend our hospitality to visiting Indians of the United States and Canada; to promote better relations...and extent the International courtesy to Canadian Indians, which our

³²² *Detroit News*, January 14, 1937.

³²³ Gordon Douglas Northrup, "Pan-Indianism in the Metropolis: A Case Study of an Emergent Ethno-Syncretic Revitalization Movement." Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1970, 114.

forefathers knew no boundaries. We shall make every effort to elevate the environment of our people, and lay a cornerstone of lasting fellowship.³²⁴

The NAIC consisted of members from Canada and the U.S.—largely a function of Detroit’s geographic location. Yet this was not a community without conflict. Many historical tensions remained, including: between First Nations and U.S. Indigenous people, between Michigan Indigenous people and those from other parts of the U.S., full-bloods and mixed-bloods, those with “good” jobs and “bad” jobs, and those with varying educational levels. Ralph West, a Creek Indian who came to Detroit in 1939 to study law. He believed that there was no racial discrimination in Detroit, which would hinder the progress of Indigenous people. “On the whole, the Indian on coming to live in Detroit has improved his economic status,” wrote West, “but,” he continued, “he has not improved himself socially because of the persistence of his “Indian” attitudes an behavior, basic to which is a sense of inferiority generated by reservation living.”³²⁵ There were elite Indigenous people who looked down upon the lower class with less education, essentially blaming them for the dilapidated conditions in which they might have found themselves or for them drinking alcohol—a common narrative of Indigenous people in Detroit.

On September 19, 1940, about 25 Native Americans attended the first meeting of the North American Indian Club at the Central Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Metropolitan Detroit, at Witherell and Montcalm. The club’s main purpose was to create an intertribal club and meeting space for Native peoples in the city. By 1943, there were 175 paid members. They met every first and second Sunday. Each meeting began with a meal, followed by business, and then entertainment. It was to be a cultural hub, a space where Indigenous

³²⁴ Ralph West, “The Adjustment of the American Indian in Detroit: A Descriptive Study” (Wayne State University, 1950), (Wayne State University), 56.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

peoples could meet outside of the bars. While conditions in the Motor City were challenging for Indians, conditions on Michigan's reservations were no better. This is the longest lasting Indigenous organization in Detroit.³²⁶ While it is not known what they did during the period, it was documented that they were engaged in conversations regarding relocation—in Detroit.

If postwar America was a place of great change, so, too, was that for Indigenous people. And perhaps the most important issue was the termination and relocation policies.³²⁷ Those policies included: the House Concurrent Resolution 108 (June 1953), which sought to withdraw U.S. support guaranteed to various Native Americans; and Public Law 280 (1953), which allowed state governments control over Native tribes in Minnesota, California, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oregon, and Alaska. Lastly, the Relocation Act of 1956 provided federal funding to reservation tribal members who “actively” sought employment away from their respective reservations.³²⁸ Conversations between the BIA and the NAIC occurred with respect to relocation.

There is not a lot of documentation about what exactly the NAIC did during the 1940s and 1950s, but surely they had enough things to deal with, especially engaging in conversations regarding making Detroit a possible site for relocation. Initially, around 1956, the Bureau of Indian Affairs tried to persuade members of Detroit's NAIC to support termination and

³²⁶ Ibid., 124.

³²⁷ Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

³²⁸ Dewi Ball and Joy Porter, *Competing Voices from Native America*. (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009). Specifically look at chapter nine: “Termination Era, 1945-1970” (pp. 199-224) and chapter ten: “Key Events of the Red Power Era: Alcatraz (1969), Trail of Broken Treaties and the Occupation of the BIA Headquarters (1972), and Wounded Knee (1973)” (pp. 225-248), specifically, pgs. 201-202.

relocation. While a few of the Saginaw Chippewa supported termination (largely because they believed that they would be able to own the deed to their land), the majority opposed it, as they were very aware of what could happen to them.³²⁹ The BIA also tried to persuade Indians of Detroit to accept termination through conversations with the NAIC between 1956-1957. In addition, there was a proposed bill to be passed by Congress to terminate U.S. services to Michigan Indian communities.

They began this conversation, though, not with Indian community input. Instead, they tried to persuade leadership with a drafted piece of legislation, which they thought Michigan Indian communities would appreciate. Titled, "A Bill," this legislated act was designed to "provide for the termination of Federal supervision over the property of Indian tribes, bands, and groups, and individual Indians in Michigan, and for other purposes."³³⁰ The proposed bill was designed to terminate federal supervision over trust and restricted Indian tribal properties, over groups and individual Indians, federally owned property held in trust for Indians, and for the termination of Federal services to Indians because they are, in fact, Indians. In twenty sections, the bill planned to terminate Michigan's tribal communities by allowing for individual tribal members to sell land. A key component of this proposed legislation was to quickly restrict on who could become Indian. The bill would be able to finalize the rolls of Michigan tribal communities. In section three of the bill, each tribe would have six months to prepare and submit a proposed roll of members, which would be published in the federal register. If the tribal failed to submit such a roll, the Secretary would be able to create a roll and publish it in the Federal registry. If a supposed tribal member who was left off of a roll wanted to dispute it, they

³²⁹ Charmaine M. Benz (ed.), *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story: A History of the Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek* (Mt. Pleasant, MI: Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan, 2005), 114-115.

³³⁰ Library of Michigan, Record Group 65-47, Box 1, Folder 1.

would be able, except they had only ninety-days to do such a thing. The Secretary would be able to determine if the said person had a case or not. The secretary's decision would be final and conclusive.

A report authored by Hatfield Chilan, Under Secretary of the Interior, further supported this legislation in Michigan. It was fundamentally based upon the belief in Indian integration into the U.S. political and economic system. He reasoned that people were misunderstanding Indian relationship to local, state, and national government. After arguing that all Indians born in the U.S. were citizens of the U.S. and the state in which they resided, he also argued that Native peoples did not have a unique perspective as citizens living within the nation-state. "They have the same right to local-self-government, however means self-government, within the framework of our Federal and State constitutional systems—not outside of them." Indigenous peoples "consent in the same manner that other citizens consent to be governed by their elected Federal, State, county and municipal officials." He acknowledged tribal governments, except that they were around only because Congress "allowed" them to operate because of expediency, when "Indians were not recognized as citizens or ready for assimilation into our legal system." In criticizing the idea of self-determination, Chilan wrote, "that principle has no application to any minority group of United States citizens. No minority ethnic group has the right to determine that it shall not be subject to our Federal-State constitution."³³¹ Of course he did not mention that the concepts of self-government and self-determination were quite different for tribal communities. Nevertheless, relocation did not come to Michigan.

Indeed the plans for tribal termination and relocation fizzled out quickly, for at least two reasons. The NAIC, who at first supported relocation, saw the devastation it caused Indian

³³¹ Ibid.

communities and individuals in other states, including the Menominees, and took away their support. As a result, the BIA lost interest and no longer pursued relocation and termination. The second reason is that Michigan's Indian reservations size and populations were small compared to areas in the Southwest. As a result, the BIA simply lost interest.³³²

Conclusion

Charles Eastman's time in Detroit and the Society of American Indian's meeting represented the shift from old aspects of indigeneity. Although attempting to create new definitions of indigeneity, they were hindered by their attempts to engage with a political climate in its actual existence—not necessarily those of an older time. They were not pre-modern; they just did not take full grasp of what it meant to be Indigenous in early twentieth century Detroit.

The North American Indian Club's formation was the beginning of the Indigenous community's renewed and sustained attempt at political organizing. More than this, it was the first time they really began to assert themselves as modern Indigenous subjects who could move beyond nineteenth century notions of indigeneity, and instead engage with a political climate that, although rendering them invisible, was ripe for being challenged. And it was Indigenous women who were on the forefront of creating new meanings of indigeneity in the postwar period.

³³² Northrup, *Pan-Indianism in the Metropolis*, 626-627.

Chapter 4: Indigenous Women in Defense of Community and Nation: Gender, Race, and Political Culture in Postwar Detroit

Three years before the Detroit race rebellion, the most costly and destructive in United States history, Indigenous women such as Hannah Aikens were on the forefront in advocating for the rights of Indigenous people in Detroit. On August 19, 1964, Aikens, a Delaware Indian, wrote to Lewis Beeson, executive, secretary of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs. She wrote in response to a request that she speak to an upcoming meeting on “urban Indians.” In the letter, Aikens wrote that she regretted that she would be unable to make it to L’Anse, Michigan for a meeting later that month. She had just experienced a terrible car accident, in which a young family member broke their collarbone. In addition, she did not have the funds to make the long drive from Detroit to the Upper Peninsula.

Although unable to attend the meeting, she made recommendations for what the group could discuss. For example, she hoped that they would confer about the ‘preservation of Indian culture,’ which, among other things, involved preserving Native languages. Aikens was fluent in her own Delaware language, believing her linguistic knowledge helped her maintain her identity. She believed that there “should be classes on Chippewa” language. She wanted to learn Anishinaabemowin in order to communicate with Anishinaabe Detroiters. More important, she wanted Detroit’s Indigenous children to learn the language. She advocated for Indigenous people’s right to their own language in the future because she understood how boarding schools sought to strip Indigenous children of their language. “In the past, the use of Indian language was forbidden and students were punished severely if they were caught using it,” wrote Aikens. She

continued, “I know this condition existed at Mt. Pleasant Indian Boarding School as well as other such schools throughout the nation.”³³³

Aikens’ understanding of history, and the connection between culture, language, and power was typical of her time. Echoing decolonization theorist Frantz Fanon, Aikens knew that to speak a language is to assume also a culture and to bear the weight of that community.”³³⁴

With the rise of Indigenous rights movements in the postwar era, sparked by meetings such as the gathering in Chicago that led to the founding of the National Indian Youth Council, as well as the direct action fish-in movements in the Northwest, Indigenous people began to assert themselves more directly during a moment when other groups such as Black Americans were leading their own assault against white supremacy.³³⁵ However, a host of scholarship has focused on the role of Indigenous men as the major players on the stage of Indigenous social change.

More than simply being a part of the larger Indigenous rights movement of the time, women such Aikens present for us a window of opportunity to analyze the role of Indigenous women in preserving Indigenous culture in postwar Detroit. Though her letter is from 1964, her

³³³ Hannah Aikens, “Aikens to Lewis Beeson,” August 19, 1964. Record Group 66-7, Box 1-Folder 1. Library of Michigan, Lansing, MI.

³³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 2.

³³⁵ For a general overview of the Red Power Movement see, Paul Chaat Smith and Robert A. Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (Boston: South End Press, 1995). Troy Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz: Red Power and Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). For a focus specific to Native women see Donna Langston, “American Indian Women’s Activism in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Hypatia* Vol. 18, No. 2, special issue: Indigenous Women in the Americas (spring, 2003). At least two authors depart from the belief that Native activism began with AIM. See Daniel Cobb and Loretta Fowler (eds), *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900*. (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007); Daniel Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008). Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

commitment to social justice on behalf of Indigenous children in Detroit and throughout Michigan foreshadows the major role of Indigenous women in shaping political culture in the postwar era. They managed to care for not only their own families but also Detroit's entire Indigenous community.

This chapter analyzes the intersecting concepts of Indigenous feminism, racialization, and indigeneity in the postwar period. This chapter makes two major arguments. First, it was Indigenous women who were the major architects of political change in Detroit. Second, through the creation of cultural and educational institutions, Indigenous women created new definitions of what it meant to be Indigenous in late 20th century Detroit, thus challenging longstanding beliefs of Indigenous disappearance.

The women in postwar Detroit were urban Indigenous feminists. This brand of feminism is historically situated, geographically specific, and trans-generational. To understand and accept an urban Indigenous feminist is to also locate these women's experiences in a particular time and place, and recognize how they actually lived—not how we might image them to have lived. In my understanding, we must understand both how the urban place shaped Indigenous women's activism and political consciousness as well as how they came to shape urban political culture.

I have organized this chapter in three ways. First I analyze the political climate in both Detroit and nationally that gave rise to the work of Indigenous women. Second, I explore how, through culture, education, and concern for the family, women like my great-grandmother, Esther Shawboose Mays, were the major architects of change in the post-rebellion era. I also analyze, through an interviewee, Sandra, who grew up in Detroit as a teenager, experienced race in a city predicated on a blackness and whiteness.

Political Culture in Postwar Detroit

Postwar cities (and their surrounding suburbs) were deeply entrenched in rapid change in political economy and the construction of housing.³³⁶ Postwar cities were the product of the New Deal liberalism. Following World War II, the government “was riddled with ambiguities and contradictions that left room for opposing interpretations of what constituted proper government action.”³³⁷ For example, the new welfare policies in the postwar era, such as the GI Bill, largely served as an affirmative action policy for white Americans.³³⁸ Similar events were occurring in the Motor City. Detroit’s population changed, so, too, did its political climate. 1950s Detroit was a place embedded in contradiction. Built for a population of nearly 2 million people, there were a variety of white ethnic communities living in the city. One could become solidly middle class with a union protected job in the factories of Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors. One could walk down the streets and hear the beautiful sounds of Barry Gordy’s Motown musical empire blaring throughout the city. This was not a perfect city. Black folks were still barred from living in certain areas, caused by redlining policies that zoned certain neighborhoods as distinctly Black or White.

For example, Thomas Sugrue’s *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (1996) explains the development of racial inequality in postwar Detroit. According to Sugrue, Detroit, deeply affected greatly by New Deal liberalism, presents a unique opportunity to understand the state of

³³⁶ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

³³⁷ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race Inequality in Post-War Detroit*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 10.

³³⁸ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

the city. On the one hand, “African Americans forcefully asserted their rights to equal opportunity in employment and housing.” On the other hand, “they faced opposition from working-and middle-class whites... who expected the state to protect the privileges associated with property ownership and race.”³³⁹ Sugrue also points out that, since the 1950s, Black Detroiters had been very active in asserting their rights in a city still polarized by Black-White politics and in a climate where white civic and home associations explicitly barred Blacks from living in certain neighborhoods. Groups like the NCAAP and more militant organizations, since the 1940s, had fought against employment and housing discrimination.³⁴⁰ While Black Detroit changed drastically in the postwar period, especially gaining more political power, they could not necessarily fend off the devastating impacts of major changes in the national (also impacted by global trends) and local economy. The city’s local economy changed permanently since the 1950s. According to Sugrue, the city suffered four major recessions between 1949 and 1960. The auto industry suffered as well, but that was not new. What was new was “that the auto manufacturers and suppliers permanently reduced their Detroit-area work forces, closed plants, and relocated to other parts of the country.”³⁴¹ Indeed, between 1947 and 1963, “Detroit lost 134,000 jobs, while its population of working aged men and women actually increased.”³⁴² However, perhaps the most significant political event that occurred in Detroit was the Detroit Race Rebellion of 1967.

³³⁹ Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 10.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

On July 22, 1967, at 3:45 AM, Detroit police officers raided five “blind pigs” (after hour drinking places). Black folks had gathered there to celebrate the homecoming of two servicemen from Vietnam. After many people were arrested, people began to surround the place. Tempers escalated. Thousands of people ended up in the streets. Looting and the destruction of buildings ensued after Black folks found out a young Black man was killed by the police. The aftermath was the most devastating. Forty-three persons were killed, and thirty-three were Black, ten white. The police and the National Guard caused the majority of the deaths. Following the rebellion, the city’s assessor’s office estimated that nearly 22 million dollars in property damage had occurred. The city was never the same. But the changes in post-rebellion Detroit can be blamed neither on the rebellion nor on the election of Coleman A. Young in 1973. As Sugure points out, “By the time Young was inaugurated, the forces of economic decay and racial animosity were far too powerful for a single elected official to stem.”³⁴³ Thus, as Detroit was changing, whites leaving the city and more Blacks moving in, Black Detroit was a place of great hope and struggle. And Native people, many always there, and the continuing presence of indigeneity, were an invisible community within the larger arena of Black-White political struggles.

Following the racial rebellions that occurred across urban America, President Lyndon Johnson proposed a study that would understand the root cause of them. Chaired by the Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, in 1968, the committee produced what is now called the *Kerner Commission Report* (1968). After interviewing witnesses, assessing property damages, the committee concluded ambiguously what the root causes of racial rebellions were: “What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions

³⁴³ Ibid., 270.

maintain it, and white society condones it.”³⁴⁴ This statement is unclear, perhaps alluding to the invisibility of whiteness—both in exploitation and now knowing whom to blame for their condition—within Black spaces. If Black Americans were able to bring attention the poverty and structural violence in which they lived, which sociologist Kenneth Clark called a dark ghetto, then Indigenous people continued to be invisible.³⁴⁵ Though Judy Mays, a Saginaw Chippewa, recalled, It started getting scary after two to three days; they started getting the [military]. We started seeing army trucks going down the streets in fully army gear.”³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 2.

³⁴⁵ Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harpers & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965). Clark writes, “The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and--above all--economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters" (11).

³⁴⁶ Judy Mays interview with author, June 25, 2014.

