



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

University of Calgary

PRISM: University of Calgary's Digital Repository

Graduate Studies

The Vault: Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2016

The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression

Hubbard, Tasha

Hubbard, T. (2016). The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Calgary, Calgary, AB.

doi:10.11575/PRISM/28021

<http://hdl.handle.net/11023/3272>

doctoral thesis

University of Calgary graduate students retain copyright ownership and moral rights for their thesis. You may use this material in any way that is permitted by the Copyright Act or through licensing that has been assigned to the document. For uses that are not allowable under copyright legislation or licensing, you are required to seek permission.

Downloaded from PRISM: <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression

by

Tasha Hubbard

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

September 2016

© Tasha Hubbard 2016

Abstract

This dissertation examines the kinship relationship between Indigenous peoples and our relative the buffalo. I posit that texts in which Indigenous peoples express their relationship with the buffalo contain expressions of Indigenous epistemologies. Indigenous kinship theory, Indigenous critical geography, and Indigenous histories are foundational for this project. The presence of the buffalo is found within Indigenous oral stories, literature, art, and other forms of expression. Specifically, the dissertation engages with the representation of buffalo's role in creating and renewing kinship ties. It examines Indigenous grief and mourning during the genocide of the buffalo; buffalo confinement and diaspora during the settlement era; women's knowledge of the connection between buffalo and the land; and the artist's role in revitalizing the relationship with buffalo. Authors and creators include Percy Bullchild, Alexander Wolfe, Edward Benton-Banai, Leslie Marmon Silko, Stan Cuthand, Barry Ahenakew, Neal McLeod, Marilyn Dumont, Louise Erdrich, Mourning Dove, D'Arcy McNickle, Linda Hogan, Beverly Hungry Wolf, Beth Cuthand, Louise Halfe, Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, Adrian Stimson and Thomas King. This work can be understood as the imperative for Indigenous peoples to remember the kinship relationship shared with the buffalo, including the web of responsibilities to all peoples, human and more-than-human, with whom we share this land.

Preface

“Buffalo Genocide in Nineteenth Century North America: ‘Kill, Skin, and Sell’” was originally published in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, Alexander Laban Hinton, Eds. Copyright 2014, Duke University Press. All rights reserved. Republished by permission of the publisher.

The map illustration in Figure 10 is reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc. from *Almanac Of The Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko, from pages 5 and 6. Copyright © 1991 Leslie Marmon Silko. All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my sincere gratitude for my supervisor Jeanne Perreault, my committee members Adrienne Kertzer and Pamela Banting, and my examining committee members Daniel Heath Justice and Heather Devine. Their guidance in completing this thesis and their ideas for moving forward were invaluable. I would also like to thank my master's supervisor Len Findlay, who has not ceased to champion my ideas and methodologies. I'd like to acknowledge Connie Luther, Erin Wunker, and Natalee Caple who were my colleagues in the English department graduate program and were unflagging in their support, both in person and online. A huge thank-you goes to my Indigenous literature and art colleagues who gave me advice and insight into this work. I'd also like to acknowledge David Oakleaf, who told me in his capacity of graduate chair that it would be possible to complete the Ph.D program with a newborn baby. I believed him. As a result, I would like to sincerely thank the people who helped me care for that baby as he grew up during the course work, candidacies, and the writing of the dissertation. Finally, so much gratitude goes my family, who were relentless cheerleaders, often telling me to "hurry up" because they wanted to see me more. This was the biggest incentive.

This manuscript has been copy-edited by a third party.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to three late scholars who supported my academic path. Jo-Ann Episkenew told me when I was twenty-three years old that academia could be my path and recently told me that she was patiently waiting for me to complete because she had plans for me. I hope I figure out what those were. Renate Eigenbrod accepted my first conference paper and continued to mentor me throughout my graduate degrees and was an extremely supportive department head for my first academic appointment. Narcisse Blood validated my ideas about the buffalo and shaped my thinking in ways that I am still discovering. They are profoundly missed.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures and Illustrations	vii
Introduction: The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression	1
Chapter One: “Everything is Buffalo, Simply Everything is Buffalo”: Listening to Our Grandparents	19
Chapter Two: Buffalo Genocide and Indigenous Loss in Nineteenth-Century North America: “Kill, Skin, and Sell”	48
Chapter Three: “You Can’t Run Away”: Buffalo Confinement in Mourning Dove’s <i>Cogewea</i> , D’Arcy McNickle’s <i>The Surrounded</i> , and Linda Hogan’s <i>Mean Spirit</i>	84
Chapter Four: Buffalo Land: Intersections in Indigenous Geography and Indigenous Women’s Literature	122
Chapter Five: Imagining Back to Reality: Plains Indigenous Buffalo Artists	149
Conclusion: Singing the Buffalo Back	180
Works Cited	190
Appendix A: The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Repatriation	220

List of Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1:	Jones, Tim. “Wilfred Tootoosis and Mistaseni.” 1966. JPEG File.....	21
Figure 2:	Bullchild, Percy. <i>The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It</i>	28
Figure 3:	Hubbard, Tasha. “Paying Respect.” 2011. JPEG file.....	47
Figure 4:	Hubbard, Tasha. “Paying Respect II.” 2012. JPEG file.....	49
Figure 5:	Harney, Ricky. “Buffalo Grief I.” 2015. JPEG file.....	71
Figure 6:	Harney, Ricky. “Buffalo Grief II.” 2015. JPEG file.....	72
Figure 7:	Forsyth, N.A.. “Another Buffalo Wanted For the Car.” Date unknown. Stereograph. Montana Historical Society Research Center.....	96
Figure 8:	Forsyth, N.A. “Making A Last and Fierce Struggle for Freedom.” Date unknown. Stereograph. Montana Historical Society Research Center.....	108
Figure 9:	Hubbard, Tasha. “Sleeping Buffalo.” 2014. JPEG file. 121	
Figure 10:	Silko, Leslie Marmon. <i>Almanac of the Dead</i> . Illustration. 1999. JPEG file..	141
Figure 11:	Marchand, Marie-Eve. “Writing-on-Stone.” 2014. JPEG file.....	151
Figure 12:	Quick-to-See Smith, Juane. <i>Genesis</i> . 1993. Oil, collage, and mixed media on canvas. High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia.....	158
Figure 13:	Quick-To-See Smith, Jaune. <i>Spam</i> . 1995. Acrylic mixed media. University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ.....	159
Figure 14:	Quick-To-See Smith, Jaune. <i>The Browning of America</i> . 2000. Oil and mixed media on canvas. Crocker Art Museum. Sacramento, CA.....	161
Figure 15:	Stimson, Adrian. <i>Re-Herd</i> . 2014. JPEG file.....	164
Figure 16:	Stimson, Adrian. <i>Re-Herd</i> . 2014. JPEG file.....	164
Figure 17:	Stimson, Adrian. <i>Re-Herd</i> . 2014. JPEG file.....	165
Figure 18:	Locke Harvey. “Pablo Allard bison in Elk Island loading for Blackfeet.” 2016. JPEG file.....	186
Figure 19:	Hubbard, Tasha. “Waiting for the Buffalo.” 2016. JPEG file.....	187
Figure 20:	Hupka, George. Montana Blackfeet buffalo release. 2016. JPEG file.....	188

Introduction: The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression

In 2004, I was attending a friend's wedding in Regina, Saskatchewan when the bride's sister asked some of the guests if we wanted to see something special. A small group of academics, performers and artists drove out to a site and were shown a large stone in the shape of a buffalo¹ that had recently been uncovered. There was a small medicine bowl carefully placed near its head. Reverently, we stood in silence and contemplated its significance, its role, and its re-emergence. After awhile, we started to share our thoughts, while my partner of the time, unnoticed by anyone but myself, moved behind it to view it from the other side. At that moment, one of the performers suggested we sing an honour song for this Grandfather Stone, and everyone began to sing. My partner joined in, but from his position on the opposite side of the stone. I noticed people visibly react, but kept singing until the end of the song. At that moment, he came from behind the stone, startling the rest of the group. One by one, they revealed that they thought the stone was singing back to us.

To a non-Indigenous person, this might seem ludicrous, that a stone could sing. Western empirical thought would dictate that this kind of event would be 'illogical' at best. Sakej Henderson, Chickasaw, explains this perspective: "As an institutional and imaginative context, [western thought] includes a set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality. Habitually educated and usually prejudiced Europeans accept these assumptions and beliefs as true, as

¹ While 'bison' is the official and scientific name for the animal known as buffalo, both words tend to be used interchangeably, and as 'buffalo' is the preferred term for most Indigenous peoples, it is privileged in this work.

propositions supported by ‘the facts’” (58). The idea of a stone singing would definitely be excluded from so-called “factual” reality. However, to an Indigenous person, this event (if it had happened) would have been understood as a gift, a link between the spirit of the buffalo and those of us assembled to honour it. Perhaps the stone would have been responding to a contemporary calling by our people who have been traumatized and oppressed and who are now recovering our collective sense of self and community and seeking help in that endeavor from the spirit of the buffalo.

I experienced both of these reactions simultaneously as a Nêhiyaw (Cree) woman who was raised in a settler adoptive home.² In my years as a student in Western academic institutions, and now as faculty, I am familiar with the dominant ways; as part of my scholarly path, I continue to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing in my life, where my personal and academic life intertwine.³ When I began my academic path, engaging with Indigenous creative expression represented an opening to my Nêhiyaw inheritance found within literature and other texts: the stories, concepts, and paradigms shared by my family and our people’s knowledge keepers. Due to colonial policies like residential school and the child removal system, many Indigenous peoples have been disconnected from our own histories and epistemologies; seeking and sharing the personal within Indigenous texts can be a source of both learning and

² Following the example of Natasha Beeds and others, I will not italicize or capitalize Indigenous language words, unless they are part of a quotation. Beeds writes, “although most styles italicize ‘foreign’ languages, it is my position that Nêhiyawêwin must be placed beside English in an equal textual position. I am using English as a means of discourse; however, I am placing nêhiyaw language within this text as a theoretical and a living space – a space where words carry spiritual power and a space that I call home. nêhiyaw words are also not capitalized according to the convention of the orthography built by Leonard Bloomfield, Ida McLeod, Freda Ahenakew, and H.C. Wolfart” (119). I will digress from Beeds’ practice slightly and capitalize Indigenous words when used as nation-identity markers or as proper nouns.

³ My deliberate turn to Indigenous epistemologies is reflected in various ways in the dissertation, including the use of first person plural voice.

empowerment to many of us. Further to this, as Indigenous scholars, we evoke the personal voice when speaking about ourselves and “the communities linked to the literature” (Eigenbrod and Episkenew 10) as part of a recognizing our accountability.