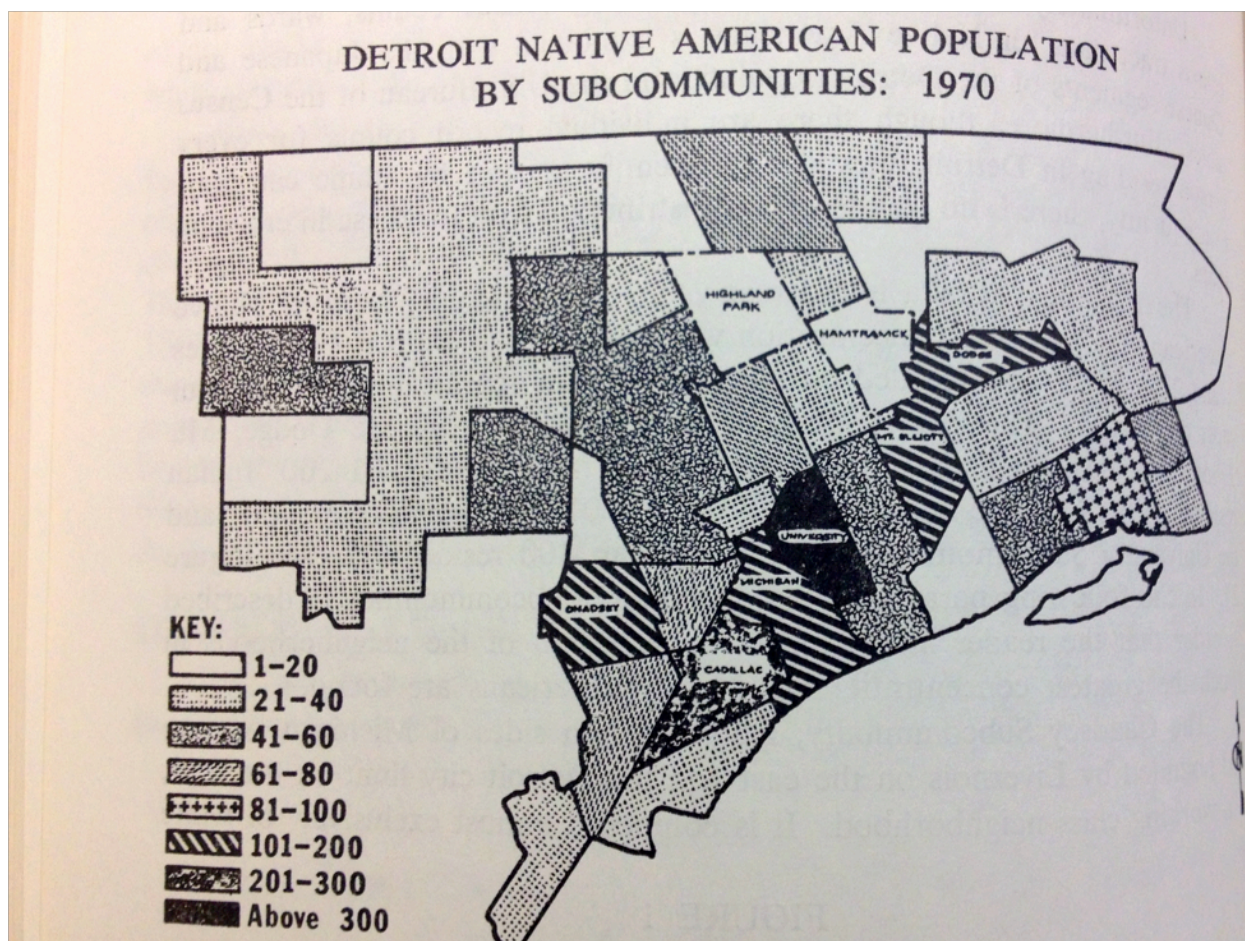


Figure 10. Beatrice A. Bigony, "Native Americans in Detroit," in *Immigrants and Migrants: The Detroit Ethnic Experience, Ethnic Studies Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 345-366.

Despite the difficulties, anthropologists and community members' were able to document the conditions of Detroit's Indigenous community. The Native population lived throughout Detroit, though they were concentrated in five areas: the Dodge, Mt. Elliot, Michigan, and Chadsey subcommunities (each with 101-200 Indigenous residents), the Cadillac subcommittee (201-300 residents), and the University subcommunities (also known as the Cass Corridor, with more than 300 residents). Beatrice Bigony, an anthropologist who spent three years living among Detroit's Indigenous community, described Cass Corridor area in the following way:

Contains a transient, largely non-working population in the area immediately adjacent to the downtown business district. As one moves northward, away from downtown, one

finds a mosaic of people (whites, blacks, Orientals, Native Americans, and East Indians). Some of these people are employed fulltime, some part-time, some irregularly, and some not at all. There is some light industry in the neighborhood but most of the neighborhood people who work are employed outside the subcommunity. The Wayne State University community is in the northern section of this community, with students filling most of the housing north of Canfield and east of the Lodge Freeway. The Third Avenue skid row lies within this subcommunity as does the low income Jeffries Housing Project. The area immediately west of the Lodge Freeway contained in the subcommunity is a predominantly black residential neighborhood.³⁴⁷

Historian Edmund J. Danziger wrote that this was the one place where Indigenous people lived and spent numerous hours at the “Indian bars.” He remarked that the point of entry for most Indigenous people coming to Detroit for the first time was the corner of Michigan and Third Avenues. “Even if they had city relatives and friends,” wrote Danziger, “they congregated there in the bars, on street corners, in second-floor apartments above shops—just to socialize or to get useful leads on job and housing.”³⁴⁸ Though it is difficult to get precise numbers, the largest numbers of Indigenous nations living within the Detroit area were: the Anishinaabe, Cherokee,

³⁴⁷ Beatrice A. Bigony, “Native Americans in Detroit,” in *Immigrants and Migrants; The Detroit Ethnic Experience*, Ethnic Studies Reader (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 349.

³⁴⁸ Edmund Danziger, *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit’s American Indian Community*. (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 35.

Haudenosaunee, and Dakota and Lakota.³⁴⁹ According to the U.S. census, there were about 2,000 people of Indigenous ancestry living in Detroit in 1950.³⁵⁰

The emergence of Indigenous political culture in postwar Detroit is not divorced from the larger and rapidly changing political climate across postwar America and throughout Indian Country. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 4, 1968—sparking riots in Black communities throughout the country; Robert F. Kennedy, former attorney general, presidential candidate, and young brother of John F. Kennedy, was assassinated just two months later in June. Indigenous activism, though long ongoing, began to challenge decades long attempts to picture them as relics of the past. Even the U.S. government noticed, including President Richard Nixon.

On July 8, 1970, Nixon gave his “Special Message to Congress on Indian Affairs” to the public. President Nixon’s message was simple: give Indigenous people control over their lives and reverse the decades long policy of the government trying to assimilate Indigenous people into mainstream America. “The first and most basic question that must be answered with respect to policy concerns the historic and legal relationship between the Federal Government and Indian communities,” said Nixon.³⁵¹ Federal policy had operated on two extremes, according to Nixon: Federal paternalism and termination. First, to assimilate Indigenous people into white society by dictating their every move and not allowing them control over the lives. The second extreme was

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁵⁰ 1950 Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Statistics for Michigan*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953.

³⁵¹ Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs.," July 8, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2573>.

to sever the relationship all together between the Federal government and Indigenous communities. None of these extremes had worked. Instead, Nixon asked Congress to usher in the era of Indigenous self-determination: “Self determination among the Indian people can and must be encouraged without the threat of eventual termination,” said Nixon.³⁵² He continued,

We must assure the Indian that he can assume control of his own life without being separated involuntarily from the tribal group. And we must make it clear that Indians can become independent of Federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support.³⁵³

Indigenous Invisibility

As mentioned in previous chapters, despite the Detroit Indigenous community’s activism, they remained invisible. Such a small population, though, had trouble making their concerns known. Louis Cook, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press* wrote an article for the *North American Indian Association Newsletter* titled, “Detroit’s Forgotten People—American Indians.” Written in a morbid tone, the article offers a few social demographics on Detroit’s Native Americans, but mostly of the city’s invisible Indigenous population. “Being a stranger in one’s own land is hard to bear, Detroiters have found black power, brown power, and even a little yellow power, but the city’s American Indians are still looking for red power.”³⁵⁴ To what extent “yellow power” and “brown power” was known throughout the city in the mid-1970s is debatable, but there is no doubt that Black Power was the dominant discourse and the most visible, coupled by the race

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ *North American Indian Association Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 6, June 1976.*

rebellion in 1967. A Black Panther Party chapter also formed in Detroit in 1968.³⁵⁵ Besides the racial rebellion, the most important event in postwar Detroit was easily the election of the city's first Black mayor: Coleman A. Young in 1974. The election of Young created great change for Detroit. He placed more Black officers in the police department. He also dismantled the racist police unit STRESS (Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets) that was known among the Black community as a murdering squad. Founded in 1971, STRESS quickly earned its reputation, killing citizens (mostly Black) at 7.17 per 1000 officers, the highest in the country.³⁵⁶ Young also worked with corporate elites to bring jobs to Detroit, with mixed results.³⁵⁷

Still, we might suggest that the election of Young was the first time in which Black folks became the new “indigenous” community. While Black activism was a strong part of Detroit's history, Young's election made Detroit a Black city—in political power and, only a few years later, a majority Black space. Indeed, as early as 1970, Detroit's total population was 1,511,482, and the Black population was 660,428—representing nearly 45% of the total population.³⁵⁸ The creation of a Black Detroit was rooted not only in the contested terrains of a Black-White political, social, and economic environment, but deeply embedded within the tensions of indigeneity, that which was caught between settlers (whites) and Indigenous people. Thus, to be

³⁵⁵ Ahmad Rahman, “Marching Blind: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party in Detroit,” in *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party*, ed. Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 181-231.

³⁵⁶ Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*. South End Press Classics. (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998), 167-173.

³⁵⁷ Joe T. Darden et al., *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 256-257. Darden presents an important book that argues we cannot understand the underdevelopment of postwar Detroit without the entire Metro Detroit area, the suburbs, which, many, and certainly not all, developed rapidly.

³⁵⁸ Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 23.

Black in Detroit, or rather to have a Black Detroit, suggests also that the shifting nature of indigeneity was no longer in the hands of white Detroit, but now, perhaps paradoxically, within the hands of Black Detroit, an oppressed group, but one who had long waged war within Detroit city politics.³⁵⁹

For example, in James and Grace Lee Boggs' important essay, "The City is the Black Man's Land," we see how Black activists and those concerned with how Blacks were treated in cities deploy Detroit for their particular interests. More than this, they represent what we might call Black Indigeneity.³⁶⁰ James Boggs, a Black American revolutionary and theoretician who worked in the factories of Detroit and Grace Lee Boggs, also a theoretician and revolutionary (still working in the Detroit community this day!) were instrumental in radical activism in Detroit. Although they were committed to radical social change, they used the history of Indigenous people to erase Indigenous concerns. In this important essay, Boggs explains the material conditions that exist for the Black community to take over politics in cities. Cities, argues Boggs, are the central location through which the revolution must occur. They outlined a

³⁵⁹ In making this claim, I do not mean to suggest that Blacks were an equally oppressive group on par with whites. On the contrary, that would be intellectually inaccurate, even lazy to suggest a thing. However, I do think within cities across America, and in other regions throughout U.S. history, scholars still have a lot of work to do in order to better understand the relationship between blackness and indigeneity, its contradictions, and how we can go forward in understanding these competing and oft-intersecting concepts and people in the 20th century.

³⁶⁰ Shona Jackson's *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) makes an important contribution to how Blacks in the Caribbean position themselves in relationship to land in the Caribbean. Her framework is useful for also understanding Black ideas in relationship to land, or the city, in the postwar period. Jackson writes, "*Creole Indigeneity* refers to the practices of belonging and becoming that have provided a new material, symbolic, and discursive relationship to the land for Blacks, Indo-Guyanese, and Indigenous Peoples. The term captures the unique tensions between settler and native—where *native* refers to a fixed identity of Indigenous Peoples and the inhabiting of that term by Creoles via their indigenizing and creolization processes—that still operate in Guyana and throughout the Caribbean" (64).

radical Black political thought for giving the Black community power in cities, especially Detroit:

America has already become the dangerous society. The nation's major cities are becoming police states. There are only two roads open to it. *Either* wholesale extermination of the black population through mass massacres or forced mass migrations onto reservations as with the Indians.... *Or* self-government of the major cities by the black majority, mobilized behind leaders and organizations of its own creation and prepared to reorganize the structure of city government and city life from top to bottom.³⁶¹

On the surface, this presentation is a radical, manifesto of Black political takeover in cities. Yet, his use of indigeneity renders Indigenous experiences and histories in cities, invisible. Thus, Black folks, too, used indigeneity, in this case, the history of Indigenous oppression, for their own political gain, which had the consequence of erasing an actual Indigenous presence in cities. Thus, within the political environment of Black electoral and radical politics, Indigenous people were made invisible. Though Mayor Young, a product of Black Power politics, championed Black causes, apparently Indigenous peoples were rendered invisible.

“Detroit’s Indians have been attempting for months to gain an audience with Mayor Young,” wrote Cook.³⁶² However, they had no luck, because “the city administration is more interested in people who vote, and the Indians do not, for the most part.”³⁶³ This comment

³⁶¹ James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, “The City Is the Black Man’s Land,” in *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Worker’s Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 40.

³⁶² *North American Indian Association Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 6, June 1976.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

gestures toward the unique status of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S., both as sovereign peoples and U.S. citizens. Cook also pointed out the challenges that Detroit's Indigenous community faced, not only of invisibility, but poor housing and little opportunities for education. Cook ended his article on a gloomy note: "When an urban Indian dies the cause is usually put down as a heart attack because it's too much trouble to figure out what really happened."³⁶⁴ In other words, the only thing a coroner knew was that an Indian had died and it was probably due to alcoholism, but no one cared enough to figure that out. Similarly, Danziger wrote, "by 1970 [Indigenous people] were a minority of minorities in the Motor City."³⁶⁵ If the general Indigenous population suffered invisibility, none suffered more than the youth.

In spite of the Indigenous community's supposed invisibility, they were very active, and were well aware of the larger, national activism happening throughout Indian Country. During the Red Power Movement, Indigenous people throughout the U.S. began to challenge how they were treated on and off the reservation. Perhaps most notably, the Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt, joined by Russell Means a year later, joined together the American Indian Movement in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1968.³⁶⁶ One of the underappreciated components of AIM's activism was the creation of The Heart of the Earth Survival School in 1971.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Danziger, *Survival and Regeneration*, 14.

³⁶⁶ Russell Means, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 153. Means notes that he met with Bellecourt and Banks in Detroit when they first asked him to be a part of AIM.

Education for the Future of the Indigenous Community

Since the 1950s, Detroit's Indigenous community was concerned with the future of Indigenous Detroiters because their youth were dropping out of high school.³⁶⁷ In the Michigan Commission of Indian Affairs' 1971 survey conducted in 383 Native American households, it was found that of all the children who dropped out of high school, over half did not reach the 9th grade. The report attributed the high drop out rate and generally lack of achievement to a combination of factors, including low educational achievement among adults, poverty, and inadequate housing and health problems.³⁶⁸ Indigenous youth high school dropout rates persisted until the 1970s. In Detroit, they dropped out for at least four reasons.

First, many were called names and teased because of their Indigenous heritage. Second, young women in particular were ostracized because they typically date men outside of their race. Third, they cited the school's curriculum as being whitewashed—something that did not represent their experience as Native people. Fourth, they felt a general feeling of isolation from the rest of the school children. Finally, students were bored with the material in which they had to learn from. Some parents believed that their children were being pushed into vocational programs only with little to no opportunities to learn other information.³⁶⁹ Some teachers held problematic views of Indigenous people. Though education was a local issue, it gained national attention in the late 1960s.

³⁶⁷ Ralph West, "The Adjustment of the American Indian in Detroit: A Descriptive Study" (Wayne State University, 1950), (Wayne State University), 44.

³⁶⁸ The Governor's Commission on Indian Affairs, *A Study of the Socioeconomic Status of Michigan Indians*, (Lansing, MI: Commission of Indian Affairs, 1971), 29

³⁶⁹ Beatrice A. Bigony, "Native Americans in Detroit," in *Immigrants and Migrants; The Detroit Ethnic Experience*, Ethnic Studies Reader (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 354.

On January 30, 1969, Senator Edward Kennedy wrote a memorandum to the subcommittee on Indian education, asking for an extension to continue studying the state of Native American education and children. “To a substantial extent, the quality and effectiveness of Indian education is a test of this government’s understanding and commitment,” wrote Kennedy. After nearly two years of investigation in reservation, rural and urban Native communities, Kennedy et al. published *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* (1969). Among the findings of the report, one in particular stood out: “Public schools educating Indians rarely include coursework which recognized Indian history, culture or language, and often uses materials and approaches which are derogatory toward Indians.” The report continued, “the primary result of the manner Indians are treated in the history textbooks in use today is a propagation of inaccurate stereotypes.”³⁷⁰ This was also true in Detroit.

On a March 5, 1970, the *Detroit News* published an article titled, “The Abandonment of the Indian in Detroit’s Red Ghetto.” Authored by journalist Tom Pawlick, the article is a tragic story of Indigenous children in Detroit Public Schools. Pawlick interviewed a teacher at Burton Elementary school, Mrs. Yvonne Walker, an Black kindergarten teacher. She told of the difficult circumstances in which Indigenous children found themselves. “We had an Indian family here awhile ago with five children. The older ones were always getting into fights. People would make remarks, or call them ‘squaws’,” she said.³⁷¹ As a result of the name-calling, the students would fight—often. The story of these children was sad. The father died of tuberculosis; shortly

³⁷⁰ Edward Kennedy, ed., “Indian Education: A National Tragedy--A National Challenge” (U.S. Government Printing Office, November 3, 1969), 22. His brother, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was the original chair in 1967.

³⁷¹ Tom Pawlick, “The Abandonment of the Indian in Detroit’s Red Ghetto,” *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, March 5, 1970).

after, the mother died of cancer. A grandmother took them in, but never made mention of these deaths to the school. Apparently, as stereotypically believed of Indigenous people, she was “too proud.”³⁷² Finally, the grandmother became stricken with tuberculosis, and the grandchildren were sent to foster homes.