Thus, I begin with my location: I am Nêhiyaw, Anishnaabe, Nakota, and Métis. My people come from both Treaty Six and Treaty Four territories, in what is now known as Saskatchewan. But as Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett remind me, location is more than simply saying where you are from: “location is about relationships to land, language, spiritual, cosmological, political, economical, environmental and social elements in one’s life” (98). I was adopted out as a baby and I reconnected with my birth family in my teens. As a result, I have spent the last twenty-seven years in a continual symbolic and embodied home-coming. I do not discredit my experiences prior to my first home-coming. Instead, I find ways to interweave those experiences while using my work as a scholar and a filmmaker to enrich my relationships to land and spirit. Thus I relate to the idea of the duality of a remembering and re-remembering process that Absolon and Willett discuss (117), and this is the aim of my research. I am continually striving to remember to look within our ways for guidance and knowledge, and to be a contributing member of my nation and my family.

During the event at the Buffalo Stone, I was not the one calling the buffalo; however, it has occurred to me that perhaps, in some small way, the buffalo have called to me. Shortly after this incident, I became engaged with the story of the buffalo on the plains and planned to make a feature film about their near-destruction and burgeoning return. For over a decade, I have been interested in the complex interrelationship between the buffalo and plains Indigenous peoples. Within this framework, I find myself seeking an understanding of my relationships to self, family, community and nation that is both inclusionary and transformative, and I find myself

seeking to understand the responsibilities that come with that relationship. I take inspiration from Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice, who says, “One of these responsibilities is to know not only our lived history, but also our intellectual histories, to understand the legacies of story and thought that speak across the ages to strengthen our survival today” (*Our Fire* 218). If I am to honour that responsibility, then I must ground my work within nêhiyawewin and Indigeneity in order to contribute to the on-going survival project.

In this work, I will primarily use the term Indigenous, following the example of Janice Acoose, who supports the term “because it connotes the political realities of cultures ‘growing naturally’ from the land” (221). While I understand that the critique of essentialism could be waiting in the wings, I also have come to understand from my family and from ceremony that we are of this land, and to deny this would be to deny our very selves.

Nêhiyaw adoptee Margaret Kovach, in her work of defining an Indigenous research framework, posits that “[t]he ability to craft our own research stories, in our own voice, has the best chance of engaging others” (60). It is my hope that this is the case with my own research, that both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples contemplate the relationships we share with both the buffalo and the lands we share with each other, and the ways in which that relationship is explored in Indigenous texts.

I am continually mindful of my location within an academic institution. As such, I am compelled to take up Dakota scholar Angela Cavender Wilson’s ‘call’ to Indigenous scholars:

[O]ur task is to challenge the academy as an agent of colonialism and carve a place for our own traditions as legitimate subjects of scholarly study, but on our own terms. This means defying the disciplinary boundaries that dissect and categorize our traditions, as these boundaries simply do not exist in Indigenous

ways in which the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual are inseparable.

We can specialize and narrow our efforts of concentration, but none of us may lose sight of the holistic traditions from which we have come. (73)

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith agrees. She makes the claim that “for indigenous peoples fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism” (28). Rather than working within one specific discipline, this dissertation will incorporate a multidisciplinary approach, understood by Kim Socha and Les Mitchell as “an integrated way of understanding and seeking” (121). Thus, I seek to discuss a variety of texts that feature the buffalo, including literary, filmic, and artistic, while blurring the lines between the academic disciplines of Art, History, Indigenous Studies, Film Studies, Geography, Gender Studies, Education, and of course, English. I do this because I agree with Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew who says “[c]ontemporary Indigenous literature cannot be divorced from its contextual framework” (186). This contextual information includes our own Indigenous histories and understandings, which traverse and ultimately supersede disciplinary boundaries.

I am also mindful of the decolonizing imperative that many Indigenous scholars put forward. Nêhiyaw scholar Winona Stevenson tells us that “[d]ecolonization is about empowerment — a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples’ values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities” (212). I do want this work to be a small part of the rebuilding of our sense of self and our kinship responsibilities. I also wish to resist efforts within some academic circles to deny Indigenous nationhood through the insistence of engaging with Indigenous texts as assimilative multiculturalism. Justice explains how this happens: “Indigenous peoples are read primarily as

colourful contributors to the great Canadian socio-cultural mosaic” (“Necessity” 150).

Indigenous peoples are not multicultural: rather we are nations within a nation, and efforts to contradict this are a new form of erasure. Next, in my own analysis of the texts I have chosen, I make a deliberate and thoughtful move away from using the categories of “Canadian” and “American.” While the political and historical contexts of these nation-states do have varying influence on Indigenous peoples living on either side of the colloquially-known “medicine line,” I instead choose to view the texts as coming from their specific tribal (or community) origins. Finally, I engage with Indigenous critical theory but do not exclude Western theoretical frameworks. I use theoretical concepts and ideas from a diverse array of scholarship, including critical race geography, art as transformation, and critical animal studies. These areas often encourage the kind of multidisciplinary scholarship I am enacting.⁴

Indigenous Multidisciplinarity in Practice

Critics of Indigenous literatures and other creative expression generally maintain that Indigenous stories articulate knowledge about the universe. Editors Niigonwedom Sinclair, Anishnaabe, and Renate Eigenbrod, in the introduction to their special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* that focuses on Indigenous literatures, agree and build on this assertion to say that Indigenous theory “is listening, perceiving, and creating things out of relationships forged from experience” (9-10). Indigenous peoples’ deep experience with our worlds provide guidance that shows how to live well together, how to reconcile the past, and how to ensure the future well-being of those who share the land. Seneca scholar Penny Kelsey wants us to keep an

⁴ For example, Critical Animal Studies (CAS) often uses an interdisciplinary approach that moves across disciplinary borders and challenges the assumptions within those disciplines (Socha and Mitchell 129-30).

expansive definition of theory and its potential to affect our lived experiences: “If we take theory to mean a lifeway or way of considering one’s world, suddenly the field for studying Native American literature possesses a far wider range of theoretical strategies” (10). I like the idea of theory as a way of considering the world. This resonates even more when I consider the Nêhiyaw concept of nisitohtamowin, meaning understanding, but specifically understanding yourself-in-relation to the world around you. There is also miyo-wicehtowin, meaning having good relations with the world around you and working in the spirit of interaction and reciprocity.⁵ My work here will follow these notions of theory.

In the spirit of having good relations, Jace Weaver’s *That the People May Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* has as its central tenet the concept of communitism, a combination of community plus activism. It animates the concept of community found within Indigenous texts:

Literature is communitist to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community, including the wider community. In communities that have too often been fractured and rendered dysfunctional by the effects of more than 500 years of colonialism, to promote communitist values means to participate in the healing to the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities and the pained individuals in them. (43)

The consideration of healing is a recent development in the criticism of Indigenous texts, one echoed by Episkenew, who explains, “[W]hile stories, dance, and song were considered beautiful in their own right, they served educational, spiritual, and healing functions. This multiple

⁵ For further explanations of these nêhiyaw concepts, see Kovach 65 and Keith Goulet and Linda Goulet’s *Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous Pedagogies* 59-61.

functionality has not been lost in contemporary Indigenous literature” (192). This mode of functionality extends to bring the writer into a relationship with the community, and is, according to Weaver, one that comes with responsibilities: “I would contend,” he says, “that the self-appointed status of the writer is, and must be, one of those things that makes us understand our accountability to Native community” (*That The People* 42). There is power in story, as Episkenew reminds us that “[a] story can help dislocated ‘tribal relations’ reconnect with their communities and make those all-important psychosocial connections necessary to support emotional health” (16). As Indigenous literary scholars, we need to approach our stories, which appear in the form of literature, art, film, and new media, with an Indigenous theoretical lens that privileges our existence, our ideas, and our future. By doing so, we contribute to the necessary activism that moves towards healing of our people.

Weaver’s communitism, Osage scholar Robert Warrior’s concept of tribal sovereignty, and Creek scholar Craig Womack’s tribal-focused literary criticism, among others, have led to the Indigenous literary approach known most commonly as American Indian Literary Nationalism. This is a critical model that Justice says is focused on “shifting the critical lens from a central concern with mediation with Whites or finding pan-Indian commonalities to looking first at the particular experiences of the People in their world” (*Our Fire* 211). The theoretical framework calls for a theory built upon past and present Indigenous thinkers, according to Warrior, who states, “In comparing our histories and our contemporary lives with those of other American Indian people, we see the complexities of our various pasts and have an opportunity to learn how other people have confronted the same problems we face” (123).

American Indian Literary Nationalism affirms the existence of Native literature as a specific field, and it advocates for a theoretical approach that “draws on theoretical and

epistemological models that arise from indigenous languages and literatures, as well as the many, varied, complex, and changing modes in which Native nations have operated on the ground, in particular places, over a wide expanse of time” (Brooks 244). An American Indian Literary Nationalist approach is not exclusionary of other theoretical approaches, as its detractors have posited. Rather, this kind of approach privileges Indigenous modes of thought and encourages “decolonization, survival, recovery, development, and transformation” (Weaver, “Splitting” 73). Besides these weighty goals, Womack explains that this approach also calls for a move away from “atemporal, nonhistorical analysis” that rests only in the symbolic, prioritizing instead a move toward developing “historical methodologies since Native literary criticism has too often been scrutinized along thematic lines rather than historical details” (“Integrity” 171). Womack maintains this does not mean to abandon close reading, but to consider context when approaching Indigenous literatures.

American Indian Literary Nationalism does yield to some potent critique, including the scarcity of Indigenous women’s voices included in the literature. Yup’ik scholar Shari Huhndorf, in *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, discusses the ways in which privileging the concept of nation can result in the reification of colonial power regimes, and can reinforce social systems such as patriarchy (4). I have chosen to work with several Indigenous women’s texts and I have chosen to include a gender analysis in one of my chapters. The buffalo are my guides in this as well, as they are known to be matriarchal in times of peace, with the eldest female holding the leadership position. Indigenous governance systems took the buffalo way of life as a foundation for living in a good way, both for themselves and for their children and grandchildren.

I wish to use Indigenous kinship as a theoretical base as I interweave history, creative expression, and futurity. Justice elaborates on how kinship works as a theory:

Imagination, political expression, kinship in practice — together, these are all ways that Indigenous national literatures can help to articulate the complex continuities of Indigenous peoples, offering a different sense of reality than that offered by a commodifying settler culture of reflexive purchase and disposal, of a social system rooted in ravenous social and ecological gluttony. And we have the choice to grow with that knowledge or, for whatever reason, to refuse to listen to the songs, the voices, the words, the living breath. (Justice, “Relevant” 75)

Reinvigorating our relationship with the buffalo encompasses the possibility of growth for ourselves, for our communities, and for our territories. To do this work of reclaiming ourselves, we must engage not only with Indigenous literature, but also with multiple modes of creative expression. I agree with Huhndorf’s claim: “Although the political dimensions of literature have garnered much critical attention, less notice has been paid to visual expression in indigenous contexts” (20). The way in which Indigenous peoples reclaim visual methods, including installation art and mapping, in order to express their history as well as their future, warrants close examination.

Within the different critical positions expressed in Indigenous Nationalism, I am drawn most to the concept of kinship. Blackfoot scholar Betty Bastien writes about Blackfoot alliances with others: “Alliances are kinship relationships. Kinship means that Siksikaitsitapi [Blackfoot] survival is dependent upon the cosmic order and that our existence is based on knowing and learning our alliances” (4). In my own Nêhiyaw tradition, an embodied understanding of the world is articulated with the term *wahkohtowin*, or kinship relationships. Nêhiyaw scholar Neal

McLeod explains it in this way: “Through relations, we are able to create the web of understanding of our embodied locations and stretch it outwards to a wider context of collective historicity and through a poetics grounded in dialogue and an open-ended flow of narrative understanding” (“Cree Poetic Discourse” 112). One of the central ways we make connections to other humans and to the rest of the living world is through the arts. Anishnaabe poet and scholar Kimberly Blaeser contextualizes kinship relationships and the intricate ways they are related to the land. She notes that kinship with place “continues to embed itself in all the creative arts, sometimes linking them to one another” (253).

A revival of the importance of kinship within Indigenous literary criticism means a renewal of relationships to self and others. Justice discusses the shift from self to community that then transforms into community-in-relation, signaling a move towards a more overtly political model: “This model places the People into the web of familial rights and responsibilities that define that particular tribal community, while acknowledging the realities of changing historical experiences and their impacts on the various threads of that relational web” (*Our Fire* 211). By acknowledging the shifts that have occurred in the Indigenous experience, this approach resists stifling or freezing people into an image from the past, while maintaining the kinship relationships that have enabled people to survive this far.

But what is meant by the term “people”? A Euro-Western definition would usually limit the applicability of the term to humans, although recent Critical Animal Studies work questions the ways in which Euro-Western scholarship have denied peoplehood to other beings, specifically animals. Kim Socha and Les Mitchell point out that “CAS can be used as a filter through which nonhuman animals are exposed as human constructs while also giving them power as beings independent of human ideologies and of value simply because they exist as

independent entities, not as resources for the human animal and its cultural institutions” (130). David Sztybel, in his essay “Animals as Persons,” fleshes out the argument to consider animals as persons: “The crux of the issue of what a person is lies in what we consider to be the core of our own personhood: our capacity for conscious experience, and this is a capacity we share with any number of nonhuman animals. I hope that once we have understood this we will eventually adopt the proposal that many nonhuman animals are persons” (246). Other critical animal studies scholars have come to the same conclusion. Paul Waldau, in his *Animal Studies: An Introduction*, discusses the concept “more-than-human” within the framework of CAS (122-24). And finally, John Grim, in “Knowing and Being Known by Animals: Indigenous Perspectives on Personhood,” discusses how the Lakota express the idea of “more-than-human” (376).

Keeping the recent perspective of CAS in mind, it is important to note that Indigenous peoples have long understood that personhood is not exclusively applied to human beings. Within Weaver’s concept of communitism, he explains that “no sharp distinction is drawn between the human and non-human persons that make up the community” (39). Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr., in his foundational text *God Is Red*, says that behind the concept of kinship “stands a great conception shared by a great majority of the tribes. Other living things are not regarded as insensitive species. Rather they are ‘people’ in the same manner as the various tribes of human beings are people” (88). Understanding peoplehood to be inclusive of other beings besides humans automatically shifts our relationship to the world around us to one of respect. Daniel Wildcat, the Creek protégé of Deloria Jr., explains an Indigenous viewpoint on the concept of other-than-human persons:

Our worldviews recognize many other-than-human persons as participants in our activities. Community is more than human. The beauty of this feature of

Indigenous worldviews is that, while plant and animal persons share fundamental features of consciousness, volition, and power (i.e., they are sentient beings), they are also not exactly like us. Salmon, bear, eagle, and bison experience and know things that we as humans do not. And within our communities you can find — if you are open to it — many human relatives who have acquired knowledge from these other-than-human relatives with whom we share our homelands. (“Just Creation” 297)

My father has shared with me that Nêhiyaw people are in a kinship relationship with the buffalo spirit known as Kise-napewi-mostos or Old Man Buffalo. It has been explained to me that the word has a connotation of a benevolent grandfather, in that grandparents often have a soft spot for their grandchildren. Through this relationship, the buffalo is understood to be our teacher of good governance; in other words, the buffalo teaches us how to live as family, as kin, and as a people.

Wilton Goodstriker, Blackfoot, in the introduction to *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*, also speaks about buffalo as teacher, as he heard it from the Blackfoot elders in his family:

My grandfather told me that innaihtsiinni (our alliance- and kinship-forming process) comes from the ways of the sacred societies, the buffalo societies. When this way is used, it lasts for all time because the promise is made to the Giver of Life. It is the time when people adopt each other as parent and child and as brothers and sisters.... An agreement of this kind cannot be broken. It is the highest form of making peace. (26)

Crow Elder Joseph Medicine Crow speaks of hearing stories of kinship with the buffalo from his elders:

They would say that long, long time ago that the buffalo were just like human beings, that they had their own chants, their own dances and songs, and they just lived like human beings. They were brothers to the human beings of all the tribes. So the animals and the human beings were always here together and associated together and considered themselves brothers.... The buffalo, our brother, always here with us, furnishing us food, hides for our clothes, robes for our beds, sinew, bones, everything that they provided for our livelihood. So we have a special relationship historically and religiously with the bishee, (we call it bishee), bison, or buffalo that is still strong to this very day. (qtd. in Hansen 100-01)

The Lakota also have a kinship relationship with the buffalo. Anishnaabe scholar Winona LaDuke, in her work *All Our Relations: Struggle for Land and Life*, quotes Black Elk as saying that “the buffalo is the closest four-legged relative that we have, and they live as a people” (143). Also quoted is contemporary Lakota leader Bill Kills Straight, who discusses the animals coming before humans: “The four leggeds came before the two leggeds. They are our older brothers, we came from them. Before them, we were the root people. That is why we are spiritually related to them. We call them in our language Tatanka, which means ‘He Who Owns Us.’ We cannot say that we own the buffalo, because he owns us” (136).

The concept of ownership factors in the colonial mindset that affects our relationships to the land and to those with whom we share the land. Animal studies scholar pattrice jones understands this: “In imagining themselves owners of land, animals, or other persons, people abstract themselves from the web of relationships that is the basis of all life” (237). While most

non-Indigenous scholarship about the plains bison and Indigenous peoples focuses on buffalo as sustenance, there are other exceptions with a similar viewpoint to Jones. Howard L. Harrod has noted the connection between the bison and human families in *The Animals Came Dancing: Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship*. He observes that when humans and animals entered into kinship through the hunter/hunted relationship, a pattern of reciprocal obligations was established. He asserts that humans “saw clearly that the buffalo-people had families, children, and a social structure comparable to the humans” (102). Anthropologist Alice Beck Kehoe makes a similar observation of the Blackfoot, noted by Bastien: “Kehoe... states that the ways of the bison were very similar to those of the Siksikaitsitapi” (12). These observations by non-Indigenous scholars hint at something integral to Indigenous well-being: the survivance of the buffalo.⁶

Which brings us full circle back to the call of the buffalo, as it is part of my intention for this dissertation to follow what Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete calls a sense of “indigenous logic” which “moves between relationships, revisiting, moving to where it is necessary to learn or to bring understandings together” (*Native Science* 210). Thus, I wish to examine the kinship relationship between Indigenous peoples and our relative the buffalo. I posit that texts in which Indigenous peoples express their relationship with the buffalo contain expressions of Indigenous epistemologies. Anna Lee Walters, Pawnee/Otoe-Missouria, makes a direct link between the buffalo and creative expression: “The buffalo brought order, teachings, values, ethics, aesthetics and life. The languages of these groups reflect long associations with the buffalo; literary forms and literature grew out of them” (372). This dissertation will build on these associations. The call

⁶ Survivance is a term employed by Anishnaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor. Most scholars interpret it as either a combination of survival and resistance or survival and endurance.

of the buffalo found within literature, art, film and other forms of expression can be understood as the imperative for Indigenous peoples to remember the kinship relationship shared with the buffalo, including the web of responsibilities to those with whom we share this land. If buffalo is our teacher, what do we need to learn? Is it that we need to remember and retell the stories that are carved into this land?

One way I strive to fully and comprehensively respond to the call of the buffalo is to tell the buffalo's history and existence on this land, including their near-extinction, confinement and tentative return. Indigenous histories have been told again and again from non-Indigenous perspectives and thus I wish to incorporate our own knowledge in the dissertation. For this reason, in cases where the written scholarly history differs from the oral tradition, I will privilege the oral version of events surrounding the buffalo.

Finally, as part of my methodology for this dissertation, I tell my own stories about treks to various buffalo stone sites found in the territory of what is now known as Alberta, Montana, and Saskatchewan. Liz Bryan, in her monograph *The Buffalo People: Prehistoric Archaeology on the Canadian Plains*, explains that most of these large rocks have "lines of parallel grooves thought to represent ribs" (70) and so the boulder glyphs are called ribstones. The ribstones, along with several buffalo rock art sites, are sometimes referred to as the Hoofprint tradition. According to archaeologists James Keyser and Michael Klassen, "some Northwestern Plains Hoofprint sites and glyphstones were and still are used as offering sites by the Plains Cree" (186). Another archaeologist, Gloria Fedirchuk, interviewed Cree elders about the site: "According to Solomon Bluehorn of the Little Pine Reserve, Saskatchewan, the guardian spirit of the buffalo resided in these effigies" (17). This is similar to what my family and traditional teachers have told me.

As I drive to the sites, I think about my research and what it means to me as a Nêhiyaw woman. I am reminded of Kathleen Absolon's work on Indigenous methodologies. She says, "Our very presence in our journey enacts an Indigenous methodology. Our gestures, ways of thinking, being, and *doing* enact an Indigenous methodology" (118, italics mine). The doing for me involves expending effort to visit each site, walking up the hills and walking down the valleys, laying tobacco down, and asking permission and guidance for the work I am doing.

Using Indigenous kinship as a critical position, this dissertation will show how creative expression that engages with the buffalo demonstrates and activates our kinship relationship, helps us understand our collective struggles, and strengthens and renews our connection to our territories and nations. Chapter One begins with oral stories that have been adapted to textual form by Indigenous peoples, including Percy Bullchild, Edward Benton-Banai, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alexander Wolfe, Stan Cuthand, and Barry Ahenakew. I examine the depths of the kinship relationship with buffalo and the ways in which this established relationship is echoed in the contemporary poetry of Neal McLeod. Chapter Two argues that the purposeful and strategic destruction of the buffalo by colonial forces constitutes genocide if one accepts the Indigenous position that the buffalo are a people, and that buffalo genocide elicits expressions of immense loss and grief, as shown in Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* and Marilyn Dumont's poem "Les Animaux." In Chapter Three I discuss the shared experience of confinement for the survivors of buffalo and Indigenous genocide, and the necessity of endurance in D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded*, Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*, and Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*. Chapter Four analyzes knowledge maps and the ways in which Indigenous women's knowledge illuminates imaginative geographies that centre around the buffalo in Louise Halfe's *Blue Marrow*, Beth Cuthand's "Four Songs for the Fifth Generation," and Leslie

Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. Chapter Five builds on the idea of imagining back the buffalo to explore the role of visual art and artists in making space for the buffalo's return. Indigenous artists Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith and Adrian Stimson are known for their land-based buffalo art, just as fictional artist Munroe Swimmer, in Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*, uses art to remind his people that the buffalo will return to the land.