Mrs. Walker told a story of another child. “They’re beautiful kids, but they have a lot of problems,” she said. “One little girl, five years old, has been in the youth home twice. Her parents abandoned her.”³⁷³ According to Mrs. Walker, “All the Indian children do neat work. They’re very exact, at least at first, eager to learn. But they are shy and withdrawn.” She did not get into why the students may be eager at first and then become shy and withdrawn, or simply no longer participate. “One boy speaks if you speak first, and then it’s in a low voice, almost a whisper.”³⁷⁴ Finally, there was one little boy who “just sits and cries all morning. He has problems at home, but won’t talk about it.”³⁷⁵

Mrs. Walker was probably a caring teacher who simply wanted the best for the Indigenous children—indeed all children—in her school and classroom. But her comments reveal, among other things, the lack of knowledge about Indigenous histories, and, how stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples also impact the thinking of Black Americans. The teacher obviously knew very little of the Indigenous experience in Detroit, and it is doubtful that she had the educational materials to teach culturally relevant education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This brief encounter, though, illustrates, in part, the limits of ethnic

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

relations in Detroit, and how Black Americans also participated in settler imaginings of Indigenous Peoples. During the height of nationalist movements and calls for self-determination, Detroit's Indigenous community took action—led primarily by Indigenous women. A major part of their feminism was making sure that the community, from children and adults, were educated.

Detroit's Indian Educational and Cultural Center

A school for Detroit's Indigenous students had been an idea since at least the early 1972. The North American Indian Association put out a poll for their readership in order to determine if the community supported such an effort.³⁷⁶ However, though a community idea, Esther Mays' vision for creating an institution that would help sustain indigeneity in the Motor City as well as transmit Indigenous cultures to students from their educational institution was a major part of Mays' vision of being Indigenous in postwar Detroit.

Esther Shawboose was born on May 3, 1924 to Westbrook Shawboose, a day laborer, and Elizabeth (Liza) Silas, a stay at home mother. She was born a month before President Calvin Coolidge signed into law the Indian Citizenship Act on June 2, 1924, which gave Indigenous people U.S. citizenship. She was born neither a U.S. citizen nor a member of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, which had not yet formed into a political unit.³⁷⁷ As an adolescent, she attended the Mt. Pleasant Industrial boarding school at an early age before the school closed in 1934. According to her children, she never discussed her tenure. Whatever her experience, it gave her motivation to make sure that Detroit's Indigenous youth did not have the experience that she had as a child.

³⁷⁶ *North American Indian Association Newsletter*, Vol. 2, No. 11, November 1972.

³⁷⁷ For a history of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe see, Charmaine M. Benz (ed.), *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story: A History of the Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek* (Mt. Pleasant, MI: Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan, 2005).

In a city predicated on Blackness and Whiteness, an institution that nurtured Indigenous identities was paramount. Thus, the creation of the Detroit Indian Educational and Cultural Center was created to serve those needs.

There are two important points that should be made about the DIECC. First, it was designed to meet the great diversity of Indigenous Peoples living in Detroit. Second, it was an embrace of modernity—through education—for Indigenous peoples. By modernity I mean embracing something new, and respecting the diversity of Indigenous America, and not being held down what some may call “traditional.” In other words, challenging how Indigenous Peoples would be represented among their own community and society. Importantly, though, Indigenous parents understood that their children needed education to succeed in a rapidly changing postwar America.

From the beginning, parental involvement in the school was a desire of the co-chairpersons and the educational committee. The DIECC staff encouraged community involvement by institutionalizing it. The Detroit Indian Parent Advisory Council and the Detroit American Indian Parent Council, both of which kept Indigenous student concerns first, guided all decisions. Esther Mays and Walter Albert served as the chair-persons for each council. In addition, they held employment opportunities for at least ten high school students to serve as mentors to younger students. They also encouraged the involvement of the elderly, who would serve as counselors to the young people about, teaching them about Indigenous histories and cultures. The staff understood that they were dealing with a diverse Indigenous population throughout Detroit, even though the majority of their constituents were Anishinaabe.

Though Esther Mays was a co-founder of the DIECC, and herself also served on Michigan’s Indian Educational Advisory Council, the major architect of the educational

curriculum was her daughter, Judith (Judy) Mays. Judy was well qualified. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education Administration from Michigan State University, and she would later graduate with a master's degree in Education Administration, and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Wayne State University. They meet weekly on Saturdays, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

The DIECC was a place for Indigenous people to come and interact, and serves as a broad cultural, social, and educational center for the community. The DIECC's educational component had two purposes. First, they wanted to reduce the high drop out rate that existed among Indigenous youth. Second, they desired to create an environment where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students would be able to learn about the unique contributions of Native Americans in US history, and in Detroit. They would do bead work, go on trips to learn about plants, and even participate in some language classes (Anishinaabemowin).

The community was ecstatic. "Detroit's Native American children have a place to go now to be together and to learn singing, beadwork, legends, history and all the things it takes to keep Indian heritage alive in the young." Students also learned Indigenous drumming and singing.³⁷⁸ In addition to the "formal" schooling that would take place, members of the staff also provided emergency services, including optical and dental, as well as counseling for youth. Within three years, the DIECC served nearly 100 Detroit Public School students every Saturday throughout the school year.³⁷⁹

A year after the DIECC's existence, Judy wrote a letter to the *Native Sun*, a local community newsletter published monthly, encouraging parents to get involved. "WE NOW

³⁷⁸ *Native Sun News Letter*, Vol. 6, No. 5.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

HAVE OUR SCHOOL,” wrote Judy. She followed that up with a rhetorical option rooted in the discourse of self-determination: “Can we sit back and let someone else do our work?” Realizing that only through community involvement could the DIECC reach its potential, Mays appealed to the parents, stating, “Indian parent interest and participation is the only way our school program can proceed as originally planned, for it is you who carry the Indian culture and traditions of your tribe in your hearts.”³⁸⁰ Judy’s point is important, for it reveals that Mays had a broad view what it meant to be Indigenous in the postwar era, amidst the Red Power Movement. She also understood the notion that indigeneity was not to be relegated to cultures of the past; but lived in the daily realities of Indigenous people. Children growing up in Detroit had to know that being Indigenous was not what they saw in popular culture. They would learn from their parents and elders who were shaped by a city, and yet maintained their Indigenous identity. Indeed, the point of the DIECC’s curriculum was to foster in students to “be more effective in [their] ability to understand [their self] and [be] better equipped to cope in a public school system that has not geared itself to meet his individual needs.”³⁸¹ The DIECC had a major impact on a former student I interviewed.

The DIECC was necessary on a practical level for Indigenous students. Sandra, a Cherokee now living in Canada, recalled the important impact the DIECC had on her. As a teenager, she mentioned that months before she began attending the DIECC, she had a negative encounter with a guidance counselor who encouraged her to take business classes. The counselor told her that she should not go on the college preparation track because she was an Indigenous student. He told her to take courses in the business track, because Indians dropped out of school

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

at an alarming rate and therefore it would benefit her in the long run.³⁸² However, the DIECC helped her imagine that she could be both Indigenous and successful—something that the Detroit Public School district had long ignored. “The Indian school had a big impact on me. As a high school student, as someone who had been struggling with identities issues because of the whole Black-White thing in my neighborhood, in my high school, all that stuff.”³⁸³ Reflecting back on the impact on the DIECC, the same student remarked, “It was the first time in our lives that we were able to get together with other Indian kids and learn stuff.” The student further stated, “[the DIECC] was just great because we learned how to be proud of being Indian—as kids.”³⁸⁴ The counselor told her that she should not go on the college preparation track because she was an Indigenous student. He told her to take courses in the business track, because Indians dropped out of school at an alarming rate and therefore it would benefit her in the long run. However, the DIECC helped her imagine that she could be both Indigenous and successful—something that the Detroit Public School district had long ignored. “The Indian school had a big impact on me. As a high school student, as someone who had been struggling with identities issues because of the whole Black-White thing in my neighborhood, in my high school, all that stuff.” Reflecting back on the impact on the DIECC, the same student remarked, “It was the first time in our lives that we were able to get together with other Indian kids and learn stuff.”³⁸⁵ The student further

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Sandra Interview with the author, August 2, 2014.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

stated, “[the DIECC] was just great because we learned how to be proud of being Indian—as kids.”³⁸⁶

Play and recreation were also an important part of the curriculum. During the summer of 1976, the DIECC staff held a weeklong summer camp for fifty-students at Camp Wathana in Holly, Michigan. Taking these urban Indigenous students to camp was a success. Though their presence presented a certain irony in a couple of senses. These were urban Indigenous people; most of them had never seen anything other than skyscrapers and streets. They were familiar with the sounds of the factory work occurring at the River Rouge Plant, the smell of urban industrialization. While their parents had either migrated to Detroit a generation ago (and some had been there before that), they knew nothing of the great outdoors.

Students had fun. They canoed, rode horses, swam, did archery, built campfires, learned drumming and singing, and had dances at night. The young people enjoyed catching frogs and toads, picking up sticks and leaves for building fires. They children had a good time outside of the city. If this were not one way to bust stereotypes, they also shared space with the Campfire Girls, a group of young white girls who performed “Indianness” better than the Native (urban) Detroiters. The Native Detroiters had to challenge the stereotypes implanted in the young girls’ minds. The *Native Sun Newsletter* reported that, “we had to change the image of Indian people in many of the girls’ minds and straighten out several misconceptions.” We do not know what misconceptions they had. However, they were likely rooted in the broader U.S. historical settler imagination of the brave warrior and the Indian princess—one wearing long braids holding a tomahawk and the other wearing pigtails and some leather dress. Regardless, the student’s embodied Motor City indigeneity because they had grew up in the city, and were still

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

Indigenous, of the modern kind, who challenged long held stereotypes of their being romantic Indians. Importantly, they were not ashamed of not knowing how to do outdoor activities—things that Indians are “supposed”—to do. Instead, they embraced it. This was not the first time that a Native person had went before the Camp Fire girls, hoping to dispel white misconceptions of Indians. Charles Eastman had attempted to do so back in 1932.³⁸⁷

Mays believed that the DIECC staff could handle the teaching and tutoring of remedial subjects such as math, science, and social studies, but only Native peoples who understood certain types of knowledges could teach that to children. Indeed parents were situated to pass on certain types of knowledges not only to their own children but also to others. “We are of many tribes and these characteristics of the various tribes differ. Learning all these variations is more than our staff can absorb in a short time.”³⁸⁸ The acceptance of Indigenous diversity among Detroit’s Indigenous community was profound. It was not just that Mays was sensitive to the diversity within Indigenous Detroit, she also understood the politics of division that impacted the community; they did not want these rifts impacting students. They were also open to community criticisms and suggestions. The DIECC was important for cultivating an Indigenous identity in students, but Mays and the staff also understood that the broader public required a re-education, too.

In addition to her commitment to the Detroit Indigenous community, she was also active on the statewide Michigan Indian Education Advisory Council (MIEAC). The MIEAC was formed to combat the discrimination experienced by Indigenous students in the school district,

³⁸⁷ Russell Gore, “Sitting Bull’s Follower Who Won Paleface Wisdom: Raised to Hate White, Now Is a Doctor Here,” *Detroit News* (Detroit, July 17, 1932).

³⁸⁸ *North American Indian Association Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 6, June 1975.

and to make sure that they were given representation in school districts across Michigan wherever they existed. At a January 20, 1977 meeting, Mays challenged Lester Gemmill, a Pit River Indian from Northern California and longtime activist, in what appeared to be a heated conversation about the role the MIEACC should serve for the Indigenous community throughout Michigan. Mays asked Gemmill, the state coordinator of Indian Education in the Michigan Department of Education, why there appeared to be very little Indigenous community input from the ground. She believed Indigenous people from the community should determine educational policies—not the other way around.³⁸⁹ If Mays was concerned about the education of children in Detroit and Michigan, she was very well aware of the importance of also keeping Indigenous children within the Indigenous community.

Saving the Children: The Fight to Maintain Indigenous Community and Identity

From 1972-1974, Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) traveled around Michigan to do what other commissioners had failed to do since their founding in 1956: get Michigan Indian input.³⁹⁰ Although the MCIA was comprised mostly of American Indians, they were governor appointees. As such, it was not until 1972 that they really sought Indian community input. Their 1974 culminating report showed that Michigan's Indians were suffering similar issues, whether rural, reservation or urban. This was especially true regarding education and social services; a major concern was Indian children and the foster care system. During the

³⁸⁹ Minutes for Michigan Indian Advisory Education Council Meeting, January 20, 1977. Michigan State University, University Archives and Collections.

³⁹⁰ James R. Hillman (ed.), *The Minutes of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, 1956-1977*, Vol. 1, (Canal, OH: Hillman Publishing Co., 1990). They were founded to be a collection of activists to respond to the needs of the entire state of Michigan's Indigenous population.

MCIA's travels to various Indian communities throughout Michigan, they found that an Indian child being placed in non-Indian homes was a major concern of Native people. Their concern was that children were being kidnapped like a generation before them, and therefore would miss out on the chance to learn important indigenous life ways and customs.³⁹¹ One Indian stated, "an Indian social worker is needed to work with families in all areas of their needs and problems." Another suggested that "more Indian foster care homes are needed for Indian children," and "there is a lack of information about what programs are available and who is eligible." Esther Mays shared similar beliefs.

Esther Mays understood the importance of the home in maintaining both community, and as an important opportunity to raise children within and Indigenous culture. Having nine children of her own, she did everything that she could to help them foster a strong Indigenous (Saginaw Chippewa) identity, even as they were mixed with Black ancestry and lived in a predominantly Black social world. She was, as Susan Lobo describes an "urban clan mother." These urban clan mothers' households, "play a vital function for the extended family, for highly mobile individuals within the urban Indian community, and for those who circulate through or visit the city."³⁹² Her home was known for being a place where children could stay. Indeed her daughter

³⁹¹ Recently, Margaret Jacobs has done a substantial amount of comparative work on Indigenous adoption, moving it beyond the U.S. nation-state framework, showing how it worked in other settler-states such as Australia and Canada. See, Margaret D. Jacobs, "The Habit of Elimination: Indigenous Child Removal in Settler Colonial Nations in the Twentieth Century," in *Colonial Genocide in North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 189–207; Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

³⁹² Susan Lobo, "Urban Clan Mothers: Key Households in Cities," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 11.

recalled that she was a “fierce fighter, warrior, for Indian rights in the city,” mainly for children.”³⁹³ She also stated that they always had people’s children in their household.

To formalize her advocacy on behalf of children, she formed, with her daughters Linda Lindsey and Judy Mays, the Great Lakes Northern Stars (GLNS). The GLNS was a non-profit organization whose efforts and major objectives are to establish funds for ethnic groups in the Detroit area, particularly Native Americans.”³⁹⁴ The GLNS did everything, and she would even take children into her home whose parents had been incarcerated. And she would keep them until they got out.³⁹⁵ In that same year, she traveled to Washington D.C. to tell of her particular experience.

By the mid 1970s, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate decided to take steps towards understanding the nature of the government’s complicit role in the kidnapping of Indigenous children from their community. Though Indigenous children were being quickly taken away from their homes, Indigenous community organizations, on and off the reservation, fought to keep their children with either their parents or at the very least within the Indigenous community. Esther Mays, traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the Senate hearings on Indian child welfare were held on April 8 and 9, 1974.

At 9:00 AM, Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota began the 93rd Congress, 2nd session titled, “Problems that American Indian Families Face in Raising their Children and How These Problems are Affected by Federal Action or Inaction” with an introductory statement. He served as the chair of the session. Committee members also included “Henry M. Jackson of

³⁹³ Judy Mays interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

³⁹⁴ North American Indian Association Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 7., July/August 1973.

³⁹⁵ Judy Mays interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

Washington, Lee Metcalf of Montana, Floyd Haskell of Colorado, Dewey F. Bartlett, Oklahoma, James A. McClure of Idaho, and Paul J. Fannin of Arizona. In addition members of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs were also in attendance, including J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. of Louisiana, Alan Bible of Nevada, Frank Church of Idaho, Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, Howard M. Metzenbaum of Ohio, Clifford P. Hansen of Wyoming, Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon, and James L. Buckley of New York. In addition to the government officials, there were at least thirty-two, Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendees who gave statements. They represented a range of organizations, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribes and Indigenous community organizations, and practitioners, including psychologist and psychiatrists who worked with Indigenous communities.

Senator Abourezk began the meeting stating, “We have called these hearings today to begin to define the specific problems that American Indian families face in raising their children and how these problems are affected by Federal action or inaction.”³⁹⁶ He continued, “Unwarranted removal of children from their homes is common in Indian communities.” He also cited the condition of Indigenous children in the welfare system: “a minimum of 25 percent of all Indian children are either in foster homes, adoptive homes, and/or boarding schools;” Indigenous children were also “removed [from their homes] at rates varying from 5 to 25 times higher than” compared to the national average of 1 per 51 children. However, “up to now,” he said, “public and private welfare agencies seem to have operated on the premise that most Indian children would really be better off growing up-non-Indian.” Senator Absourezk argued that a result of these policies were “unchecked, abusive child-removal practices, the lack of viable practical

³⁹⁶ *Indian Child Welfare Program: Problems That American Indian Families Face in Raising Their Children and How These Problems Are Affected By Federal Action or Inaction* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 1.

rehabilitation and prevention programs for Indian families facing severe problems, and a practice of ignoring the all-important demand of Indian tribes to have a say in how their children and families are dealt with.”

Over the next two days the committee would hear from Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons from around various Indigenous communities. “From what we learn from [the testimonies],” said the Senator, “this committee hopes to be able to propose Federal action and the legal means to protect and develop their families.”³⁹⁷

The testimonies varied. Some wrote prepared statements, which they read aloud; others spoke more spontaneously. Perhaps the most profound statements came from the women whose children were taken away. For instance, a Mrs. Townsend from Fallon, Nevada. She brought her three children with her, ages 14, 9, and 7. The state took away her children unjustly. Mrs. Townsend testified that the police department harassed her in her hometown of Fallon. The police officers there arrested her after a longtime of harassment. She was arrested for drunken driving and resisting arrest. During her containment, the officers brutalized her. That was not the worse of it. The police came the next day and kidnapped her children, and placed them in temporary foster homes. She then had to deal with the Nevada State Welfare Department, which was not a pleasant thing.