As I engage with the literary, artistic, and filmic representations of buffalo created by Indigenous people, I feel as though I need to remind myself of the power that underscores stories of the buffalo. Kiera Ladner, Nêhiyaw, after learning from Blackfoot elders, explains that the stories exist within the sphere of the actual world we live in: "These ideas are not simply the abstract or ontological manifestations of a belief in a non-differentiated circle of life or the inter-relatedness and interdependency of all species" (74). Indigenous critical theory is found within Indigenous creative expression in order to tell us we have a responsibility to honour the relationships we share with all beings, including the buffalo.

Chapter One: “Everything is Buffalo, Simply Everything is Buffalo”: Listening to Our Grandparents

[K]inship is best thought of as a verb rather than a noun, because kinship, in most indigenous contexts, is something that’s done more than something that simply is. (Justice, “Go Away, Water” 150)

On the bank of the Gardiner Dam, there is a small cairn created by the Saskatchewan Government in 1967 to remember the majestic Mistasiniy.⁷ Meaning ‘big stone’ in English, Mistasiniy was a quartz boulder noted by early explorers and was the subject of several archeological studies, including a detailed survey by Zenon Pohorecky, an archaeologist at the University of Saskatchewan. He estimated the large granite boulder to be 1,600 tons in weight, 80 feet in circumference, and 26 feet in diameter (13). He also described the surrounding area: “This stone is set within a natural amphitheatre, and is enclosed on three sides (east, south, and west) by outlying stones. Some are set in a tier-like fashion, and one large outlying rock to the east has a circle of smaller stones around it” (12).

The Mistasiniy is in the shape of a buffalo lying down and marked the site where, in Cree cosmology, a human person turned first into a buffalo person and then into a stone and remained there as a reminder of the obligations we have to our families (see fig. 1). I went to the monument with my son and while we drove along a quiet Saskatchewan highway towards the site, I told him what I knew about the Mistasiniy story, in order to continue the storytelling tradition with my own family. When I reflect on why it has been so important for me to go

⁷ The spelling of the Cree word Mistasiniy varies from story to story, from Roman orthography to phonetic renderings.

physically to buffalo stone sites, I am reminded that these buffalo stones are markers of my peoples' traditional territory, territory that explains so much of who we are as a people. Cajete discusses the significance of land for Indigenous peoples. He says that land can be equated with the Indigenous mind, as it is "the place that holds memory" and "contain[s] the kinship to certain plants, animals, or natural phenomena" that people identify with. He goes on to explain that land "contains the memories, the bones of the ancestors, the earth, air, fire, water, and spirit from which a Native culture has come" ending with the conclusion that "[i]t is the land that ultimately defines a Native people" (*Native Science* 205). The buffalo stones, as with other sacred sites, are vessels of memory that continually remind the people of their connection to their territory. Traditional peoples say, "Land is who we are." As I walk in sacred places, I feel as though I am reconnecting with the buffalo spirit that has been waiting for us, its relatives, to return after over a century of dislocation and removal. Signs show themselves to me, reminding me of Blackfoot Elder Narcisse Blood's words: "Places [are] alive... they are imbued with spirit and are our teachers" (qtd. in Kovach 61). The site where Mistasiniy looked out upon the land is part of the process of teaching and learning that our Elders share with us.



Fig. 1: Jones, Tim. "Wilfred Tootosis at Mistaseni." 1966. JPEG file.

Sacred sites are documented and studied by Western-based scholars and researchers, but as Linea Sundstrom points out, they "have often been content with viewing landscape as the site of food procurement rather than the site of all aspects of life. This has oversimplified our view of native cultures and has essentially treated past cultures as little more than food-getting mechanisms" (260-61). Similarly, within Euro-Western historical accounts, buffalo are primarily viewed as food for plains Indigenous peoples, which overlooks their other important roles as guide, teacher, and relative. The traditional stories taken up in this chapter exemplify the understandings of kinship between Indigenous peoples and the buffalo, one that is based in the territories of the people, much like the buffalo stones on the prairies.

Before I move to the stories themselves, I want to pause and consider what Winona Stevenson emphasizes for Indigenous scholars in her PhD dissertation “Decolonizing Tribal Histories,” that Indigenous researchers need to begin with the Creator. She goes on to explain that “within the oral traditions are the stories that embody the laws and protocols the Creator gave to humankind to govern the transmission of knowledge and human conduct in relation to the Creator, creation, and all others” (232). The stories that continue to be told, both in oral and textual form, provide us a map of our existence on this land, and provide guidelines of how we are to live while we are here:

A people’s understanding of the cycles of nature, behavior of animals, growth of plants, and interdependence of all things in nature determined their culture, that is, ethics, morals, religious expression, politics and economics. The people came to know and to express a ‘natural democracy,’ in which humans are related and interdependent with plants, animals, stones, water, clouds, and everything else. (Cajete, “Philosophy” 46)

Our systems of knowing and governing ourselves are irrevocably intertwined with our understanding of our relationship to those with whom we share the land. While there are ceremonies and stories that explain multiple relationships, my focus here is on the resonant and enduring stories that tell us about our relationship to buffalo.

Many of our stories were put into textual form by anthropologists, other Western-trained academics, and interested writers, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Some examples are Verne Dusenberry, *The Montana Cree: A Study in Religious Persistence*; Leonard Bloomfield, *Plains Cree Texts* and *Sacred Stories of the Sweetgrass Cree*; James

Lapointe, *Legends of the Lakota*; and Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*. Indigenous communities have criticized the methods behind the collection of those stories and the versions of the stories themselves. According to Gerald Vizenor, anthropologists “were not the best listeners or interpreters of tribal imagination, liberation, or literatures” (12). Anthropologists and other academics often imposed their own moral codes and Western-influenced interpretations on the stories. However, the textual records of these attempts are sometimes incorporated into a reclaiming process, in which certain stories, forgotten because of colonial influence, are taken up and used by Indigenous peoples as a starting point for engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing. In the introduction to *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows*, Crow writer Phenocia Bauerle says⁸ “While I work at developing the ability to transform the traditional oral skills of my people into writing, it is absolutely essential that texts that tell of my people exist for me to acknowledge and experience” (xiii). These changed stories still hold vital insights into Indigenous epistemologies.

Indigenous oral tradition is the way knowledge is passed on in interpersonal ways from the teller of a story to the listener. Stevenson explains that “Children grew up hearing, over and over again, stories about how to conduct themselves in their relations with each other, the animal peoples, the land, the ancestors, the spirits, and the Creator” (255-56). Those seeking a deeper knowledge must enter into a long-term reciprocal relationship with the knowledge holder. Graham Furniss elaborates on the ways in which relationships continue to guide the process of writing stories down: “Orality and the process of entextualization... with all its correlates of form, of genre, of event and of interpretation, is necessarily embedded within interpersonal

⁸ A useful discussion about how “as-told-to” narratives done respectfully can support the oral tradition is on page xiv of Bauerle’s introduction.

transactions that relate to ways of knowing and ways of communicating that knowledge” (144). While the subtleties of an oral story cannot be transcribed on the page, continuing the stories in a written form still contributes to the creation and reception of knowledge. Julie Cruikshank says writing the stories “becomes one way of familiarizing an audience with narratives so that a storyteller can count on listeners to appreciate the really creative editing and shaping when she tells those stories again” (“Social Life” 104). Pomo scholar Greg Sarris explains that by engaging with stories in any form “we continue their life in very specific ways” (40). Thus, by writing about these stories here, I hope to contribute to the on-going survival of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous stories continue to be told in the language of the people, much in the same way they have for centuries. However, the versions I choose to engage with in this chapter are told in English for reasons of accessibility, both my own and that of my audience. In fact, Indigenous oral historians are increasingly making the stories available in English. Community Nêhiyaw scholar Harvey Knight explains this in the preface to *Earth Elder*: “[T]he way to know who we are today and the strength to face our uncertain future lies in knowing our past — our history” (viii). Oral historians are aware of the ways in which dislocation from culture and language has affected our communities. This is often given as a reason for telling the stories in English, hoping that they will help people reconnect to their communities. Christopher Vecsey maintains that “translations can never convey the full formal beauty of the mythic texts, even though they can accurately convey the drama and the import of the narratives” (22). For the purposes of this work, the ability to engage with the narratives is the primary goal: “While Indigenous oral traditions can never be adequately duplicated once transformed into written texts, when treated with integrity they can yield new ways of understanding the nature of

history” (11-12). I would add that the stories also yield ways of understanding the nature of our relationships to each other and to the world around us. In his contribution to the Indigenous critical theory collection *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, Womack asserts, “We believe theory, in fact, can emerge from novels, poems, plays, and many other forms, including life itself. We even claim these as prominent emergence points, important creation stories for theory... stories are the birthplace of theory” (7). Indigenous theories of ways to live well together are held within these stories.

The writers I have chosen to focus on in this chapter are aware of the complexities and pitfalls of putting the oral story down on the page. Anishnaabe scholar Edward Benton-Banai writes a preface to his collection *The Mishomis Book*. In it, he attempts to allay concerns of an Indigenous audience by explaining there are specific protocols to follow when engaging with oral stories: “The author has been careful not to profane any of the Ojibway teachings. He has attempted to leave the sacred teachings intact where their complete form has been proclaimed by ritual” (ii). He goes on to acknowledge that the textual form is “only a glimpse” into the full scale of Anishnaabe creation stories, but what is shared will continue to have an impact on readers. Saulteaux writer Alexander Wolfe believes it is important, in an age of distraction, to use the written stories to support the oral tradition, but the written versions must “still comply with the wishes and aspirations of the grandfathers” (xv). Finally, despite what is missing from the translated and textualized stories, we can take comfort in knowing what Vizenor explains about endurance: “[s]hadows, memories, and imagination endure in the silence of translation” (12). Nothing is ever ‘lost,’ just put on hold until such a time that we are ready for it. As language and culture revitalization continue to grow in Indigenous communities, perhaps that

time is near. Therefore, for reasons of accessibility, I have chosen to engage with stories that Indigenous historians and writers have written down in English.

Indigenous epistemologies and ways of applying our systems of knowledge are accessible through the textual versions of the stories. As Linda Hogan, Chickasaw, asserts in her essay “First People,” these ways of knowing are more than simply systems of belief, an often-belittled phrase that implies such knowledge is counterfactual. Rather, these ways of knowing are experiential knowledge, knowledge that tells us “the human animal is a relatively new creation here; animal and plant presences were here before us; and we are truly the younger sisters and brothers of the other animal species, not quite as well developed as we thought we were” (10). Thus through story, Indigenous peoples are able to understand our role within the web of relationships that make up our ecosystem. These relationships come with benefits, but also responsibilities, resulting in an understanding of the necessity of reciprocity and reverence (Stevenson 232; Jo-ann Archibald 85).