Though Mrs. Townsend suffered, nothing was worse than the experience of her children. Her Nine-year-old daughter Anna spoke. Senator Abourezk asked Anna, “do you want to say anything?” “Yes, I would,” replied Anna. She continued, “My brother, he was mistreated by Mr. Kelly. He slapped him and he smoked right in his face and puffed right in his face.” The Senator then interrupted her, “Just a minute, Anna. If that’s too hard for you to talk about, you don’t have

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 2.

to. Perhaps it is better if she didn't, Mrs. Townsend." The reasoning for his interrupting young Anna is unknown. Though such painful reminders might surely have been uncomfortable, if not saddened her. She stopped, and her mother continued her testimony. She spoke about the difficulties Indigenous mothers faced because they did not know about the resources available to them: "I think that most of the Indian women are usually overwhelmed by people who think their children should be taken away from them and they really don't stand up to anybody and they don't have anybody to tell."³⁹⁸ Ultimately, she got her children back. However, she still could not understand why white people wanted to take her children away.

Unfortunately, the testimony of other mothers, agency heads, "experts," and those connected with Indigenous children and welfare shared similar stories: Indigenous families, especially mothers, had no recourse for the kidnapping of their children and many of those children who spent a significant amount of time within white homes did not allow them to maintain their Indigenous identity. In Michigan, similar stories existed. During the travels of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs (previously the Commission on Indian Affairs; they changed their name so as not to be confused with the Central Intelligence Agency) to better understand the conditions of Michigan's Indigenous population, they held a series of meetings in tribal communities, both on and off the reservation. Appointed members concerned founded the MCIA in 1956 with the condition of Michigan's Indigenous population, especially the state of children.³⁹⁹

On April 9, 1974, at 9:00 AM, Senator Abourezk began the session stating, "The first witness this morning is from Detroit, Mich., Esther Mays." He invited her up to the witness

³⁹⁸ *Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978*, 1978.

³⁹⁹ James R. Hillman, *A History of the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, 1956-1977* (Clinton, OH: Hillman Pub. Co, 1985).

table, and apologized for making her stay overnight. “I want to apologize to you for cutting you off last night. I want to express the committees gratitude for your staying overnight.” Mays, known among her contemporaries for playful banter and sharp tongue remarked, “since you’re handing out compliments, I’d like to compliment you on your timing. It’s almost as good as ours.” She then moved swiftly into her statement.

“My name is Esther Mays and I am from Detroit, Mich. The organization that I’m representing is called the Native American Child Protection Council. I am on the board of directors.”⁴⁰⁰ Mays embodied Detroit, both as a place where she lived and as a particular way of being Indigenous. As Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman writes, “embodied geographies thus become pivotal in decolonization projects, and it is here that Native feminisms can play a major role in our thinking about the connection between land, individuals, and constructions of nations.”⁴⁰¹ She very briefly introduced what exactly she did with the Native American Child Protection Council. She said that the organization was founded to keep families together—by any means necessary. Serving more than fifty families throughout the state of Michigan, the NACPC was in direct response to the policies of “various social service agencies as it affects the lives of the Native American community.” Mays specified four major issues that hindered Indigenous families staying together, including:

1. Indian children are being placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes without regard or respect to Indian children’s racial and cultural heritage.

⁴⁰⁰ *Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978*, 1978.

⁴⁰¹ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 12.

2. non-Indian homes generally are unable to relate to the Indian child because of a lack of adequate knowledge of the child's background. We oftentimes find the child's process of adjusting to his or her new surrounding extremely difficult.
3. confusion, conflict exist in the Indian child's mind as he attempts to relate to the custom, tradition, values and the ways of a non-Indian world. We have found many instances where the Indian child, once he reaches the age where he can assume responsibility for himself, returning to the Indian community in search of his past.
4. We find many adoptive and foster family parents totally unfamiliar with the Indian way of life, its family structure, values, traditions, and customs. We find that there is a definite need for these foster families to be able to understand, in their mind, and be better able to relate to the needs of the Indian child.⁴⁰²

The Indigenous home was more equipped to meet the basic needs of children and their cultural needs. The NACPC understood that being removed from one's home, for a variety of reasons, could be traumatic in general for young people. But placing Indigenous children in Indigenous homes, believed Mays, "nurture[d] the traditions and the way of life for the Indian world. This type of environment would allow the child to remain aware of his cultural heritage and identity." She also outlined the NACPC's services, which included providing clothing, furniture, transportation, legal assistance, even attending court with parents, simply to make sure they were given every opportunity to keep their children in an Indigenous home. And they did this all voluntarily. Though they were supported by other Indigenous organizations such as her own Great Lakes Northern Stars.

⁴⁰² *Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978*, 160-161.

Mays ended her testimony by outlining five recommendations for the committee that she believed would benefit Indigenous children, community, and law:

1. The restriction of the non-Indian values be lifted and to insert Indian values for my people and our children, such as, restrictions of the Indian homes to be changed so that the Indian homes are available for Indian children; the restriction of age, because age has long been the teachers of our cultural values.⁴⁰³

This first point was very important. Elders were often seen as unfit for adopting and taking care of children. However, within Indigenous communities, the elders were the teachers of the young and the community. In other words, it was not just a person's ability to take care of a child materially, but also culturally and emotionally. She also simply wanted Indigenous values to be altered for those from the settler world—a world where indigeneity was not valuable. She also made another recommendation.

2. Change the laws that require us to be a party to the enslavement of our children and the erasers of our culture, thereby making our people become a copartner of destroying our rights as Indian parents. Keep in mind the standards that were set were made for non-Indians.

Since the early republic, Indigenous communities were divided, if not destroyed, due to the so-called civilizing mission of settlers. Mays was concerned with maintaining indigeneity, and that could not be maintained with children being placed in non-Indigenous homes without Indigenous input. She also made sure to mention that the foster care system was designed for settlers, not Indigenous people. Her third recommendation centered on providing training for social workers, teaching them about Indigenous culture.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

3. In-service training for social workers to promote a better understanding of the uniqueness of my people and the involvement of my people who you can call paraprofessionals, whose input will be the bridge of understanding of our culture and the society of today.⁴⁰⁴

This point was simply designed to include Indigenous community members who had more intimate knowledge about the Indigenous community. In order for non-Indigenous professionals to more adequately understand issues that impacted the Indigenous community, it would be helpful to include Indigenous voices to facilitate their cultural understanding. Mays's fourth recommendation was based on her belief that social agencies needed to be investigated for, if not illegal activities, at the very least questionable ethical practices:

4. If possible an investigation of agencies who deal with the Indian adoptions and make them accountable for the methods they use for transporting Indian children across the State lines and the Canadian borders. Your terms are called kidnapping when you use them.⁴⁰⁵

Mays's final point was to be put on any mailing list that involved the Indian Child Welfare hearings more generally.

Esther Mays's attendance at these hearings was not in vain. On November 8, 1978, at the ninety-fifth Congress, second session, President Jimmy Carter signed into law Public Law 95-608, or the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

Mays continued her working within Detroit's Indigenous community. She became quite a respected elder in the community. Even the State of Michigan recognized her efforts. On June

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

26, 1980, Republican Governor William Milliken appointed Mays the Detroit representative for the Michigan Commission of Indian Affairs. The committee met about five times a year, Her duties varied. For example, she participated on the corrections committee, which helped families visit relatives in Michigan prisons. Unfortunately, throughout this time, she became ill, and had difficulties fulfilling her duties on the committee.

June 26, 1980

Secretary of State ordered to issue

Commission to Esther M. Mays

Detroit

County of Wayne as mb. Mich

Commission on Indian Affairs

Term begins June 26 1980

Term expires Aug 15 1982

Confirmed by Senate _____ 19____

Remarks: (P.A. 595 of 1979)

Figure 11. Esther Mays' tenure as a member of the Michigan Commission of Indian Affairs. Image courtesy of the Library of Michigan, Lansing, MI

Though Mays became ill, she never stopped working on behalf of the Indigenous community—using her home to let children play and stay, and to allow meetings to occur. Shortly before her death, Sandra recalled how much Esther liked to joke:

She and I did become good friends and really respectful. She teased me and I would tease her back. I remember at one point she learned that I was starting to sew [regalia]. She told me she wanted me to make something for her. I said, “oh, I’m not really good, but what

do you want me to make?” She said, “I want you to make my death dress.” I replied, “What do you mean?” Esther stated, “what I’m gonna be buried in.” This conversation just kinda freaked me out because I thought it was a huge honor to be asked something like that, but I knew I wasn’t a good enough seamstress to do anything like that, plus I didn’t know Ojibwa style clothing well enough. Needless to say, I never did make that for her.... I just kinda put it off with jokingly with “oh, you’re too mean to die.”⁴⁰⁶

Sandra expressed regret about not making that dress. Couched in Esther’s form of friendly banter, she ignored it. On June 29, 1984, Esther Shawboose Mays walked on, dying of congested heart failure. Her legacy continued through the work of her children, especially in the realm of education. Reflecting on the legacy of Detroit’s Indian Educational and Cultural Center, Judy Mays remarked, “The children are the legacy. They will always remember Indian education. It helped them gain a positive attitude toward school, because, previously, many viewed school as bad for Indians.”⁴⁰⁷

Urban Indigenous feminism can take many forms, and the aim here is not to create narrow categories about the essence of it. As Shari Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack contend, “Although Indigenous women do not share a single culture, they do have a common colonial history, and our conception of Indigenous feminism centres on the fact that the imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women’s power, status, and material circumstances.”⁴⁰⁸ The urban place is markedly different from other

⁴⁰⁶ Sandra Muse Interview with the author August 2, 2014.

⁴⁰⁷ Judy Mays Interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

⁴⁰⁸ Shari Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack, “Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues,” in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, ed. Cheryl Suzack et al. (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 3.

geopolitical places—how it shapes and is shaped by Indigenous women should be carefully analyzed.⁴⁰⁹ We should be careful not to myopically define Indigenous feminism. Native peoples live different realities, and come from different communities with often different expectations. I also want to make it clear that Urban Indigenous feminism should not yield to the constraints of the modern/traditional binary that limits the possibilities and potential of Indigenous feminism. Indigenous women in Detroit did not have much time to focus on questions of authenticity.

Urban indigenous feminism was transferred from the elders to the younger women. This transgenerational, passing of the torch so-to-speak, was a key component of urban Indigenous feminism. Sandra recalled,

There was this one time, I think, when I was still in high school and I was writing for that *Indian Talk* and covering Detroit area stuff. Esther invited me to come over to her house and she said that her and Bernice [Appleton] were gonna be having some people over and I think that's when they were getting [the Native American Child Protection Council]. So I went over there and Esther was over there, and Esther was pretty poor, we all were pretty poor, her and Bernice had the good seats—dining room chairs. They had a chair for me to sit on, but most of the bottom of the chair was gone. So it was like I was sitting on a circle, outside but a big hole in the middle. And I thought this is terrible! I'd rather sit on the floor. But I thought, either these older ladies are testing me to see what kinda

⁴⁰⁹ Mishuana Goeman, “Notes Toward a Native Feminism’s Spatial Practice,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 169–187. See also Shari M. Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009). There is plenty of room to explore how the urban environment shapes Indigenous women’s activism. The urban here could mean a host of things, including: where Indigenous women lived, the structural forces that allowed them to work in certain jobs and not others, how their bodies are rendered in/visible in certain spaces based upon phenotype and perception.

person I am or they're just having some fun. And I sat through a two-hour meeting—just a casual thing in Esther's living room, the kids and grandkids were in and out of the house. Esther didn't really know me at that point.... All that time I sat, moving from cheek-to-cheek, sitting on that chair.⁴¹⁰

Racialization and Indigeneity in during this time was also a difficult thing to navigate. Yet, Detroit's Indigenous community persisted in making a place for themselves in this Black city, marked by white flight, controlled by a Black political machine.

Beyond Black and White: Race and Gender in Detroit

The experiences of Indigenous women varied in Detroit. And they wrote about their feeling invisible as a cultural/racial group. In the *Native Sun Newsletter* (first issued in 1972), the news organ for the North American Indian Association, Debra D.M. Jacquez, an Apache teen living in Detroit, wrote a poem expressing the feeling of invisibility in a racialized space, dominated by Black-White binary. Titled, "Indian and Proud, Jacquez wrote,

I am accepted into no-one's society.

Or either everyone's society.

To some whites and some blacks,

I'm either white or a wild savage Indian

I want to escape the poverty and disease on a reservation,

But I don't want to live by the white man's rules.

I am from a proud people.

I wish to have knowledge and values accepted as good as the next man's.

⁴¹⁰ Judy Mays interview with author, June 25, 2014.

I am not white nor am I black, I am an Indian and proud.⁴¹¹

The poem illustrates the challenges of being an Indigenous person in postwar Detroit. But it also hints at the clearly defined racial lines that existed in Detroit. While Detroit scholars have produced a significant amount of critical work on Detroit, hardly any move beyond the Black-White binary. Blacks viewed them as either white (or non-Black); they illustrated no critical understanding of how Indigenous peoples were racialized. The white community viewed them as relics of the past, or as “wild savage Indian[s].” But the yearning of Jacquez was likely the same as most Indigenous people living under the settler gaze and under the (Black) gaze of invisibility: to simply be accepted. Although Jacquez was a teenager, and she made important points, her last line also illustrates a paradox in how racialization worked in Detroit: “I am not white nor am I black, I am an Indian and proud.” Yet, what that last line illustrates and is indicative of race in Detroit is that there were plenty of mixed ancestry Indigenous people, including Afro-Natives, White-Natives, and those with dual Indigenous ancestry (and if one went carefully down the line, all three of these combinations might exist in one person’s lineage). Thus, Detroit presents for us an interesting entry point into the contours of racialization and belonging in a postwar city, working under the Black-White and Indigenous-Settler operational gaze.

Although there was anti-Black sentiment among the Indigenous community, there was little documentation about where it came from. Anthropologist Beatrice Bigony, observed that there was strong anti-Black racism among the Indigenous community. Bigony wrote that some of the Indigenous community learned their “prejudices from whites” and others stated “they had heard ‘all about the blacks’ from others even before coming to Detroit.” With the inception of the anti-poverty programs, anti-Black racism increased. Many Indigenous people refused to

⁴¹¹ *North American Indian Association News Letter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, March 1973.

participate in the poverty programs because Blacks held the administrative positions, and “have dominated all minority group decision making, often to the complete exclusion of all other minority groups.”⁴¹² Scholars of Afro-Indigenous history have documented Black-Indigenous relations quite well in the Southeast and in Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma). Black enslavement and Indian removal have dominated these conversations. Of course the period of enslavement and Indian removal largely occurred in the formative of the U.S. nation-state (18th and 19th centuries). Scholars have theorized the nature of colonialism in the U.S., and how that created a hierarchy of race in the U.S. But none have adequately discussed race relations among Blacks and Indigenous people in a postwar city.

For example, in a May 1977 issue of *The Native Sun* newsletter, Sandra Gregory, a Black woman, wrote to the newsletter, expressing her admiration for the Indigenous community. She also expressed her concern for what she interpreted as a slight that occurred against her when she attended the Indian Princess dance on April 23. Titled, “An Open Letter to the Community,” Gregory began with a positive tone. “First of all I truly love your newsletter,” she wrote, and, “if it wasn’t for the newsletter I would probably be lost on information regarding the Native American community of Detroit.”⁴¹³ Second, she desired to know if there was a place of entertainment for the Indigenous community. The final question was the most interesting. “I would like to know why Native Americans aren’t as close to the black community as they should be? Are we economically lower than Native Americans? Are we dirt to them (Native Americans) remember the Europeans destroyed the equalizing basis toward Native Americans as well as

⁴¹² Beatrice A. Bigony, “Native Americans in Detroit,” in *Immigrants and Migrants; The Detroit Ethnic Experience*, Ethnic Studies Reader (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 364.

⁴¹³ *Native Sun News Letter*, Vol. 7, No. 5, May 1977.

Afro-Americans.”⁴¹⁴ After asking these questions, Gregory mentioned a particular event at the little princess dance where she felt Indigenous people discriminated against her. “I was appalled to find out how the Native Americans who came thought I was part of the ‘brown furniture.’ They actually treated me as though I was dirt.” Perplexed and angered, she asked, “What have I done to your people?” Seemingly seeking to appeal to shame, she wrote, “The whites treated me with more respect than the Native Americans.” Interestingly, enough, Gregory recited a common story in the Black American community regarding Black and Indigenous historical relations, and their familial blood relations:

“In my family because they are originally from the South, were close to the Indians as a matter of fact, there is more Indian in our family than all of the whites claiming their so called ¼ blood that was that at the April 23rd Princess Dance.”

She ended her commentary and critical stance by stating that she would once more attend a Indigenous community event on June 4th and 5th, and hoped that “people will see me and not think I’m an alien from outer space.”⁴¹⁵

There is much to unpack in this letter. Gregory’s first comments are important. It does illustrate that the Indigenous community newspaper reached a broader audience than themselves and non-Indigenous. It is significant that Black folks were reading the newsletter because it helps scholars get a better picture of race relations in Detroit beyond the Black-White Binary. The final question of why Indigenous people were not more politically connected to the Black community is fascinating. To begin with, on what basis would they be connected? Gregory apparently brought with her the history of Black-Native relations in the South, and tried to implant them in

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

Detroit. The southern U.S. relationships were largely—though not exclusively—forged under enslavement and removal. The relationship was complicated, as scholars have shown.⁴¹⁶ There was little information about Black-Indigenous relations in Detroit with which Gregory could have drawn from. And she did not apparently consider why the Black community was not connected with the Indigenous community, or at least try and make political alliances between the groups. However, her point gestures towards the parallel lives of the Black and Indigenous community in Detroit, both how they got there (or had been there) and how they were treated in the country’s racial hierarchy.

Gregory then appealed to the common “enemy” for both Blacks and Indigenous people by suggesting that Europeans had done the Indigenous community wrong; not Blacks. However, an appeal on this basis would surely fall on deaf Indigenous ears given the fact that the postwar Black political power largely ignored Indigenous people.⁴¹⁷ Although historically Blacks and Indigenous people had been treated as oppressed groups, this did not mean that they were treated the same. At the Little Princess Dance, Gregory stated that the Indigenous community treated her like dirt. She said that the whites treated her with more respect.

⁴¹⁶ See, Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005) and *The House on Diamond Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 2010). See most recently, Sharon P. Holland and Tiya Miles, “Afro-Native Realities,” in *The World of Indigenous North America*, ed. Robert Warrior (New York: Routledge, 2015), 524–548. Holland and Miles note, “Pain and loss. Slavery and land. These terms map onto and move through one another as perhaps the primary concepts in Afro-Native studies” (529).

⁴¹⁷ Bigony notes that there was one case in which Indians were fired from a federally-funded construction job because blacks complained that “minority peoples were presented on the construction crew.” As a result, Blacks were hired to replace the Indians. When the case was taken to court, the judge ruled that Native Americans were a minority and they were reinstated in their jobs, 354.

Clearly angered, Gregory made claim to indigeneity by questioning the Indigenous identity of those who had ¼ Indian blood, and, by a matter of skin color, appeared white. History does not reveal to us how those who were ¼ Indian blood and looked “white” treated Gregory. But it does bring up an issue of claims to indigeneity and skin color privilege. While Gregory could have been more nuanced in her approach to making her anger known, her point might hold. In a country founded on white supremacy and colonialism, a place where there is a hierarchy of race, and white is at the top and all others are at the bottom, whiteness is the gold standard, the thing to be closely aligned with, not Blackness. Unfortunately, there was little room for a discussion of race within a country that is foundationally built on a Black-White binary. White Indians, while being Indian and accepted as such by the Detroit Indigenous community surely did not desire to be Black, for that is the lowest of lows. Perhaps one good take away is that Gregory said she would come back to an event in June, and hoped not to be treated like an “alien,” though, to be fair, she might have been an if not an alien at least strange if she was a person who looked Black but did not identify as Native. The editor at the time, Leona Nelson opened it up to the community, “Do YOU have an answer for Ms. Gregory?” And all letters had to be signed or they would not be published.

Two Indigenous people responded. Their responses differed, reflecting the very different perspectives existing within the Indigenous community. The first was Lincoln Sherwood, who identified himself as a Neebache Indian. He illustrated sympathy for Ms. Gregory and anger at his own community. After writing that Ms. Gregory was probably correct, he wrote further, “AS a Native American myself, I have noticed how my people are very prejudiced against blacks, even though they should be considered closer to the Indian community than whites.” Building on the common theme of whites as the enemy, similar to Ms. Gregory, Sherwood continued, “we all

know they (Whites) were instrumental in separating our people into different states and even into Canada.” Clearly recognizing how colonialism had created borders that separated tribal communities and families, Sherwood understood that Blacks did not do this. He continued, “So may in the 29th Century maybe even in the 1970s we—Native Americans’ should realize what the white man has done to us, more so than the blacks. We (Native Americans) have ‘stereotyped’ them (blacks) too much. Let’s be considerate to them too, and stop looking at the blacks as though they are brown furniture.” Sherwood recognized how the Indigenous community at large viewed Black Americans.

Of course there is no way to know how pervasive anti-Black views were, but it is interesting that he pointed it out. Others disagreed with Sherwood. Arlene Shampine, an editor for the *Native Sun*, responded to Mr. Sherwood directly. She began her letter with sympathy. “I can sympathize with Ms. Gregory and you to a point,” wrote Shampine. “However, I have had the experience of being ‘furniture’ also. Shampine wrote of how Blacks fell into the colonial discourses of disappearance that whites created. In fact, she quoted a local Black Detroit minister who was speaking in front of a group of students: “the black people have come a long way in the past few years, not like the American Indian, who was put on reservations and was content to allow the white government to take care of him.” She ended her brief response by stating, “I dislike stereotyping in any form or from any group, be it white, black, or whatever.”⁴¹⁸ Shampine was correct in stressing the point that Blacks participated in settler colonial discourses, too. They

⁴¹⁸ *The Native Sun*, Vol. 7, No. 7, July 1977.

simply adopted the narrative that Native Americans were defeated and lived on impoverished reservations, a statement made by Malcolm X over a decade earlier.⁴¹⁹

The post-rebellion Black political machine led by Coleman Young ignored the Indigenous community. Shampine did not address the existence of anti-Black sentiment among Detroit's Indigenous community in any significant way. Instead, she simply stated (and correctly) that Blacks also participated in stereotyping—adopting, perhaps, the settler view of indigeneity. These competing notions of race and belonging illustrate that Indigenous people were not one community and had varying degrees of problems among them. But it also illustrates the Indigenous community's lack of access to power in Detroit, which Blacks had in general (to a certain degree). These racial encounters not only impacted adults. Indeed, they perhaps most forcefully shaped the experiences of young Indigenous people growing up in Detroit. For example, Sandra, as I mentioned earlier, was one person who dealt with the negative impacts of a city predicated on blackness and whiteness.

As a teenager, growing up in Detroit presented other challenges for Indigenous youth. For example, Sandra, a self-described “mixed-blooded” Eastern Cherokee grew up in an all Black neighborhood on the West Side of Detroit. She was one of 13 children. Her mother and father traveled from Georgia to Detroit in 1949 to work in the factories. She was told that her parents' parents told them to keep quiet about their Cherokee ancestry. However, once they

⁴¹⁹ Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 423-424. Malcolm, quoting a contemporary, wrote, “our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations.” On the surface, these words are harmless. However, they suggest that Indigenous people did not fight to protect their way of life and that they were either killed off or very few existed. Malcolm's stance, unfortunately, is typical of many Black Americans.

reached the Motor City, they asserted their Cherokee identity. After three unsuccessful attempts to land a job, he finally received one. He became a claims adjustor.⁴²⁰

As a youth, Sandra noticed that the demographics of her neighborhood rapidly changing. She grew up on the West side of the city, on Plymouth and Wyoming. “When I was a small kid everybody around me was white, for the most part,” she said. By the time she got to junior high school, she said her neighborhood transformed to an all white neighborhood. Though MacKenzie High School was the neighborhood high school, her and the other students in the neighborhood were forced to attend Cody High School on the other side of town, by which they had to take a city bus. Coupled with the change in neighborhood demographics, from white to Black, were the phenomenon of forced busing, to integrate schools across to Detroit and white flight to the suburbs. By high school, all of her friends were Black youth from the neighborhood. She endured a complicated relationship with the Black folks in her neighborhood.

Reflecting back on her growing up in a place structured on the Black-White racial binary, she stated, “it was weird for me because, here I am, obviously not Black, but definitely not white.”⁴²¹ Yet, she also recalled that the white youth wanted nothing to do with her. White students even called her “nigger lover” at school because she had Black friends. She was not a passive victim of white racism. She recalled an incident where a white girl, a cheerleader, continued harassing her younger sister. The cheerleader said cruel things. She called her sister a “squaw.” Fed up with the racist/sexist comment, after class, Sandra punched the white girl in the nose. The everyday forms of colonial violence in schools had an impact on Sandra and likely others, including having to carry a knife all throughout junior and high school because “you

⁴²⁰ Sandra Muse interview with the author, August 2, 2014.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

never knew who wanted to jump you.”⁴²² Though it might be quick to point out that carrying a knife was an extreme measure, it points mostly to the severe violence of a colonial situation—on both the settler and the colonized. As radical theorist Frantz Fanon wrote, “their first confrontation was colored by violence” and “in its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives.”⁴²³ Though Sandra might not have been well acquainted with the work of Fanon as a high schooler, she did know that carrying a knife might be necessary to resist a colonial situation in the everyday. The fighting incident, though, solidified her “tough girl, tough Indian persona,” which she said, she did not know “how else I would’ve made it through high school.”⁴²⁴ She also had a complicated relationship with Black people, too.

Sandra recalled that she was very light skinned, and, as a result, Black kids in her neighborhood who did not know her would treat her automatically like a white girl. She recalled that the “Black kids in my neighborhood [who] knew me, everything was cool. But if it was a kid from a few blocks away [who] didn’t know me—they look at me and think I’m a white girl—then I could have trouble.”⁴²⁵ However, her Black friends protected her from a potentially violent confrontation with Blacks who, not knowing the history of race and colonialism in the U.S. and knowing only how skin color became the marker for a racialized identity, might have attempted to hurt her. However, there were positives for a young person growing into an urban Indigenous identity in post-rebellion Detroit. For example, her tough girl, “Indian persona” was also codified in her interactions with Black men. “I remember this Black guy who rode a

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2, 3.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Sandra Muse Interview with the author, August 2, 2014.

motorcycle, he was in a gang, but he was nice to my sister and I. He was one of those guys in high school that everyone was terrified of. He would see us in the hallway, come up to us at our locker, stroll over, and give us a kiss on the cheek. He called my sister and I his “Pocahontas Sweethearts. His being nice to us terrified the white kids.”⁴²⁶ The interaction with this young Black male was borderline sexist and racist, but it served a practical point for Sandra: protection from the white students whom she had to watch out for, often.

Living within a settler regime city where only Black and white are understood to be the major categories of racialization, young people like Muse developed an Urban Indigenous identity that was unique from both Blacks and whites; she called this her “super Indian persona.” A part of this persona was walking around with a uniquely Indigenous aesthetic, typical of the 1970s. She wore braids, beads. She wore moccasins. She even wore a bone-choker necklace. Though there were challenges to growing up in a settler regime, Indigenous people, especially youth, were resilient, and found ways to develop a uniquely urban Indigenous identity. Their identity, though uniquely Indigenous, was wedged within both Black culture (aesthetic, language, and music) and colonial and white supremacist structures of race.

Other Indigenous people, especially mixed Black-Indigenous persons, also held complicated beliefs about Black-Indigenous persons. It is not surprising. After all, they embodied and experienced racism on two sides. On the one hand, other Detroit Indians called them Lahunjee (a derogatory term for Black people, on par with the word nigger); on the other hand, Black folks either called them Pocahontas (in both a derogatory and playful manner). However, Black-Indigenous mixed persons did not recall their experiences with Blacks as negative. “I think it was more ignorance,” said Tracy Mays a Black-Saginaw Chippewa Indian.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

A part of her excusing Black ignorance was the fact that Detroit Public Schools did not teach history, “Even when I brought Ma [Esther Mays] to peak when we had Indian day in middle school they was asking do you have a horse? Do you live in a teepee? I don’t think it was hatred from the Black community. It was just ignorance.” Tracy also understood the political context in which Black Americans found themselves within the post-rebellion era: “they were struggling with their own rights. They had high drop out rates too. Comparatively speaking, we weren’t even on the graph.”⁴²⁷

What we can extrapolate from this brief example is that Indigenous people and Blacks had different views of one another, and neither group adequately understood the simultaneous processes of racialization that led to how each group was racialized—separately. On the one hand, it illustrates how U.S. hegemony and racialization works. Fundamentally, the country was founded on Black enslavement and Indigenous dispossession.⁴²⁸ As such, whiteness became the gold standard for everyone else, both as a thing to strive for and, later, during the social protests of the 1960s and 1970s, something to challenge, even despise. But in post-rebellion Detroit, political power—though not necessarily economic empowerment—laid in the hands of the Black community. They owned the discourse and the political machine. Though not intentional, they did not make room for *all* minorities, and continued supporting the idea of Indian invisibility in how Native people actually lived. Indians were, on the other hand, were likely led to believe that Blacks looked out for themselves and therefore Indians did not want to align closely with them because the issues were not the same.

Conclusion: Urban Indigenous Feminism

⁴²⁷ Tracy interview with author, June 26, 2014.

⁴²⁸ Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1710–1791.

Indigenous women like Mays cannot easily be identified by the broader White feminist movements of the time; nor can they be myopically placed within the emerging work of Indigenous feminism which, at present, suffers from two shortcomings. First, earlier iterations of Indigenous feminism, in their attempt to critically understand the role of Indigenous women in precolonial societies juxtaposed to the western feminism, utilized a nationalistic approach to explain Indigenous women's experiences. Using nationalism as a framework allowed some to ignore the patriarchy that actually exists in Indigenous communities, even as it may be a result of colonialism. Patriarchy exists, and we should acknowledge it. Second, the scholarship has ignores cities, and Indigenous women's role in those places. A city is different from a reservation or rural place because that should be acknowledged, especially in postwar U.S. cities.

Urban Indigenous feminism exists within how Indigenous women actually lived—not how we might imagine them to be. For these Detroit women, there was no contradiction between working within the home and the community. While it is difficult to illustrate the direct impact that Black political activism had on Detroit's Indigenous community, especially women, they did not live in a vacuum, and surely became aware of the Black political organizing power of the Black community. Indeed, Judy Mays mentioned that she participated briefly with groups like DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Movement), one of the city's most infamous radical groups that emerged out of the factories of Dodge.⁴²⁹ In other words, Urban Indigenous feminism, was not simply Native women doing work; they were influenced by the actual happenings unique to the Black (and workers more generally) material conditions in the city. These experiences, thus, also shaped the political perspectives of Indigenous women, and the Indigenous community at large. While Indigenous male sexism and larger economic forces impacted their ability to do certain

⁴²⁹ Judy Mays Interview with the Author, June 25, 2014. See Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit I Do Mind Dying*, 35-41 for a brief explanation of DRUM.

types of jobs, they believed working for the larger community was paramount for their existence. Mays—and others—were not only shaped by Detroit, but also came to redefine it on their own terms, with the intention of making Detroit a place conducive to the needs of Indigenous Peoples existing in a modern, swiftly changing city around them.

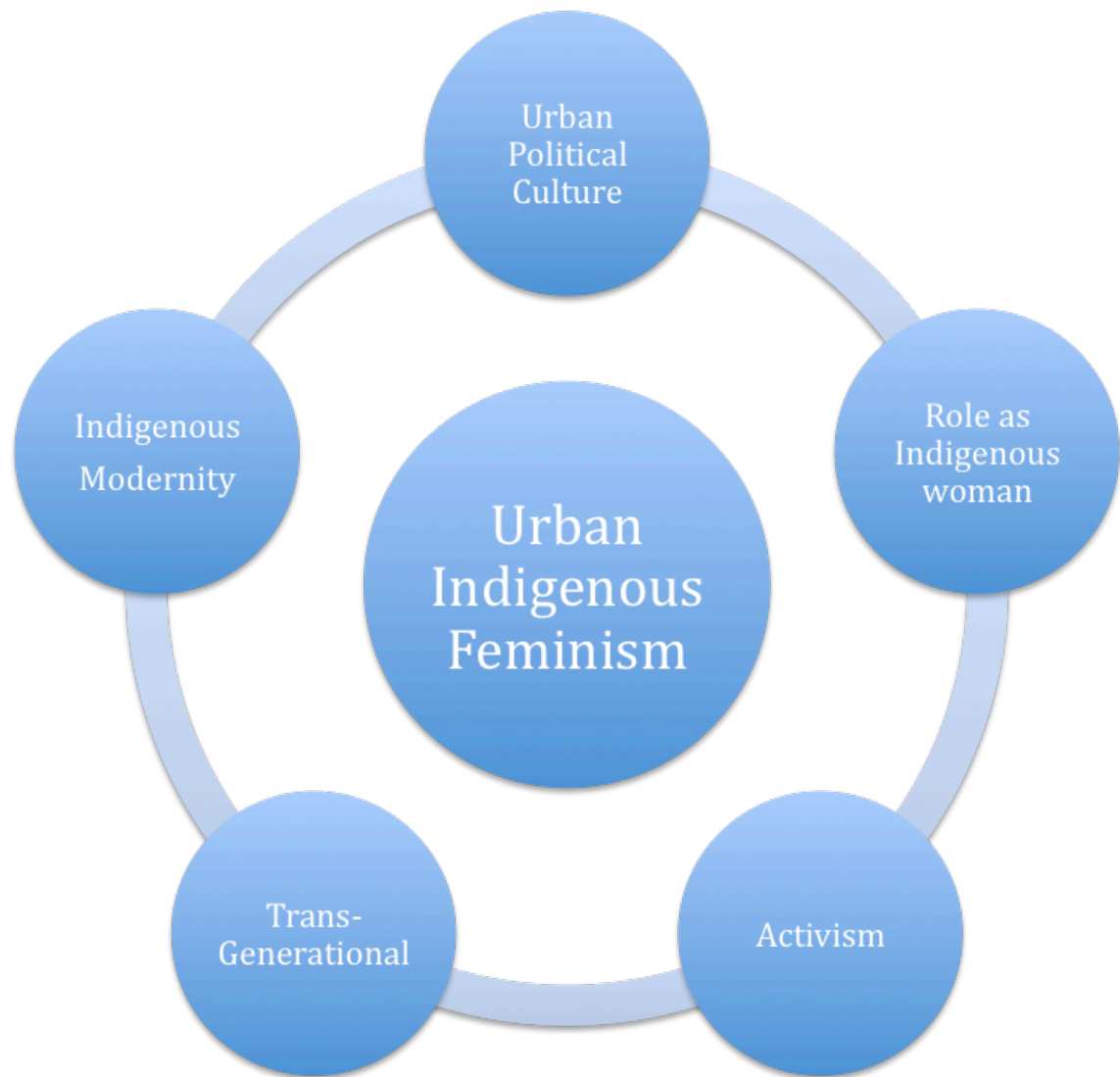


Figure 12. I use this graph to illustrate the evolving nature of urban Indigenous feminism, and the various components that define it. Key, here, though, is the urban political context, in this case, Detroit.

Indigenous feminism, as a framework, provided a new framework for understanding settler definitions of feminism and for contesting definitions imposed on Native people by outsiders. In the previous three chapters, a variety of actors deployed indigeneity, from elite

white men to Indigenous men. Finally, in the postwar period, Indigenous women were able to place their understanding of indigeneity into the public sphere, and it was through their experiences and activism that we can better understand a new meaning of indigeneity in the postwar period. By the end of the 1980s, Indigenous women's work in cultural and educational institutions, were the things that changed how we have come to view indigeneity in postwar Detroit.