The key to a responsible relationship with our ecosystem is embodying a living cultural ethic, in which we move away from the imposed hierarchy of a Western ideological model and instead see animal people, plant people, and rock people in relation to us as human people.

George (Tink) Tinker, an Osage theologian, explains in this way:

Experiencing all non-human persons as relations generates an affect or way of life in which there can be no hierarchy of being, either among a human community or between the different categories of persons in the world: two-leggeds, four-leggeds, flying ones, or what we call the living-moving people, for example, trees, corn, rivers and mountains. All of these persons are our relatives and need to be attended to with appropriate relationship behaviors. (“Why” 177)

In the plains, buffalo were integral to Indigenous survival, and thus stories of relation are common throughout oral stories coming from this region. Plains Indigenous peoples had long-standing and complex relationships with the buffalo, not just as a food source, but also as a relative with knowledge to share. Ladner explains that Cree and Blackfoot Elders have an understanding of kinship that moves beyond a simple blood relationship or lineage, and it does not exclude what she terms as “non-blood-relations and non-human beings.” She explains: “in most Indigenous worldviews, kinship is an expression of multiple intersecting relationships among all beings (human and non-human) from which flow mutual responsibilities and a social order” (282-83).

In this chapter, I examine stories that depict different iterations of buffalo-human kinship relations, including the role of the buffalo teaching important protocols to the first humans. I engage with three of the stories of Blackfoot Elder Percy Bullchild to show this relationship, as he has chosen to write down the stories his elders shared with him in *The Sun Came Down*. Through a Creation story, a Napi story, and a culture hero story, the buffalo’s importance to the Blackfoot as a source of life and knowledge is illuminated. I then turn to Edward Benton-Banai, who writes down the Midewin teachings in *The Mishomis Book*, in which the buffalo is a guide to the culture hero Waynaboozhoo. I then discuss the way in which Leslie Marmon Silko, Pueblo, retells the Pueblo story of Yellow Woman and her sexual relationship with buffalo, and how marriage narratives also solidified the kinship relationship with the buffalo in the creation story era. Finally, I look at the concept of custom adoption in several works by storytellers from my territory. Saulteaux writer Alexander Wolfe recounts the story of orphan children adopted by the buffalo, told to him by his grandfather, Earth Elder. Nêhiyaw oral storytellers Stan Cuthand and Barry Ahenakew participate in the textualizing of two oral versions of the Mistasiniy, and

while the versions differ, each tells the story of the benevolent Grandfather Buffalo adopting a human child. Finally, Neal McLeod, influenced by oral versions of the story, continues the teachings of Mistasiniy within his poetry, engaging with the cultural ethics of the story to help him understand his own kinship relationships. Within these stories, retold and revisioned, are the expressions of kinship with the buffalo people that are to be understood as guidelines for the human people to follow.

In *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, Bullchild, a Blackfeet from Browning, Montana, writes down what he terms “the Indian version of our own true ways in our history and our legends” (1). Motivated by the false stories that have been told by outsiders, he wishes to tell Blackfeet stories accurately for future generations. He explains how his grandmother, Catches Last, told him “many things” during “many nights” (2). He also provides provenance through naming the other storytellers who told him of the historic Blackfoot record and traditional stories when “the sun came down” (3), which was the proper time for storytelling. There are four sections called Earth’s Beginnings, Napi Tales, Kut-toe-yis (Bloodclot) Tales, and Honouring Creator Sun. He tells his readers that “all of this story is true” and has been preserved through preserving “our history in our minds handed down from generation to generation” (3).

The book begins with an illustration of a cow hide that is standing in for a buffalo hide (see fig. 2). Bullchild drew 62 pictographs on the hide to represent the stories in the book. Pictograph #28, depicting two buffalo, their creator, and four recipients, correlates to the story “Creator Sun’s Gift of Food to His Children.” In the story, Bullchild tells of the deity he calls Creator Sun who provides the buffalo as a gift to humans: “He blew very hard into this thing’s nostrils. Creator Sun, as he blew into the thing, said to it, ‘Now breathe the air from me, my

breath, and live with it like my children are now living with it. Eat the food of grass and foliage to fatten you and those in the same likeness as you are that will all roam this land sometime soon” (54). The Creator Sun provides protocols for the people, including not wasting the animals: “If you waste food, food will become scarce for you” (61). He explains how these words have been said to every generation, right up until his own, but that he worries about the next generations not following these protocols. Buffalo is a life-sustaining gift that is not to be taken for granted.

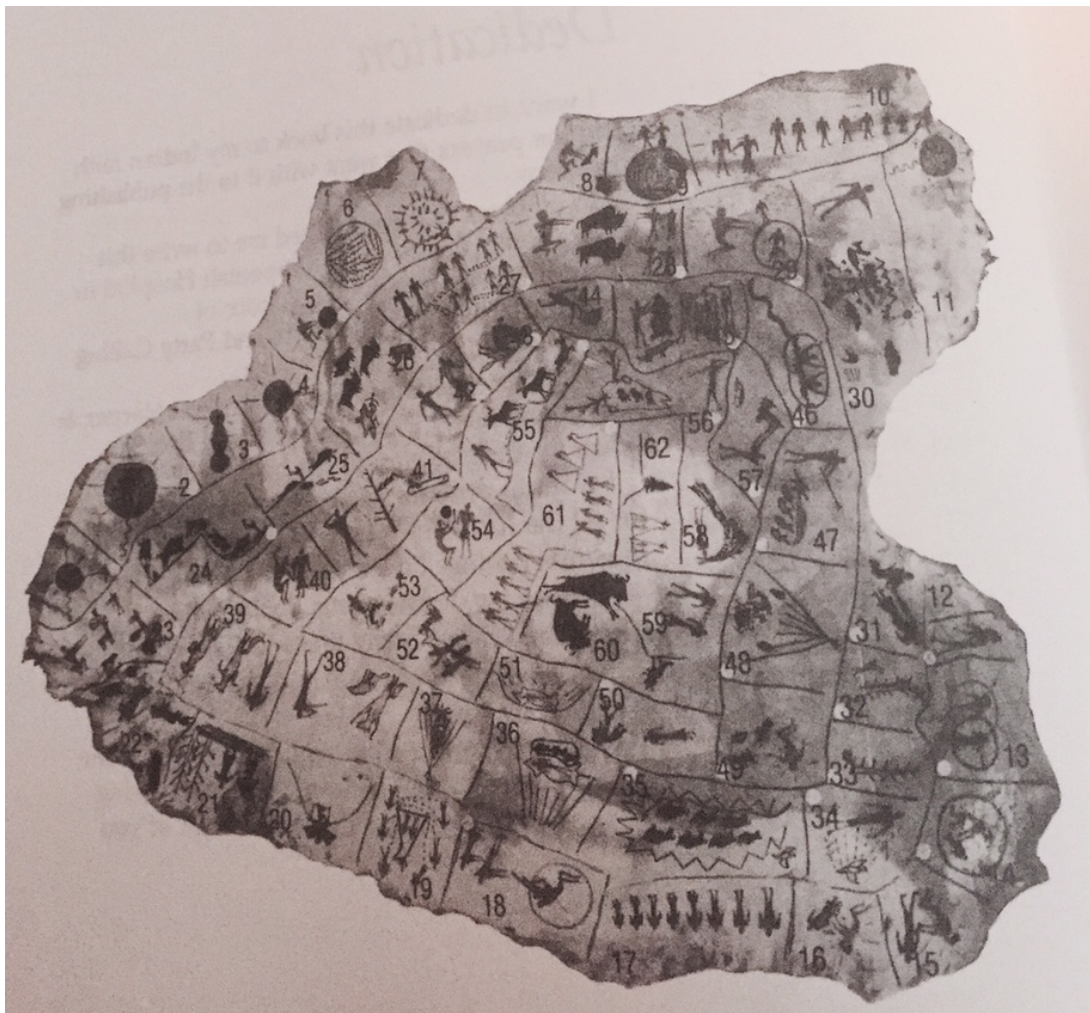


Fig. 2: Bullchild, Percy. *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*.

Bullchild also recounts Napi trickster stories, including “Buffaloes Laughing to Death.” Here, a fox uses funny antics to make the buffalo laugh to death so that the buffalo can be eaten. The fox, after teaching Napi the trick, warns him to “[n]ever be too greedy about this, do this only when you are very hungry and haven’t any other place to get something to eat. If you do this one after another, bad will come of it. Remember, not for fun” (221). Napi, as ever, does not do what he is told; instead he only eats a small amount before moving on to kill the next buffalo. Napi is then punished, as the Creator steps in and the buffalo stop laughing, and instead chase Napi up a tree: “The buffalo herd didn’t leave, they stayed around for several days watching Napi and laughing at him up the tree. It was their turn to laugh at him for killing all of those buffalo for nothing” (222). Here, Napi teaches the readers and listeners that greed and overhunting comes with consequences as it upsets the natural order: “Indigenous natural laws operate as concrete relationships within the cosmos and are the basis for all the alliances that form the social order of Siksikaitsitapi” (Bastien 40). The alliance with the buffalo mandates certain protocols that the people are expected to follow.

Bullchild also tells Kut-toe-yis stories, or culture hero stories. In “The Birth of Kut-toe-yis, Bloodclot,” Kut-toe-yis, born from the blood of a buffalo, arrives on earth and is adopted by an elderly couple. He brings justice and vengeance to the couple’s son-in-law and three daughters, who are cruel to their elderly parents. This can be understood as a warning that circumventing Indigenous values will have consequences. After justice is meted out to the transgressors, Kut-toe-yis brings the buffalo to his adoptive parents. He fills up a piskun (buffalo pound) and a cave with “a fresh herd of buffalo so the old people would never go hungry” (239). Ladner discusses the ways the buffalo are held as teachers to the Blackfoot people: “[T]he buffalo are acknowledged for teaching Siiksiikaawa, directly or indirectly, about community.

While individuals were free to live their own life without the interference of others, individuals were also obligated to and responsible for both their relations and the nation” (226). In the case of the son-in-law and his three older wives, they had ceased being responsible to their elders, and violated Blackfoot codes, and thereby deserved punishment.

In a similar way to Bullchild, Benton-Banai took the oral stories that form the framework of Midewin teachings and put them on paper in 1988. He creates a Mishomis character, an elder who is the storyteller. Mishomis tells his readers that reading these stories will be “a journey to find the center of ourselves so that we can know the peace that comes from living in harmony with the powers of the Universe” and that with these teachings, “we can better prepare ourselves for the uncertainties of tomorrow” (2). He also gives an account of the creation story of the Anishnaabe, along with the creation of Original Man, or Waynaboozhoo. Featuring prominently in several of the stories, Waynaboozhoo is part human, part spirit, and “provided the link through which human form was gradually given to the spiritual beings of the Earth” (31).

In one of the stories, “Waynaboozhoo and the Search for his Father,” Waynaboozhoo goes on a quest to find his father and encounters both obstacles and helpers along the way, including animal helpers, who often appear in the role of what Dunn and Comfort call “culture-bearers and messengers” (x). One of the helpers he encounters is a buffalo. For Indigenous peoples, according to Mandan-Hidatsa Elder Gerard Baker, the buffalo “represented strength, wisdom, fierceness and bravery, and the people believed that the buffalo taught them a lot” (147). The buffalo explains his strength and bravery in his first words to Waynaboozhoo: “Sometimes the winds bring snow that covers the Earth and can cause you to become blind and lost forever. Only I am able to survive. If this happens stand at my side and I shall protect you. I will do this because I am one of your oldest brothers” (Benton-Benai 39). Through the metaphor

of the storm, the buffalo Elder brother teaches Waynaboozhoo how kinship relationships are designed to protect the young and ensure the continuation of the people.

The concept of buffalo as an Elder relative is not exclusive to the Anishnaabe. Blackfoot people also understand animals to be their Elders, according to Jack Gladstone: “We look upon animals like the wolf, buffalo, elk, and grizzly bear as elders because they were already here in the creation when our people came along. Ours is the task to respect the elders and to respect what the elders teach us” (qtd. in Geist 130). Thus, Waynaboozhoo is shown to listen respectfully to what the buffalo tells him: “each being on Earth has a purpose to fulfill in life and... we as brothers and sisters must seek to understand and respect that purpose” (Benton-Benai 40). Waynaboozhoo then reflects on his own purpose, thereby completing relationship between teacher and student. Fred Dubray, a Cheyenne buffalo guide, elaborates on the teacher/student dynamic: “Buffalo mean everything to us. And they teach us all kinds of things. I spent a lot of time watching them, and they teach you how to respect yourself better, how they relate to each other and live with other species and how they respect each other. Those are things that are real to Indian people” (qtd. in LaDuke 160). The buffalo provide guidelines on how the kinship system should function. In keeping with these guidelines, respect is one of the seven teachings given to the Anishnaabe by the seven grandfathers in *The Mishomis Book*: “Respect for our brothers, sisters, and loved ones should also guide our path in life” (36). In *The Mishomis Book*, the buffalo is portrayed as both guide and teacher. These roles are represented by incorporating the familiar kinship relationship of siblings, including how an Elder brother tries to protect a Younger brother by sharing what he has already learned in this world.

Waynaboozhoo, as “original man,” establishes a model for those who come after him, including present and future listeners and readers. According to Harrod, those who inherit these

relationships are understood as being “able to establish and maintain relations with animals as contemporaries and even as intimate companions. Deep cultural values, such as reciprocity, interdependence, and kinship, along with the appropriate corresponding attitudes and obligations, are affirmed at the heart of those cosmological narratives” (*Renewing* 53-54). In fact, buffalo marriage stories are common amongst plains Indigenous peoples. Marriages which beget children and transformation from human to buffalo are a common theme in these stories, which indicates what Liz Bryan calls “a strong belief in the interconnectedness, even consanguinity, of the two species” (33). The interconnectedness is imprinted in cultural narratives, becoming a “part of a specific people’s symbolic heritage” (Harrod, *Animals* 64-65). As such, the offspring and the results of such unions continue to benefit people to this day.

Leslie Marmon Silko’s story “Yellow Woman” also demonstrates the interconnectedness between buffalo and humans. She discusses the ways in which the traditional stories give unique examples of kinship within peoples’ knowledge systems: “The Old Stories demonstrate the interrelationships that the Pueblo people have maintained with their plant and animal clanspeople” (69). Her people recognized that animals organized themselves socially in much the same way as humans do — in clans. She then relates the story of Kochininako (Yellow Woman) and her marriage to a buffalo within her narrative. Kochininako is looking for water when she notices “a strong, sexy man” by a fresh-water spring:

Little drops of water glisten on his chest. She cannot help but look at him because he is so strong and so good to look at. Able to transform himself from human to buffalo in the wink of an eye, Buffalo Man gallops away with her on his back. Kochininako falls in love with Buffalo Man, and because of this liaison, the Buffalo People agree to give their bodies to the

hunters to feed the starving Pueblo. Thus Kochininako's fearless sensuality results in the salvation of the people of her village, who are saved by the meat the Buffalo People 'give' to them. (70-71)

Human-animal transformation occurs at the site of life-giving water, ensuring the continued survival of Kochininako and her people through the bestowment of a gift. Reciprocity is embedded in the narrative. Much like alliances made through human marriage, an alliance between the buffalo and humans is formed, resulting in the people benefiting from the exchange.

The kinship bond formed through marriage means that the buffalo have the responsibility to gift humans, or "give their bodies to the hunters to feed the starving Pueblo." Harrod explains these kinds of stories this way: "Through marriage and sexual union [and adoption], human beings achieved a kind of double consciousness that enabled them to empathize with both human and animal realities and envision interchanges in their destinies" (*Animals* 73). Silko has her own interpretation of the marriage story: "Perhaps human beings long ago noticed the devastating impact human activity can have on the plants and the animals; maybe this is why tribal cultures devised the stories about humans and animals intermarrying, and the clans that bind humans to animals and plants through a whole complex of duties" ("Yellow" 69).⁹ In most buffalo marriage narratives, there is an understanding that a gift exchange will be mutual. Threaded throughout is the idea that all beings exist in complex relation to one another with balance as the end goal of all involved. Thus, once the buffalo have given themselves to humans for their survival, humans reciprocate with prayer and tobacco, and promise not to overhunt the herds. Bastien notes, "The

⁹ Silko seems to be suggesting that it is guilt that resulted in these kinds of stories; however, Indigenous belief systems from my territories maintain these stories are not composed, but rather originate from a time that is only discussed in spiritual settings and following proper protocol.

act of offering tobacco is an act to return relationships to the previous balanced state” (134).

Thus a marriage, with all of its social obligations, understandings of mutual responsibility, and offering of gifts, is a natural metaphor for the renewal of the relationship with the buffalo. These kinds of kinship ties embed the idea that if the buffalo does well, so do the people.

Marriage is not the only way to establish a kinship bond. Adoption narratives are also common in Plains Indigenous stories, according to Harrod: “On the Northern Plains the practice of adoption was a long-standing means of establishing relationships both between individuals and among groups” (*Animals* 70). This includes relationships between humans and buffalo, and like marriage narratives, often also incorporates transformation and reciprocity. Ladner gives us an example of how kinship works in action: “It simply acknowledges the fact that a relationship exists between beings and that those beings have accepted the responsibilities that flow from said relationship. This can be explained on a more practical level in that I have responsibilities for my brothers the buffalo” (73-74).

Saulteaux oral historian Alexander Wolfe’s story collection called *Earth Elder Stories* contains adoption narratives. Wolfe wrote down his family stories because he realized he was approaching old age, or “the age of reminiscence” (xii). He felt the need to share the histories that were given to him by his grandfathers. The first three stories are sacred stories, telling of a time when animals communicated with humans in order to help them. The second story, “The Orphan Children,” tells of a brother and sister becoming separated from the rest of the tribe. A man on a horse finds them and adopts them, and the children learn from the other members of the man’s tribe, both gaining knowledge of their respective roles and place within the community. The story contributes to Indigenous kinship teachings of how the people are connected to the buffalo. Ladner explains this notion further: “the buffalo constituted a living

example of a community living in balance. They had a social formation that included all genders; both men and women led buffalo nations at different points in time, depending on situation and season. Buffalo social structures also emphasized both flux and balance” (226-27). By being “brought into the chief’s wigwam” (A. Wolfe 6), the children experience balance, as they learn traditional roles within the community as a whole. Eventually, the children are told that “they belonged to another world, another people,” which indicates an Indigenous understanding of the ways in which the spiritual intersects with the physical (A. Wolfe 7). “The world of ordinary human experience was grounded in, surrounded by, and regularly breached by transcendent realities possessing religious and moral significance for the people” (Harrod, *Renewing* 160). This juncture of the story provides listeners with a distinctly Indigenous praxis for viewing the world.

The storyteller continues by assuming the voice of the adoptive father, who reveals his true identity as Grandfather Buffalo. He tells the children that the people have been suffering since they left, and that the children are needed because of the knowledge they have gained from him: “You shall both show and teach them what you have learned and in that way they will become a strong and caring people” (A. Wolfe 7). He sends them with a warning that the children will have to overcome their fear of their people in order to help them, but that they will succeed in doing so. He gives the instructions to follow: “In time to come, when you are in need, you will ride your horse to the west, singing the song I will give you. My children will hear you and will follow you to a place you will choose. In this way they will meet your needs. I have spoken. I am Grandfather Buffalo” (7). The orphans have been gifted with a powerful song that will call the buffalo to feed the human people. It is also significant that he chooses to end his speech with his true identity, “Grandfather Buffalo”: “Nimosom, ‘my grandfather,’ and nohkom ‘my

grandmother' are used to address game animals [including buffalo], connoting a respectful and nurturing dependency relationship" (Brightman 187). Further to this, he is identifying himself as a specific spiritual helper within Cree and Saulteaux cosmology, sometimes also known as "Old Man Buffalo." He is known to be like a benevolent grandparent, who loves his grandchildren and wishes to do what he can to help them, much like the adoptive father/Grandfather Buffalo does in the story. Tinker explains the notion of sacrifice within the kinship relationship between humans and buffalo: "The power of the buffalo is already apparent in this act of sacrifice for the good of poor humans who would otherwise be unable to take care of themselves" ("Stones" 115). Grandfather Buffalo sacrifices a part of himself in order to ensure his grandchildren survive by giving himself as sustenance. Furthermore, because he adopts the children and teaches them how to organize their community, the children can return and share the knowledge with their people, ensuring future well-being, along with the power to call the buffalo to meet the needs of the people.

Certain stories are connected to specific places on the land. A specific sloping hill beside the South Saskatchewan River is linked to the historical consciousness of Nêhiyaw people because it was once the home to one of the largest recorded buffalo ribstones on the Northern Plains. According to Bagele Chilasa, "knowledge arises out of the people's relationship and interaction with their particular environments" (117). In keeping with this, specific knowledge comes out of the stories about the large buffalo rock. Several oral and written versions of the story of the Mistasiniy are known. I will examine two versions of this story. One version is told by Barry Ahenakew, recorded and painstakingly translated into written English, and appears in Deanna Christensen's weighty published history of the Cree Chief Ahtahkakoop. The other is

told by Stan Cuthand, who shares his version of the Mistasiniy story in a collection of Cree stories in English, published in the early 1970s.¹⁰

The Ahenakew story is structured to evoke an oral setting, with an orator or storyteller reminding listeners that the story contains spiritual power to assist the young people: “It will help you. It is for your help, for you to use” (29). The narrative tells of a baby who is mistakenly left behind as a camp moves. Some nearby buffalo hear him crying. At this point in the story, the old men narrators stop and tell the listener, “These animals, when they hear something they don’t understand, they search for it” (36). This not only reveals the nature of the buffalo, but also functions as a guide to ways listeners can learn: by finding out the source of something that is not known so that it becomes part of the familiar.