Judy Mays continued working with the Detroit Indian Educational and Cultural Center throughout the 1980s. She did not stop trying to fulfill the dream of her mother: opening a full time school for Native youth. Finally, in September 1994, after years of toil, Judy helped reclaim indigeneity by inserting the most important manifestation of it in modern Detroit: Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, the nation's third ever public school with a curriculum. Finally, after nearly a century of Native people fighting both the cultural imaginings of elite white men, and then the Black political machine becoming, perhaps incidentally, the new standard of indigeneity in the city, they were able to take control of indigeneity in the Motor City.

Conclusion: Settler Colonial Cities and the End of Indigeneity in Detroit?

I will conclude the dissertation in two ways. First, I want to highlight, very briefly, the idea of a settler colonial city. Second, I will end by discussing the formation of Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, and hint at a few students' brief experience at the school.

Generally, settler colonialism describes the process of indigenous land dispossession through biological and military warfare; it often requires later attempts of settlers to assimilate the indigenous population. More important, settler colonialism is about placing a foreign population on indigenous land—and them staying there. Two conceptual arguments will help unpack an understanding of urban spaces as settler colonial spaces. I will begin with theorist Patrick Wolfe.

Patrick Wolfe argues that settler societies create a regime of difference in which the settler population creates a racial hierarchy in order to exploit the indigenous people and the enslaved people. This is what happened in the U.S. By dispossessing indigenous people and enslaving Africans, white settlers created whiteness through property. This is what legal scholar Cheryl Harris has aptly called whiteness as property. Harris writes that, “the origins of whiteness as property lie in the parallel systems of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights.”⁴³⁰ Harris creates a scenario in which we must understand three things, which include Indigenous dispossession, Black subordination, and whiteness becoming tied to both dispossession and enslavement and as the epitome of property. However, we must remember that “Different racial regimes encode and reproduce,” argues Wolfe, “the unequal relationships into which Europeans coerced the populations concerned.” He further contends that Blacks and Natives in the U.S.

⁴³⁰ Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1714.

“have been racialized in opposing ways that reflect their antithetical roles in the formation of US society.”⁴³¹ Regimes of racial difference are also historically and contextually produced. U.S. Settler colonialism was not simply about the expropriation of land from indigenous people and controlling them, it was also concerned with creating what Wolfe has called a ‘regime of difference’ in order to create and maintain complete domination over both bodies and land. Thus, the particularities of Black and Native histories should not obscure the fact that they both suffered under a settler colonial society, predicated upon structuring a ‘regime of difference.’⁴³²

In addition to Wolfe, Chickasaw theorist Jodi Byrd has suggested that the settler, the native, and the arrivant (read: settlers occupying cities in this case) should each acknowledge their own positions in relation to the U.S. settler nation. In doing this, we can “reconceptualize space and history to make visible what imperialism and its resultant settler colonialism and diasporas have sought to obscure.”⁴³³ In short, by critically understanding ourselves within a ‘regime of difference,’ in relation to U.S. Empire, and keeping in mind that urban areas, too, are settler colonial spaces, this can help us critically engage how different groups are racialized in cities, and also to push us further—at least in urban history—to reconceptualize Native peoples’ relationship to cities.

What is a settler colonial city? In *Urbanizing Frontiers*, historian Penelope Edmonds writes that, historically,

The settler-colonial city was a site in which the appropriation of Indigenous land was

⁴³¹ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” Journal of Genocide Research Vol. 8. No. 4, (December 2006), 387.

⁴³² Kyle T. Mays, “Transnational Progressivism: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Universal Races Congress of 1911” *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 25, No. 3, 2013.

⁴³³ Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxx.

coupled with aggressive allotment and property speculation, a ssite in which property relations were constructed quickly through rhetorical celebrations of making a white, civilized space.⁴³⁴

This dissertation uses the term settler colonial city to indicate indigenous dispossession, indigenous erasure, and indigenous resistance within a local place that became a city. Edmonds further contends that settler colonial cities “ were vital to settler colonialism’s ongoing project of reterritorialization and the formation of modern settler colonial-states.”⁴³⁵ Edmonds’ thoughts about cities as integral to the formation of modern settler-nation-states is important, and Detroit is no exception, for it would later become the “arsenal of democracy,” a beacon upon a hill, so to speak, of settler modernity.

Detroit is the epitome of a settler colonial city. In *Postcolonialism and the City* (1996) Jane Jacobs argues that cities are a prime place for understanding imperialism. “It was in...cities that the spatial order of imperial imaginings was rapidly and deftly realised. And it was through these cities that the resources of colonised lands were harnessed and reconnected to cities in imperial heartlands.”⁴³⁶ If Detroit is understood as a colonized place today (with the state takeover that ignores citizen rights and voices), as a place where imperialism’s colonial gaze remains in museums and other places, the process began long ago. Settler colonial cities can be identified in at least four ways. First, they are places whose origins are claimed and occupied by (white) settlers. Detroit began as sites of trade, cultural exchange, and political diplomacy; by the

⁴³⁴ Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 12.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴³⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 4.

1836, with Michigan's move towards statehood, it was quickly becoming overrun with white settlers. It was not enough to occupy the land. For, at the turn of the 20th century, these same white settlers had to justify their own modernity—and they did this through the creation of local histories.

The creation of a local history rooted in white male “origin myths” is the second identifiable characteristic. Related to this origins myth are the celebration of indigenous imagery and the memorializing of indigenous peoples (and their histories) through pageantry. Indeed as Jane Jacobs argues, “Colonial constructs not only belong to a past that is being worked against in the present, but also to a past that is being nostalgically reworked and inventively adapted in the present.”⁴³⁷

The third characteristic is that these colonial spaces are marked by invisibility. It is not that people do not live on these lands; but the indigenous people are not acknowledged in the present. They—mostly Indigenous men—are memorialized for their valor. Men like Pontiac were used to showcase the construction of gender and racial hierarchies in late 19th early 20th century Detroit. The fourth characteristic, or perhaps process, is the current condition of these cities. Although other cities with large minority populations across the U.S. exist, they are colonized spaces. They are colonized in the sense that the land is not owned by the people, the citizens generally have no “real” democratic rights in these places, and suffer from poverty and segregation. Critical urban geographer David Harvey writes, “from their very inception, cities have arisen through the geographical and social concentration of a surplus product.” He further contends, “urbanization has always been... a class phenomenon” in which “control over the use

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 15.

of surplus typically lies in the hands of a few.”⁴³⁸ Thus, Detroit citizens of today, who are majority Black, do not control the resources of their community, which is placed in the hand of the State and individual venture capitalists like Dan Gilbert.

In March 1991, the Detroit Public Schools board elected Dr. Deborah McGriff, the first Black female superintendent of the school district.⁴³⁹ One of Dr. McGriff’s major accomplishments was to empower local schools, thus decentralizing the district from the school board. She created the “Design for Excellence” initiative, which allowed for more authority over curriculum and other components of schooling. Backed by Federal funds under President Bill Clinton’s Administration, emerged the African Centered Male Academies. According to longtime Detroit educator Jeffrey Robinson and now principal of the Paul Robeson-Malcolm X Academy (formerly just the Malcolm X Academy), “the main purpose of exploring the concepts of African Centered curriculum and single sex education was to address the staggering statistics of young Black males. Under the terms of Empowerment the academies would be able to adopt special curricula and initiate programs specifically designed for inner city Black males.”⁴⁴⁰ The Male Academy Task Force met in March of 1990, which resulted in a report on the state of Black males in Detroit. This report, along with community activism and persistence (especially from Black mothers), led to the creation of the Malcolm X Academy.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York and London: Verso, 2012), 5.

⁴³⁹ Jeffery Robinson, “The Detroit Public School System, 1980-2000,” in “The African Centered School Movement and the Detroit Public School System” (Doctoral Dissertation, East Lansing, MI, Michigan State University, 2008), pp: 64-91.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁴¹ Clifford Watson and Geneva Smitherman, *Educating African American Males: Detroit’s Malcolm X Academy Solution* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1996), 35-46.

African-centered education, also called Afrocentric education, is rooted in a long history of work done by Black scholars such as Carter G. Woodson, Anna Julia Cooper, and W.E.B. Du Bois, who attempted to disrupt the white supremacist idea that people of African descent were a people without history, brought into “civilization” with their enslavement. The aforementioned scholars challenged these ideas, by showing those moments in U.S. history where Black folks were central actors in all of the major shifts, for example, during the Civil War and Reconstruction. More importantly, they began the process of making Black people the subjects of historical inquiry, and not the objects. Often times they began before the era of enslavement, pointing to the people that they had a long history prior to European capitalist greed.

According to Geneva Smitherman and Clifford Watson, Afrocentric education “approaches knowledge from the perspective of Africa as the origin of human civilization and the descendants of Africans as subjects, rather than objects of history and scientific observation.”⁴⁴² I highlight the importance of Afrocentric education and its development in Detroit, to further explain, in part, the political and social conditions which gave Judy Mays, the founding principal of Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, the almost seamless ability to advocate for a school and make it happen. Though, it must be remembered that Indigenous education in Detroit had long been on the scene, *before* the Afrocentric movement occurred.

Medicine Bear American Indian Academy

Each morning, before the school day began, students at Medicine Bear American Indian Academy would do a pledge of allegiance. This pledge of allegiance, however, was not a blind allegiance to the symbolic representation of U.S. colonialism—the American flag. It was a pledge to themselves, to the community. The pledge was called the Indian Pledge of Allegiance:

⁴⁴² Ibid., 55.

- I:** I will always respect myself and others
- N:** Never fight or call others names
- D:** Don't do drugs
- I:** Improve in School
- A:** Always respect parents and teachers
- N:** Never be a drop-out

The Indian pledge of allegiance fit the particular circumstances that students found themselves in—post 1980s Detroit, which was a particularly challenging time to be a young person growing up in the Motor City. But it was not just the Indigenous pledge of allegiance that was important; it was the space of hope and healing, designed for the postmodern Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) student, who would go on to hopefully be the future leaders in the Motor City. Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, the vision of an Indigenous mother, Esther Mays, was realized under her daughter in 1994.



Figure 13. Pictured here is my aunt, Judy Mays at the podium and her sister, Linda Lindsay, holding the bear, circa September 1994. Image courtesy of Tracy Mays.

On June 30, 1994, the Detroit Public Schools opened up applications for enrollment. And, in September 1994, the Medicine Bear American Indian Academy opened its doors at the Historic Fort Wayne, the former military post named after General “Mad” Anthony Wayne, who played a conspicuous role in the takeover of Fort Detroit from the British in 1796. Kwame Kenyatta, a staunch Black Nationalist and Detroit Public Schools school board member and city councilman, was a major supporter. MBAIA was formed within the context of the 1980s Afrocentric, culturally relevant educational school movement in Detroit.⁴⁴³ During the initial

⁴⁴³ For a detailed account of the African-centered educational movement in Detroit see Jeffery Robinson, “The African Centered School Movement and the Detroit Public School System” (Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2008). Specifically see chapter five, 95-129.

conversations about Medicine Bear, Judy Mays recalled how supportive Kenyatta was of the school. “He liked the idea of having a Native American school in Detroit. And he fought hard for us to be able to get it. So I credit him as being the one that got Medicine Bear opened as a Detroit Public School.”⁴⁴⁴

The name Medicine Bear came to Judy and others while planning to present to the school board. According to Judy, it was quite a spiritual moment:

We were sitting around talking about what we were gonna name it. Me and Linda, and Edith Young were there. We were sitting around thinking about what the name would be. We came up with bear something. And then, sitting, there, I said, “Medicine Bear.” From the educational experiences that Natives had from the past, I wanted to change that perspective around. And in order to do that we needed healing. And that’s why the name Medicine Bear, and for the bear, bear clan. But it was a weird spiritual thing from where that name came from. You know how they say everything goes in a circle, and we were all in a circle and then that name came; it was just like magic.⁴⁴⁵

Medicine Bear was open to all students in Detroit. Judy and the design team opened their doors with students from grades kindergarten through third, with the long-term goal of expanding into grades K-12. Judy wanted to go to K-12 so that the whole schooling experience of students, especially Indigenous students, was rooted in an Indigenous perspective, and so that their cultures could be celebrated and sustained. However, priority to the tune of 55% was reserved for students of Indigenous ancestry, and those who lived within a one-mile radius of the

⁴⁴⁴ Judy Mays interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

school.⁴⁴⁶ Similar to the Afrocentric educational model—what we might call an Indigenous-centric educational model—Medicine Bear centered the curriculum on the experiences of Indigenous people: “Medicine Bear American Indian Academy represents the third public school across America that has a focus on the traditions, customs, and holistic world view of the North American Indian. We must all remember the valuable lessons taught to us by this country’s first chemists, doctors, agriculturalists, negotiators, traders, fisherman, orators, veterinarians, spiritual leaders, ecologists, judges, leaders and warriors...the Native American Indian.”⁴⁴⁷ By making Indigenous persons subjects of history, Medicine Bear was able to fundamentally shift the Eurocentric and often narrowminded-ness of Black education teaching that did not value the perspectives and lived realities of Indigenous students.

The vision of Medicine Bear was to educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. They took this seriously. “Through a holistic world view, the students will learn American Indian cultural values, beliefs, oral traditions, languages and life patterns.”⁴⁴⁸ And students learned just that. One student reflected back, “We learned a lot of Native arts and crafts. We made dream catchers—matter of fact, just the other day, I taught my cousin how to make them. I can’t believe I still remember.” Moreover, students would be equipped “with the necessary survival skills, and the ability to pass on these skills to future urban Indian society, (and also non-Indian society).” Importantly, the worldview as described by the handbook was rooted in Judy’s identity as a

⁴⁴⁶ Detroit’s Indigenous community defined Indigenous ancestry broadly, and quite differently from the definitions created by the U.S. census and tribal communities. Detroit’s Native community defines ancestry more in a traditional way: a person’s kinship network and their relationship to the community. In essence, blood quantum was not necessarily a prerequisite for entrance into the Native community.

⁴⁴⁷ Medicine Bear American Indian Handbook.

⁴⁴⁸ Medicine Bear American Indian Academy Handbook.

Saginaw Chippewa woman, mixed with African American heritage, born and raised in Detroit, and as a member of the Makwa Dodem (bear clan). Medicine Bear’s understanding of “traditional” and Indigenous were made for the postwar Detroit Indigenous reality—it was an embrace of what Scott Richard Lyons has called “Indian modernity,”⁴⁴⁹ the idea of dealing with the situation in which Indigenous peoples *actually* find themselves instead of being beholden to and *only* symbols of the past. A part of Medicine Bear’s embrace of modernity was to challenge the Black-White binary and the Indigenous-Settler binary by embracing the idea of Blackness and Indigeneity, together. Medicine Bear’s vision was to create students who were “moral, non-racist...global citizens.”⁴⁵⁰

Judy believed that parental involvement in Medicine Bear, like the Detroit Indian Educational and Cultural Center, was paramount for the school to be successful. Though the parents had the general rights of parents of any DPS child, Medicine Bear sought parental input for the Academy as a whole: “Participation in the development of educational goals and objectives for the academy.”

Reflecting on Medicine Bear, Judy recalled a story about a red chair being stuck outside of a teacher’s classroom. The red chair served as a timeout chair for misbehaving students. Judy did not like that. Judy did not want anything red to be associated with negative—red in this context representing Indigenous peoples and representations about them:

Even at Medicine Bear, I didn’t let prejudice circulate. I remember one story at Medicine Bear. The kindergarten teacher had a red chair outside of her class that she would sit the kids who needed discipline in that red chair. I made them take it away. Nothing negative

⁴⁴⁹ Lyons, “Actually Existing Indian Nations,” 305.

⁴⁵⁰ Medicine Bear American Indian Handbook.

was red here. So we had to get a new chair, a blue chair. Those are some of the things I would try to instill in them because, even though there were different races of kids who attended Medicine Bear, we had a lot of whites going there, Blacks, Natives, but we all had that Native spirit of family. We considered ourselves a family.⁴⁵¹

The family atmosphere at Medicine Bear was an integral part of the curriculum. A former student, now 25 years, a self-identified Black female, reiterated the fact that it was welcoming atmosphere for students. “It was family atmosphere,” said Wes.⁴⁵² “The atmosphere was homelike. I felt I belonged even though I was Black.”⁴⁵³ Indigenous ways of communicating and spirituality were a part of the curriculum as well. “It was a safe place. We used to have circles where we would get all the teachers and students together in one big circle. We’d talk about whatever happened to someone if there was a conflict. We’d talk about it until we resolved the issue. The students loved that.”⁴⁵⁴

At its height, MBAIA educated over 100 students for the academic year, with grades K-8th. During the earlier years, it was a success. A former student, Melissa, a Black woman with Cherokee/Creek ancestry, now in her mid-twenties, who attended the academy from the beginning enjoyed her time. Melissa’s parents sent her to Medicine Bear because of the small class sizes and because it emphasized her Indigenous heritage. Melissa’s example, as a part of the larger story of Medicine Bear, provides an important insight into the intersections of blackness and indigeneity in postwar Detroit. Melissa remarked, “My experience at Medicine

⁴⁵¹ Judy Mays interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

⁴⁵² Wes interview with the author, August 12, 2014.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Tracy Mays interview with the author, June 26, 2014.

Bear was wonderful...the thing I appreciated most was that it served as a melting pot of students from different cultures.”⁴⁵⁵

Her reflections are interesting, and suggest that she was aware of the different tribal communities that existed and the blend of Black and Indigenous cultures. Most of the students were of multiple Indigenous ancestries and/or African American and Indigenous ancestry. Though her most interesting comments were in regard to her experience as a young person of mixed heritage. Melissa enjoyed the hybrid culture, between Black culture and Indigenous culture(s) that occurred in the school. “It was a school that taught respect from mother earth to relationships with people in general,” said Melissa.⁴⁵⁶ She continued, “I was proud to attend this school because it also showed appreciation for my culture as well by celebrating black history month and showing how imperative it was to preserve traditions...Native American and African American.”⁴⁵⁷ For Melissa, these cultures intersected in the everyday interactions between students and staff, but also through the use of stories to teach lessons about life and, perhaps most importantly, to teach students to have pride in themselves, whether or Black or Indigenous (or both).