Two buffalo bulls find the boy, and the younger bull wants to kill the child in retribution for humans hunting and killing buffalo. Harrod explains how the buffalo-human relationship, while one of kinship and benevolence, also maintains “a sense of tension and unresolved ambiguity” as a result of the prey-predator binary (*Renewing* 54). The two bulls represent that ambiguity, with the older bull feeling compassion, which wins out over the younger bull’s anger. When the older bull runs to get the leader of the herd, his instincts are validated with the leader’s words: “It is pitiful this human life you have found” (Ahenakew 37). Within an Indigenous framework, the word “pity” connotes the need for compassion in both buffalo and human relationships, but especially towards the weak and the young.

Later in the story, the buffalo leader expands on the hunting relationship that demonstrates the compassion that exists between the two human and non-human peoples. He

¹⁰ As I looked at the publication information, I was startled to see my birth mother’s name, Donna Pinay, listed as an editorial assistant. The book was published in 1973, the same year that I was born.

acknowledges that both pray to the same Creator, and that providing humans with the means to live is the buffalo's work. But, like the Grandfather Buffalo in Wolfe's story "The Orphan Children," the buffalo leader in the mistasiniy story shares another of the natural laws of Creation: "They cannot over-kill us. They cannot get greedy and kill too much. They can only kill as much as they can use. That is the law. But these Cree must take care, my son. That is the reason you saw what you did. They must treat us with respect, and we too must be good to them" (Ahenakew 44). The buffalo leader and the boy affirm the principle of reciprocity, but the listeners are reminded of the law as well. By continuing to pray and follow the laws and guidelines of reciprocity, Indigenous peoples are able to ensure the relationship continues and the buffalo will continually be renewed.

The people's total reliance on the buffalo is reinforced within other parts of Ahenakew's version of the story. When the boy returns to the herd after visiting the humans, he tells of his distress at seeing the meat and hides that the humans need so much: "Everything is buffalo, simply everything is buffalo" (44). While the words are said in distress, the phrase itself holds great significance. Here, the buffalo and the listeners of the story are hearing how much the people depend on the buffalo. The phrase echoes and remains in contemporary times, as it is a phrase I have heard repeated in my community.

In Cuthand's version, the Grandfather Buffalo is not the leader, but guides the young boy into manhood with the knowledge required for respect and good relations among a herd. For example, the old buffalo tells the boy not to stare at the buffalo women, as the men would become jealous. According to David Mandelbaum, traditional Cree society had strict protocols that mediated communication to do with respecting marriage and keeping peaceful relationships (107, 126). The boy doesn't listen and talks directly to the Chief Buffalo's wife to the point

where the Chief Buffalo is offended. This kind of disrespectful behavior threatens the good relations in the herd, which also represents a band. As a result of the boy's transgressions, the old buffalo takes on a disciplinary role: "'You were not to bother anyone. You talked to Okimaw's wife,' scolded the old buffalo" (Cuthand 66). This part of the story is a teaching tool in respecting others' relationships with their partners, much as in Dakota writer Ella Deloria's story *Waterlily*. That story, like the Mistasiniy story, teaches about "codes of conduct governing 'proper' Dakota behavior" (Cotera 55). These teaching protocols embedded in traditional narratives are needed to ensure peace within a group of people who depend on each other for survival.

Both versions of the Mistasiniy story end with a reference to the importance of place. In Cuthand's version, when the young man chooses to stay with his buffalo relatives, he is told to "[r]oll four times to high noon, the setting sun, the north star, and the rising sun" (71). The transformation to buffalo and then to stone occurs with each roll. In the Ahenakew version, the Cree people are witness to the transformation:

It was heard all over, how mostos-awasis had lived with the buffalo and how they had seen him change form while they were hunting these buffalo. The Crees started gathering there, they camped there, and they came to see this big rock. They danced, they sang, and they prayed, for of course the buffalo was one of the gifts given by the Creator. And they held their Sun Dances there near the place where the big buffalo rock sat. (45)

The people are witness to the power inherent within the spirit of the buffalo, and respond by gathering at the site for their ceremonies. In the Cuthand version, the boy's family performs a ceremony to find out what happens to the boy. They are told the following: "He will be found

along the great river. He was once a mighty buffalo who became a solid rock. He will be remembered for many years to come” (72). The common elements to each story are the possibility of transformation, the importance of the act of remembering, and the sacredness embedded within certain physical sites. The site of transformation, as well as the stone itself, becomes sacred, as it is a living reminder of the kinship relationship that provides everything.

Neal McLeod uses the term “body poetics” in order to explain a writing process which “connects our living bodies to the living earth around us” (“Poetic” 109). He grew up hearing the Mistasiniy story, and incorporates it into the two Mistasiniy poems found in his 2008 poetry collection, *Gabriel’s Beach*. In the first poem, simply titled “Mistasiniy,” McLeod, like Ahenakew and Cuthand, tells the Mistasiniy story. The poem begins with “a boy was in a travois” (36). McLeod tells the reader that the travois leaves marks on the land, similar to the way Cree syllabics function as marks of knowledge. In his critical work *Cree Narrative Memory*, McLeod also refers to the marks his grandmother’s footsteps have made in her kitchen as she tells him stories; these steps act as a metaphor for “pathways of memory,” which represent “how she had travelled, the connection with the land” (15). The metaphor of marking the land is continued in the poem as McLeod describes Grandfather Buffalo walking across the land: “his old body cut / paths across prairie / full of clustered memories” (36). The stories themselves can be found embedded in the land in shaped geographies such as buffalo paths, carved over millennia and still visible today. Stevenson expands on the meaning of land-markings: “Natural phenomena as well as petroglyphs and other artifacts carved on the landscape — trenches dug during warfare, wagon tracks, property boundary markers, even old abandoned cars — have stories embedded and serve to nudge memories” (248). McLeod wants the reader to realize that

like the markings on the land, the buffalo lives on in Indigenous memory through the telling of the story.

The Mistasiniy story is retold throughout the poem, with the reader told that the baby boy was “lost in the paths of distant voices” (12) but found “by a mōsāpēw / buffalo bull” (14-15), who “sheltered the boy / from the wind / sāpowāstan / blowing through” (20-23). This sets up the buffalo as nurturer to the boy, also found in Ahenakew and Cuthand’s versions. The poem also reinforces the kinship relationship humans have with buffalo:

mosōm buffalo gave stories

holding memory

his body moving

ē-waskawīt. (40-44)

Mosōm is Grandfather in Cree, and the gifts he gave are continuing into the present, demonstrated by how McLeod ends the line with the Cree word for “he is moving.” Buffalo continues to move in Indigenous consciousness, reminding the people of who they are. McLeod discusses the Mistasiniy story’s significance in his article “Cree Poetic Discourse”: “The narrative embodies the notion of wahkohtowin, as the stone embodies the relationship that people have to the buffalo” (119). When the boy goes back, he becomes a leader equipped with the memory of the knowledge given to him by the Grandfather Buffalo, just as the orphans do in the *Earth Elder* story. In McLeod’s version of the story, the Grandfather Buffalo turns into a stone to be able to always help the boy and his ancestors. Because the boy understands himself to be in a reciprocal relationship, he gives back to the Grandfather Buffalo who had turned into a stone upon the boy’s departure: “he left offerings at the stone / where grandfather laid” (58-59).

McLeod reminds his readers that “stories and names are food / helps keep the life force /
waskawīwin flowing” (63-64).

Wahkohtowin, or kinship, provides the frame for the second Mistasiniy poem,
“Meditations on paskwāw-mostos awāsis.” In this poem, McLeod directly references the
destruction of the Mistasiniy. McLeod reminds the reader of this little-known history:

You give your hide
your house of being
sit on open prairie
heavy and old standing earth
broken by dynamite
tears the line of old relationship. (14-19)

In the 1960s, it was determined that the giant stone was in the path of the Gardiner Dam. First Nations and archaeologists formed a committee called the Big Rock Committee, attempting to raise the money to move it to a safe location. They were unsuccessful, and the Province of Saskatchewan used dynamite to blow up the stone into small pieces: “In the winter of 1966-67 the rock was blown up. Part of the debris was used in a cairn that commemorates the Mistaseni at the marina in Elbow. The rest is buried in the face of the Gardiner Dam” (Davidson 13).

McLeod references the Mistasiniy story and his thoughts: “These old stories mark our bodies with meaning and live on within us, despite colonial encroachments such as the destruction of the stone” (“Poetic” 120). In McLeod’s case, the Mistasiniy story lives on through the act of adopting his youngest son; through adoption, wahkohtowin is created and maintained:

Buffalo Child
paskwāw-mostos

rock has fallen
clipped from valley's embrace
but the story lives through
this boy
his body becomes
this ancient stone. (22-29)

Thus, McLeod's Mistasiniy poems are sites for the stories of his ancestors to find a wider contemporary audience.

Janice Acoose sees McLeod's poems as transfer points: "The practice of placing his ancestors, their stories and nêhiyawiwîn storytelling protocol into written English transforms the text into a viable transmitter of culture" (224). However, it is not just the transmission of culture that occurs, but amplification, as space is created for the stories to take on new meaning. Chris Teuton explains this process: "The act of returning with new knowledge and fresh interpretations creates new terrain upon which the community may continue to grow" ("Theorizing" 197). McLeod's poems of buffalo kinship provide guidance, but they are also intended to expand to include interpretations that fit with the ways in which peoples' lives grow and change.

Due to well-documented accounts of colonization, we know that Indigenous peoples have suffered a memory lapse about the importance of these stories and these sites. The publications that I discuss here were all done with the goal of rekindling the knowledge held within the community. This is integral and essential to the decolonization process for Indigenous peoples. Re-learning our kinship alliances restores the balance that has been disturbed. Bastien puts it this way: "Kinship means that Siksikaitsitapi survival is dependent upon the cosmic order and that our existence is based on knowing and learning our alliances" (4). Despite the changes that have

occurred in the past two centuries, the importance of re-learning our alliances has not changed.

As Justice writes, these relationships contribute to a sense of both identity and nationhood:

[T]he idea that identities are conditional and influenced by social contexts isn't particularly alien to Indigenous epistemologies, given historical and contemporary kinship relationships that often included, through adoption [and marriage], the sacred transformation of the individual that brought into being what nature had originally wrought otherwise. (*Our Fire* 214)

The theme of transformation takes on added significance when we consider ways to decolonize. Sto:lo scholar Jo-ann Archibald agrees: "I believe that Indigenous stories are at the core of our cultures. They have the power to make us think, feel, and be good human beings. They have the power to bring storied life back to us" (139). These stories of kinship with the buffalo are not relics of the past, but are directly related to the continuance of Indigenous nationhood. Read now, in a time when buffalo are still largely absent from the landscape, the written stories function as memory maps for Indigenous people to remember their place in the world, evoking the same power as Bullchild's hide painting. As Justice asserts, remembering and telling these stories is "about kinship, our rights, our responsibilities, and relationships as a people, about our sacred relationships to one another, to other peoples, and to all Creation" (*Our Fire* 215). It is what I am reminded of when I go to the buffalo stone.