Other students such as Ashley, a Black and Ojibwe woman now in her early 30s, also had fond memories about learning a more important component of Indigenous history, perhaps even culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy, one that respected and enhanced the experiences

⁴⁵⁵ Melissa interview with the author, August 10, 2014.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.⁴⁵⁸ “I enjoyed learning about the culture and history of Native Americans, of us. It was different because I could learn about how the Indians lived back then, instead of about how they were killed off by white people. That was refreshing and important for me growing up as a Black and Indian child.”

One of the ironies of Medicine Bear was that its home was at the historic Fort Wayne. The Detroit Historical Society owned that building. The Historic Fort Wayne Coalition’s website suggests that there are at least nine ways that the space in which Fort Wayne stands was important for Native people, historically. The site was home to an Indigenous group’s burial mounds. Between 1710-1771, it was the site of a Potawatomi village, where Cadillac had invited them down to stay. Between 1842-1845, the U.S. army destroyed the burial mounds in the process of building Fort Wayne. In 1876, Archeologist Henry Gillman, an affiliate of Harvard University, excavated the remaining Fort Wayne burial mound and sent recovered items to the Peabody Museum. Between 1944 and 1945, archeologist Carl Holmquist of the Michigan Aboriginal Research Club excavated some Indian mounds at Fort Wayne. He recovered twenty-three burial and grave goods that were later donated to the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology. He left a few mounds untouched. Finally, in 1979, the Detroit Historical Museum opened a Woodland Indian Museum near the burial ground; by 1991, due to lack of funds, the museum was closed.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Teresa McCarty and Tiffany Lee, “Critical Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy and Indigenous Education Sovereignty,” *Harvard Educational Review* 84, no. 1 (April 2014): 101–124.

⁴⁵⁹ <http://www.historicfortwaynecoalition.com/NAConway.html> [Accessed March 27, 2015]. The information was compiled by James Conway, the Fort Wayne Project Manager and Historians in July 2010.

Fort Wayne held significance for its original inhabitants, and surely their ghostly presence remained. Returning to the work of Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, the Indigenous presence at Fort Wayne remained. Indeed, as they argue, “Indigenous ghosts are remarkably complex facets of the experience of colonialism and highlight the ways in which knowledge of place and past are constructed, produced, revealed, and contested.”⁴⁶⁰ Here, the presence of these Indigenous ghosts, disturbed by settlers for over two centuries, were finally able to exact some revenge on its settlers. Fort Wayne would become, so ironically, the place where Indigenous children would roam—and learn education, from an Indigenous point of view.

According to Judy, the Society would not let them use the library for the children.⁴⁶¹ They had to seek permission to do anything on the grounds. The irony here is that the Detroit Historical Society, which documented Indigenous history since the early 20th century (from a gift given by Clarence Burton, one of the original city historiographers). Now they wanted to control actual Indigenous peoples from operating within their space. They excavated the burial mounds of Indigenous people in years past, now they wanted to both allow Indigenous people in the building, but only in certain ways. In other words, the Detroit Historical Society held their own views of modernity, one that, once more, Indigenous peoples were only to be a part of—slightly.

Scholars of Detroit, especially the modern city, would do well to include indigeneity as a category of analysis. And I think there are at several areas where I can imagine significant work being done. For example, one example would be to document the experiences of Native people in the factors of Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors. To be sure, this would be quite an undertaking, and might need to rely almost primarily on oral histories, but it is something that is

⁴⁶⁰ Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, eds., *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), ix.

⁴⁶¹ Judy interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

lacking in the scholarship. A study of this nature would be a welcome contribution to labor history and race relations in the Motor City.

Another area in need of further investigation is the landscape of Detroit. Throughout this dissertation, I have hinted at the landscape and the erasure of Indigenous presences from those spaces. Yet, a little known piece of information is that early planners of the city based their conception of the space on the indigenous trails already in existence. This makes one wonder about how indigeneity, in this case, their construction of space, was used by settlers in order to modernize the city. Of course, this would require also an examination of the city's highway construction, which, as historian has shown has, destroyed Black neighborhoods like Paradise Valley, on Detroit's eastside.

In continuing the idea of space and place-making, I would think that another prospect to improve both urban history and urban Indigenous history would be to cast Detroit as a borderland. Detroit is literally a borderland—in the nation-state sense—because of its close proximity to Canada and the U.S. However, how did Indigenous people understand this border? Also, how did they embody these spaces in ways that perhaps differed from the settlers' version of this border? Though writing this dissertation, many questions remain, and I hope the reader comes away with just as both questions answered and generated, for, Indigenous Detroit, in the modern period, still remains a story that has many strands yet worth investigating.

Epilogue

On March 20, 2000, Judy Mays received a letter from the Detroit Public School's Department of Human Resources. In the letter Mays was told that her contract as principal of Medicine bear would not be renewed because of nepotism. Mays was shocked. DPS sent her this notice because she hired her sister, Tracy Mays, to run the Detroit Indian Educational and Cultural Center in another building. The irony here is that a Mays family member had always been a part of DIECC. Nepotism is a difficult charge in this case. As Cree scholar Shawn Wilson argues, "in the dominant system, nepotism generally involves the use of friends and relations in a concerted effort to keep others out." Detroit's Indigenous community was small, and Judy was perhaps the most qualified Indigenous persons to make such a decision. Wilson, continues, "In healthy Indigenous communities," he writes, "the strength of established bonds between people can be used to help uplift others." Ironically, the DPS bi-laws only outlawed nepotism among school board members.

A difficult question to grapple with is what is the deep reason for closing Medicine Bear? Nepotism is a good excuse; perhaps not the best answer. Prior to the school closing, Judy and the staff held meetings with architects and DPS to discuss moving to a new building. "The promised us a new school. We looked at property, we had meetings about what it would look like. [DPS] hired an architect. The board never went through with it. I don't know if it was money or what." Ironically, it was money.

During 1999, the Detroit Public Schools was taken over by an Emergency Financial Manager. The District did not suffer from a deficit. Speculation suggests that, DPS was one of the city's largest landowners, and venture capitalists wanted to own the land.

After contacting Detroit's Native community, on June 14, 2000, Mays and nearly 100 supporters of Medicine Bear gathered to attend a rally in front of the Detroit Public Schools Center Building on Woodward Avenue, Detroit. Mays' sister, Tracy, took the microphone. In dramatic fashion, she wrapped her hands around her two long braids, looked at the crowd, pulled the braids together, raised an orange pair of scissors, and, one by one, cut each braid. The crowd gasped in uniform. The crowd erupted with moans and wailings; people cried. After moments of despair, Tracy handed each one of her clipped braids over to her children. She then went back to the podium and said, "I want (Detroit Public Schools [Superintendent] David Adamany to know why I cut my hair." "I am in mourning," she said, "for the loss of the city's only Native American principal, because it is like a death, and it is a part of our culture to cut our hair when we are in mourning."⁴⁶²

Following the day after her contract was officially not renewed, on August 1, Judy Mays filed paper work in the Wayne County Circuit Court suing DPS, charging them with "contract, and age, sex and race discrimination."⁴⁶³ I will end here. Judy did not win her case. Tracy left the position as director of DIECC. The Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, the vision of a mother, the lifework of a daughter, the outcome of their Urban Indigenous feminism, crumbled. Medicine Bear was closed officially by the school district after the 2001-2002 school year. Reflecting back on her time at Medicine Bear, a former student stated, "I'm not Native, but what it meant for me was a really very diverse and non-discriminatory school with a very tight-knit family feel. I really needed that type of environment as a kid."

⁴⁶² Shawn Lewis, *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, June 15, 2000), sec. C.

⁴⁶³ Shawn Lewis, "Fired Academy Principal Sues," *Detroit News* (Detroit, MI, August 15, 2000), sec. D.

Being fired from Medicine Bear was heartbreaking for Judy. Indigenous education largely vanished after she was gone. However, I do not want to end on such a negative note. In fact, after talking with family, many of them have thanked me for helping recall the important work that Judy did for Indigenous children and Detroit. When I asked her what the legacy of Medicine Bear was she replied,

We were the third [public] American Indian school in the country. I think they were in Minneapolis and Milwaukee. We were the third one. It was innovative to have a school like that. And the legacy is that we made it. It was a dream of my mother's—always to have a school for Native American children in Detroit. That was a legacy fulfilled through me by opening and being a part of her dream. To have it opened for kids, that would be the legacy—see someone's dreams come to fruition. [My mom] didn't get to see Medicine Bear. That's what drove me—I was driven by that. And since I had been in Indian education so long, it was just like an extension.⁴⁶⁴

Although still stinging from the pain of being fired from her role as principal and fulfilling her mother's dream, she remained positive about the legacy: “It was a very rewarding experience and am humbled to have had the opportunity to do some of the things I was able to do. Living on for my mom. Taking over for her, that was very gratifying. And I would do it again if I had the chance, in spite of the ending. I would still be at Medicine Bear. But since I left there, my life just went down—depression and all.”⁴⁶⁵ Though she may still be reeling from her unjust firing,

⁴⁶⁴ Judy interview with the author, June 25, 2014.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

Wes remarked, “She was so devoted and genuine, and she reached out to a lot of the kids at the school. All of the students loved her, including me.”⁴⁶⁶

Conclusion

Detroit holds a particular meaning for Indigenous peoples, both past and present. I will conclude the dissertation in three ways. First I want to reiterate the major claims herein. Second, I want to give some brief highlights about the meaning of Detroit in the historical memory of its Indigenous residents. Lastly, I want to explain why, using my own research on Detroit, that you cannot adequately understand urban history, of racialization and gender construction within the urban place without Indigenous persons, and the places they occupied before, during, and after settler encroachment.

Detroit means many things to its past and current Indigenous inhabitants. It was a place of great political activism, a context in which Indigenous identities and cultures were formed, in particular urban ways. In this section I leave the reader with the words of Indigenous persons as they reflected back on their time in Detroit. In so doing, I hope to reclaim Detroit as an Indigenous space—a place whose meaning is constructed through the experiences and lived realities of Indigenous persons. In other words, I am using their words as an aesthetic, a political, cultural, and social symbol, to challenge how we have come to know Detroit as a Black-White, racialized and gendered space.

Sandra Muse

I love Detroit. It breaks my heart that Detroit is going through the hard times that it's going through. To me, there was always an Indigenous space within the boundaries of Detroit. There

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

*was always a Detroit Indian community. Sometimes when I used to go over to Belle Isle or just down on the banks of the Detroit River and go fishing, I would just sit there and imagine how beautiful it must've been along there for our ancestors, during our ancestors time before the skyscrapers, and the concrete, and the highways, and the factories and all of that stuff. I will always be a Detroit girl. I've been in Ontario 27 years, I think; long time. I still follow all of the sports teams for Detroit, Red Wings, Pistons, Lions. But Detroit is home. It'll always be home. I learned how to survive it. How to deal with my own identity complex as a Native teenager, someone who didn't quite fit in anywhere. It was the only place I felt like I fit in was those good ol days at the Detroit Indian School. And those were so vitally important.*⁴⁶⁷

The opening of Medicine Bear American Indian Academy was the culmination of nearly 40 years of Indigenous awakening and realization in the Motor City. Yet, its closing also pointed to the limits of indigeneity in a city still predicated on Blackness and Whiteness. While particular historical circumstances allowed for Indigenous people to assert their visibility, even gaining some relative political power in Detroit, they could never fully insert indigeneity on an equal political culture plane as other ethnic/racial groups had for decades. Though the Indigenous community tried their very best to become visible, the forces of race and gender that render Indigenous people as relics of the past were often too much to overcome. And they found that asserting indigeneity in a city also dealing with rapid financial decline and a host of other issues was not good for business. Yet, this does not mean that indigeneity is completely wiped out, perhaps going back to times past when settlers attempt to memorialize indigeneity. Indigenous people are still remembered, though in a faint sort of way.

⁴⁶⁷ Sandra interview with the author, August 2, 2014.

From August 5-8, 2014, I attended the National Summit on Race in Chicago, Illinois. I was invited to participate as a scribe, someone who would take notes on the assigned session, with which the organizers assigned me. A national summit on race, I thought, wow, maybe we'll have a broad constituency from which to critically analyze race in the United States. After all, my understanding of the processes of racialization are rooted in critical studies of whiteness, the persistent, ongoing combination of settler colonialism and white supremacy, and the current immigration debate (or more accurately the immigration of Brown bodies from Central and South America), which has captured the Nation's imagination. I was wrong. The summit on race was a summit on the condition of Black folks. Upon realizing that, I was not upset. In fact, I am okay with a conference that emphasizes Blackness—just be sure to let everyone know that before attending. I just made it a point to let everyone know—publicly—that race does not operate on a Black-white binary. I might have even mentioned that Black folks can participate in colonial projects of erasure, which perpetuate the idea that Indigenous peoples are relics of the past. Matter of fact, I and one other person were the only known Indigenous persons in the area. It was still an important learning experience.

One of my favorite moments was meeting Dr., Reverend, activist-extraordinaire, Joann Watson. Mama Watson (as she is called in the Black community) is a former councilwoman on the Detroit city council. She resigned upon the implementation of an Emergency Financial Manager. She has been a staunch advocate for Black rights in the Motor City—and still is—for decades. Walking down to the convention center, I saw my mentor, gave her a hug and kiss on the cheek, and she introduced me to Mama Watson. Her and I talked for about 45 minutes. Curious, I asked her, “do you remember a Native American public school? It was called Medicine Bear American Indian Academy?” Seemingly struck by the bolt of lightning that

historical questions can illuminate, she lit up and smiled, “yeah, I do.” I then asked, “do you know my aunt Judy Mays?” She replied, “Yes. Oh my god. I can’t believe I am sitting here talking to Judy’s nephew.” She then continued, “I remember your aunt. She was a strong, fierce woman. And she always had a group of people to back up what she said. And she made her claims for that school clearly and effectively.” She further stated that “she demanded that they give her a school. She used data, but one of the most impressive things I remember about your aunt was that she *demanded* that the school board give her that school. And they did.”

If indigeneity and Indigenous people are not an active force on the Detroit political cultural scene, they remain within the minds of an older generation, those who can remember times past. If we learn anything from the history of Detroit’s Indigenous past, combined with the competing notions of claiming indigeneity, this concept still occurs, with the Dan Gilbert’s of the world, who make claim to Detroit. There are also the hipsters who bring in their coffee shops and craft beer breweries who want to make something out of nothing, as if they are the new pilgrims, making a beacon upon a hill. Indigeneity has now come full circle—back to the time of the Thomas Palmers of the world, who created a city with a distorted view of the history. If we learn anything from Detroit’s history, we know that at some point, the Indigenous population, all 7,000 who now live in the Detroit area, will become visible again, even as a shooting star, they will cross the mind of their fellow Detroiters; perhaps this time they will be given the proper stay that they deserve.

Indigeneity, though, was resurrected again January 2014—albeit in the crudest of ways. On January 27, 2014, Paige Williams, a writer for *The New Yorker* published a scathing article of long time Oakland County Chief Executive, L. Brooks Patterson. Titled, “Drop Dead Detroit!” the article was a critique of Patterson, a major critic of all things Detroit, even as he sits as an

outsider in one of the wealthiest counties in the United States—vanilla suburbs surrounding a chocolate city. Williams accused Patterson of racism. It is easy to see why, Patterson, speaking about Detroit stated, “Anytime I talk about Detroit, it will not be positive. Therefore, I’m called a Detroit basher. The truth hurts, you know? Tough shit.”⁴⁶⁸ He even told his daughters not to get gas there. If kicking a struggling city down, whose residents happen to be majority Black was not enough, he brought Native Americans into the conversation. When asked how he would fix the financial problems of Detroit, he said, “what we’re gonna do is turn Detroit into an Indian reservation, where we herd all the Indians into the city, build a fence around it, and then throw in the blankets and corn.” Apparently these comments happened long ago, though the place of Indian people in the white imagination suggests that Patterson could have made this statement just as easily in 2014 as in 1974.

Black Detroiters protested Patterson’s racist characterization of Detroit. And so did the Native community. As a result, on February 11, 2014, L. Brooks Patterson submitted a letter to Matthew Wesaw (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), former Chairman of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and currently Executive Director, Department of Civil Rights in Michigan, apologizing for his remarks. In the letter, Patterson offered an apology—though the sincerity and taste of it is questionable. Following a meeting with Wesaw, Patterson wrote in the letter, “I was unaware of the entire sordid episode of Native Americans facing extinction through the imposition of disease filled blankets.”⁴⁶⁹ He further wrote, “I apologize for my ignorance of history and I want you to know that it was never my intent to disrespect Native Americans.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Paige Williams, “Drop Dead, Detroit!: The Suburban Kingpin Who Is Thriving Off of the City’s Decline,” *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014.

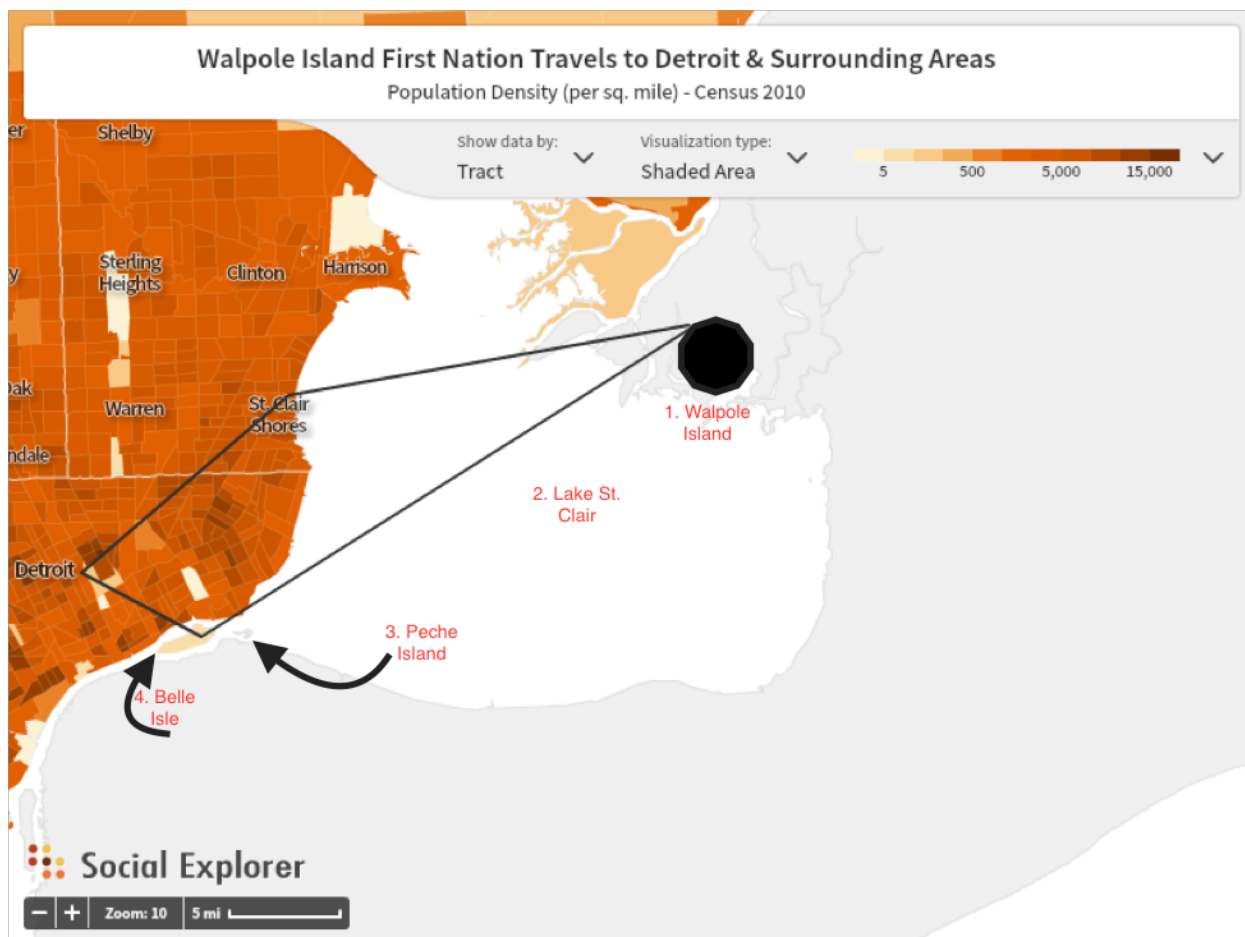
⁴⁶⁹ L. Brooks Patterson letter to Matthew Wesaw and the United Tribes of Michigan, February 11, 2014.

Regardless of his lack of Indigenous historical knowledge, the making of Detroit into an Indian reservation is interesting—and distasteful. But Patterson is not the only one who knows very little about Indigenous Detroit. My interest in bringing up Patterson’s disparaging comments is to point toward how Native Americans have been erased from the official histories of Detroit, so much so that government officials can make reference to them, and know nothing about their historical or contemporary presence in the Motor City. Even Detroit’s Black population has tended to ignore Native Americans. Though not as ignorant as Patterson’s, they largely do not acknowledge a Native presence whatsoever. Miigwetch for reading this story.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

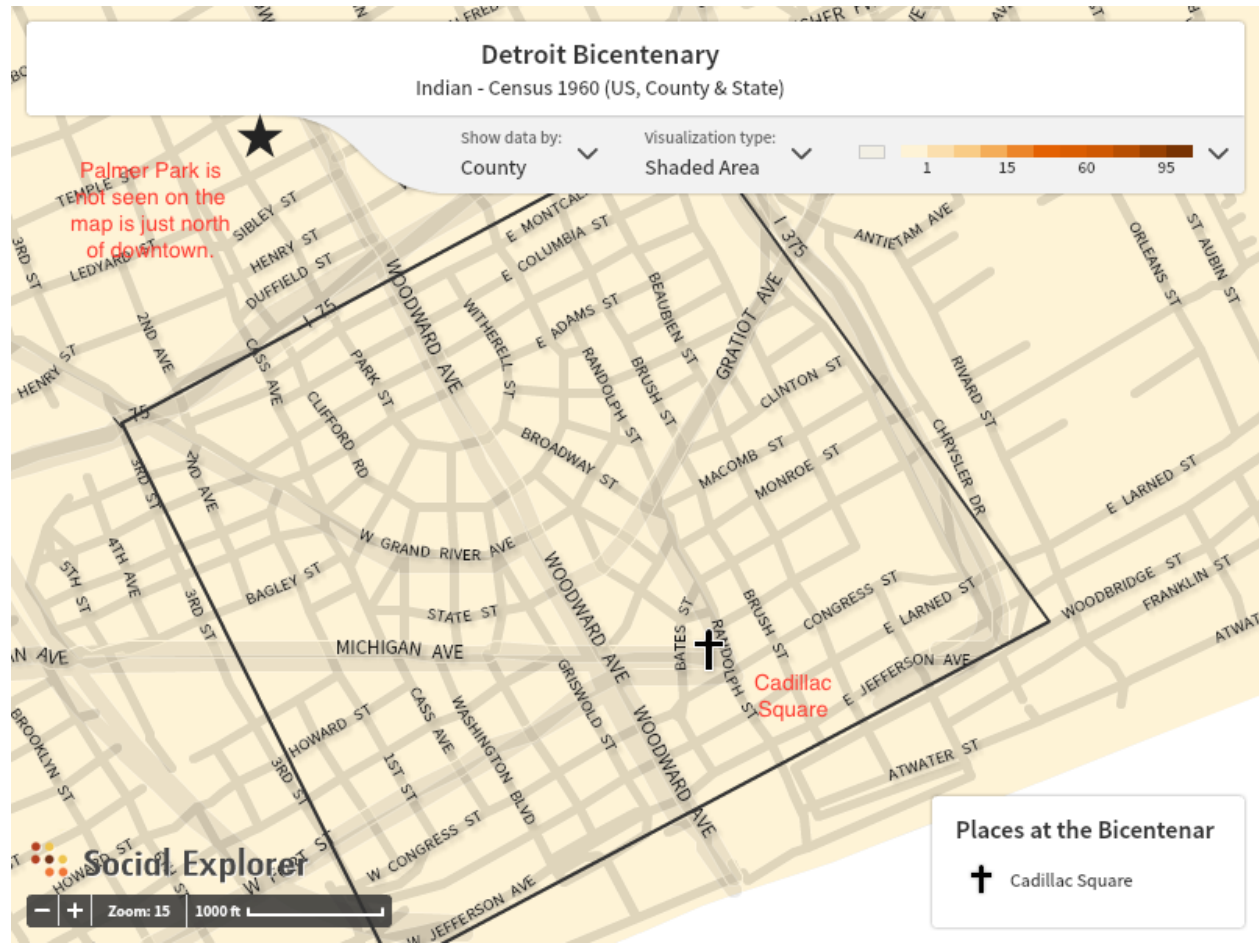
Appendix A

These maps are brief illustrations of where various Indigenous people and also performances occurred in Detroit and surrounding areas.

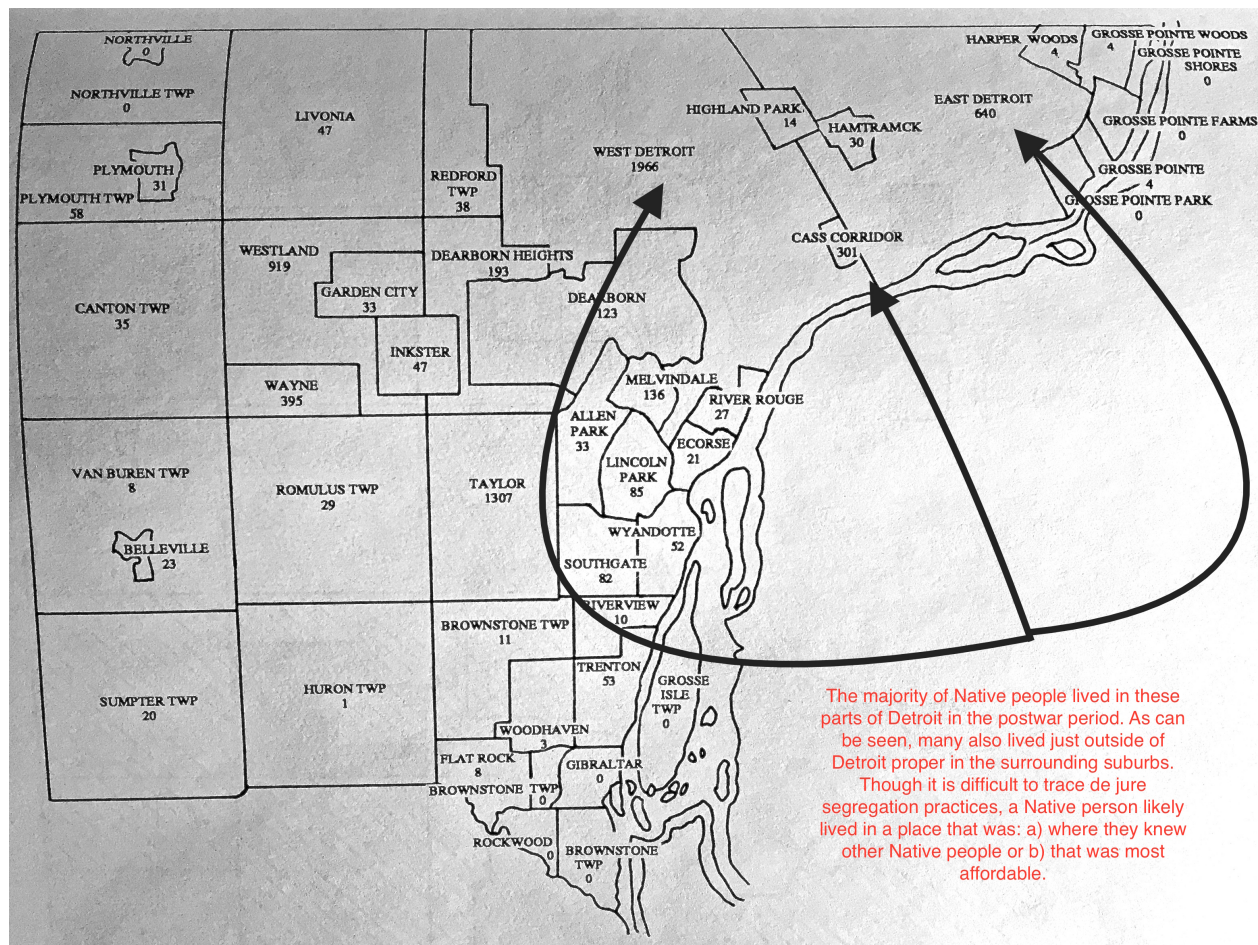


This map illustrates the major points in chapters one and two. Point 1 is the Walpole Island First Nation reserve, which is about 30 miles north east of Detroit. Point 2 is Lake St. Clair, which lies between Michigan and the Canadian Province of Ontario. A part of the Great Lakes system waterways (including the Detroit River and the St. Clair River), it connects Lake Huron (to the north) and Lake Erie (to the south). Point 3 is Peche Island located in the Detroit River, at the opening of Lake St. Clair. It is 1.2 miles (1.9 kilometers) east of Belle Isle. It was at this point during the bicentennial that Cadillac and his men began their journey. Point 4 is Belle

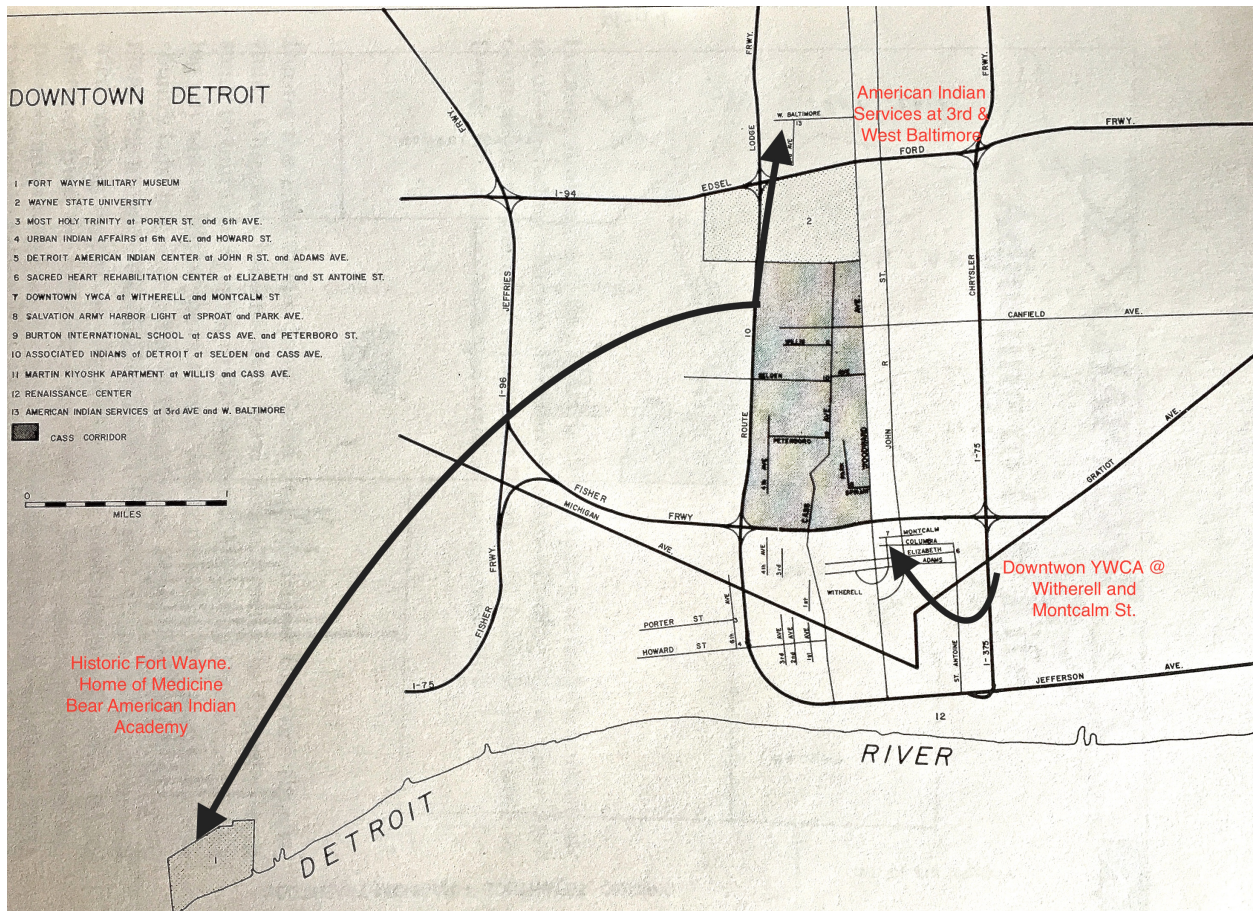
Isle, where Thomas Sands in chapter one made claim to the island located in the Detroit River, and is said to have been a summer home of the Odawa chief Pontiac.



This map illustrates the approximate location of the events at the Detroit Bicentennial celebration in 1901. Important locations are Palmer Park, where the delegation of Indigenous people stayed. Also important is Cadillac's Square, where Cadillac's chair was dedicated, and where many of the after parties took place.



This map is taken from Edmund Danziger's *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit's American Indian Community*. It is not exactly clear which Census he got his population data from, he likely got it from the 1980 US census. Though Detroit (and Metro Detroit) Native people were not always as inclusive as far as who was an "Indian," community counts, for example, those done by the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, always counted more than the U.S. census. The discrepancy in numbers reflects, I think, the differences between who the community considered "Native" and the colonial politics of blood quantum and recognition.



This map of downtown Detroit is taken from Edmund Danziger's book *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit's American Indian Community*. He used the map to illustrate key points of meeting for Detroit's Indigenous community and where many have lived, in the Cass Corridor area, near Wayne State University. For my purposes, I am re-using (and have slightly modified) this map to point out the key buildings of the city in which Native people used. For example, 1 on this map represents Fort Wayne, where Medicine Bear American Indian Academy was located. American Indian Services was at 3rd Avenue and West Baltimore was the first spot of the Detroit Indian Educational and Cultural Center.

It is important to note that though many Native people lived in the Cass Corridor area, they were quite spread out in the city and in the Metro Detroit area. Thus, while they surely suffered the effects of segregation, including extreme poverty, low income, it is debatable

whether or not they were segregated like Black Americans, or were restricted in living in certain areas. I think this is more a function of two factors. First, the idea of Indigenous invisibility largely determined, I would assume, how Native people were treated. In other words, I would argue that Native erasure as an ideological process was so strong that there was no need to segregate anyone. Second, the ubiquitous nature of the Black-White binary in Detroit was so strong it seems to be the case that unless someone knew that a Native person was in fact, Native, meaning they had a conversation or simply knew them personally, they could be mistaken as Black, white, or even Mexican. Being a Native American was not on the ethnic/racial mindset of city residents.

Here, phenotype, or how outside groups understood race as it related to Native people is important to acknowledge. In other words, if you looked Black you could easily be designated as such, and this discriminated, though none of my oral histories nor has my research revealed housing discrimination against Native people (in the same literal way as happened to Black Americans). If you looked white, but were not, or did not have the financial means, you might be able to pass off as white, but you might have lived near Black folks.

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