The provincial government erected a monument to Mistasiniy on the banks of the Gardiner Reservoir out of some of the pieces that remained. It sits near the Elbow Marina, just by the edge of the water. When my son and I arrived, I undid his seatbelt, took a small breath, grabbed some tobacco and stepped out of the car. As I walked towards the monument, sadness engulfed me, and I began to cry. I felt the same grief I feel at the loss of someone in my family.

As I walked around the stone, my son took some of the tobacco that I had brought, and put it down on the stone (see fig. 3). Mistasiniy has now become part of our shared history, our lived experience. A cousin told me that he has some of the pieces of Mistasiniy, collected by my uncle, who was part of the last ceremony held by the intact Mistasiniy. I take comfort in this knowledge. The Mistasiniy's destruction mirrors the destruction of the great herds of buffalo in the nineteenth century, the subject of my next chapter. The buffalo and the Mistasiniy live on in a physical form and in Indigenous consciousness. Tinker suggests that "we might productively think of the broken pieces of a rock continuing to have a collective consciousness that remains unbroken and undifferentiated. Thus, we can relate to the whole of the rock by relating to a small piece of it" ("Stones" 115). And as McLeod reminds us, Mistasiniy and Grandfather Buffalo continue to live on in each of us as we practice and follow our laws of wahkohtowin. We are related.



Figure 3: Hubbard, Tasha. "Paying Respect." 2011. JPEG file.

Chapter Two: Buffalo Genocide and Indigenous Loss in Nineteenth Century North

America: “Kill, Skin, and Sell”

August 23rd, Iron Creek.

This beautiful stream derives its name from a strange formation, said to be pure iron. The piece weighs 300 lbs. It is so soft you can cut it with a knife. It rings like steel when struck with a piece of iron. Tradition says that it has lain out on the hill ever since the place was first visited by Na-ne-boo-sho after the flood had retired. For ages the tribes of Blackfeet and Crees have gathered their clan to pay homage to this wonderful manitoo.

George McDougall (John McDougall 141-42)

Near Hardisty, Alberta, the Iron Creek meteor sat on the highest hill in the area. It was known as the Manitou Stone to generations of Indigenous people, and it also had a third name: Grandfather Buffalo Stone. It was the Grandfather to all the buffalo ribstones across the northern prairies. Hugh Dempsey, in *Big Bear: The End of Freedom*, mentions ribstones: “These monuments were like sentinels on the prairie, each one a tribute to Old Man Buffalo, guardian of the herds” (37). One of the most sacred sites in Nêhiyaw and Blackfoot geography, the Grandfather Buffalo Stone was where ceremonies took place and offerings were given to the Grandfather Spirit of the buffalo, to ask for the return of the herds so life would continue.



Fig. 4. Hubbard, Tasha. "Paying Respect II." 2012. JPEG file.

After a journey of exile, the Grandfather Buffalo Stone was returned to the northern plains area in 1973, and currently sits in the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton, Alberta.¹¹ While in Edmonton in 2012, I decided to visit the Stone. My Cree-speaking father was also in the city, and I invited him to come along. Together, we walked quietly towards the exhibit hall, where the

¹¹ In 1886, the Grandfather Buffalo Stone, or Iron Creek Meteorite, was moved to the Victoria University in Cobourg, Ontario, eventually ending up in the Royal Ontario Museum before it was taken to the Royal Alberta Museum in 1973 (Lowey). Despite attempts by local Cree groups to have the Stone either returned to its original site or to Cree possession, it remains in the museum.

Stone sits in front of a famous photo of piled-high buffalo bones (see fig. 4). No words were spoken as we paid respect to the Stone spirit held within.

Lieutenant William Butler travelled through the same region, now known as central Alberta, in 1870, as part of his trip to report on the conditions of the northern plains Indigenous peoples to the Canadian government. He wrote about the Grandfather Buffalo Stone in his memoirs: “No tribe or portion of a tribe would pass in the vicinity without paying a visit to this great medicine: it was said to be increasing yearly in weight. Old men remembered having heard old men say that they had once lifted it easily from the ground. Now, no single man could carry it” (304). However, by the time Butler was writing about the Stone, it no longer sat in its place high upon a hill. George McDougall, a Methodist missionary, had it removed in 1866 and taken to the Victoria Mission near Lac St. Anne, in an attempt to draw potential worshipers to the church and away from their own traditions. Butler recounts the reaction from the Cree to their Grandfather’s removal: “When the Indians found that it had been taken away, they were loud in the expression of their regret. The old medicine men declared that its removal would lead to great misfortunes, and that war, disease, and dearth of buffalo would afflict the tribes of Saskatchewan” (304). I have heard similar stories of those who lamented the theft of such an important sacred being and the terrible things that would happen as a result.

McDougall did not believe these predictions, as shown by a letter he wrote in 1869, published by his son John: “Three years ago, one of our people put the idol in his cart and brought it to Victoria. This roused the ire of the conjurors. They declared that sickness, war, and decrease of buffalo would follow the sacrilege. Thanks to a kind Providence, these soothsayers have been confounded, for last summer thousands of wild cattle grazed upon the sacred plain” (141-42). However, Mrs. Frederick Stephenson, a Methodist writing about prairie mission

history, tells a different story: “The buffalo became scarce and the people suffered during the winter of 1867-1868” (98) and “A scourge of smallpox, in 1870, carried off thousands of Indians” (102). In March of 1871, McDougall, while still unwilling to make the connection to the stolen Stone, admitted that conditions were worsening: “The buffalo having left the Saskatchewan, the Indians have had to follow them on to the bare plains, and we fully expect to hear of great suffering, if not death, from starvation” (171-72). Within a few years, the predictions of the Cree medicine men had come to pass as the buffalo numbers plummeted in the 1870s. James Daschuk, in his monograph *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, describes the dire situation of Indigenous peoples on the northern plains in the latter decades of the nineteenth century after the buffalo were gone. For a population that had already endured much trauma, their situation was then compounded with “region-wide famine” and diseases like tuberculosis sweeping in “among immune-compromised communities” (99-100). The destruction of the buffalo resulted in casualties due to starvation of Indigenous peoples, and contributed to the colonial genocidal project in North America.

In this chapter, I endeavor to apply the concept of genocide to the buffalo slaughter of the late nineteenth century. I explain how, viewed through an Indigenous epistemological framework, buffalo are a nation of people. I show that contemporary critical animal studies, along with post colonial studies and feminist studies, are shifting towards this position, joining the chorus of Indigenous scholarship that refutes Eurocentric beliefs in the supremacy of the European man. I then demonstrate how imperialist belief systems sought the erasure of both Indigenous people and buffalo, conflated as inferior and expendable, and that the destruction of the buffalo was genocidal in nature. Using hide hunters’ first-person accounts, as well as historical scholarship, I lay out the steps taken by hide-hunters, supported by the US army and

government policy, to “kill, skin, and sell” buffalo systematically in order to clear space for settler colonialism. I then explore the effect buffalo genocide has on Indigenous peoples, demonstrated by creative expression. Métis poet Marilyn Dumont’s “Les Animaux” and Anishnaabe writer Louise Erdrich’s *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* both express deep mourning for the dead buffalo and even imagine the buffalo survivors’ own grief as a result of genocide.

Finding a definitive meaning of genocide has been the subject of numerous scholarly efforts since the field of genocide studies grew in the 1980s, but there is not one commonly accepted definition.¹² Some scholars feel that the label of genocide should be applied only when a mass extinction takes place in order to avoid rendering the word “banal or meaningless by careless use” (A. Jones 19). Helen Fein, founder of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, puts forward a definition that emphasizes physical destruction: “Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim” (qtd. in A. Jones 18). Raphael Lemkin created the term genocide during World War II, combining the following: “the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, clan) and the Latin suffix *cide* (killing)” (“Genocide” 228). In his publication *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, he explains that genocide is two-fold; it is the “destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group” and “the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor” (79). Furthermore, he considered the cultural life of nations to be

¹² Definitions spanning time and positions are presented together in Adam Jones’s *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Colin Tatz, in *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide*, also supplies definitions that span international law, social sciences, and dictionary entries.

integral to their biological and political existence. According to Damien Short, Lemkin understood the following: “a nation possesses a biological life and an interrelated and interdependent cultural life such that an attack on its physical existence is also an attack on its cultural existence, and vice versa” (839). Those scholars who take softer positions on defining genocide worry that rigid definitions exclude actions that need to be included, so instead they promote “a *dynamic and evolving* genocide framework, rather than a static and inflexible one” (A. Jones 19, italics mine). In his discussion of specific colonial genocidal practices, Andrew Woolford says, “[T]he study of colonial genocide should contribute to the broader task of decolonizing genocide studies by overcoming Eurocentric biases within the field” (31). This entails, among other things, allowing the inclusion of “those actors usually disregarded in genocide studies or viewed as external to human groups” (31).

Here, I would like to propose that a decolonized definition of genocide that is dynamic and evolving must be inherently responsive to Indigenous epistemologies. An Indigenous paradigm expands the conception of ‘people’ to include animals and other other-than-human persons, thereby valuing all life, not just that of humans. Tinker explains this further:

In one of the polyvalent layers of meaning, those four directions hold together in the same egalitarian balance the four nations of two-leggeds, four-leggeds, wingeds, and living-moving things. In this rendition human beings lose their status of ‘primacy’ and ‘dominion.’ Implicitly and explicitly American Indians are driven by their culture and spirituality to recognize the personhood of all ‘things’ in creation. (“American” 165)

In other words, being “a people” is not an exclusive domain only applied to humans, nor is there a hierarchy where humans occupy the top and animals the bottom. Hogan, in her essay “First

People,” echoes Tinker’s statement: “[F]or us, the animals are understood to be our equals. They are still our teachers. They are our helpers and healers. They have been our guardians and we have been theirs” (12).

Arvol Looking Horse, keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf pipe, speaks of this close relationship with buffalo to Winona LaDuke: “With the teaching of our way of life from the time of being, the First People were the Buffalo people, our ancestors which came from the sacred Black Hills, the heart of everything that is” (162). Indigenous knowledge held in my nation’s oral tradition explains how the buffalo people take care of us and teach us how to live, much like a benevolent grandparent. As a result of this connection, my traditional teachers describe the loss of the buffalo as a major wave of trauma for plains Indigenous peoples (epidemic disease and the Indian wars came before).

Many Euro-Western viewpoints disregard the spiritual and kinship relationship between animals and humans, or relegate it to the category of folk tales. However, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, in their *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, say that if we accept the work of Alfred Crosby and Virginia Anderson, who explore the environmental and cultural domination of Indigenous peoples by Anglo-European settlers, then “such destructive changes were premised on ontological and epistemological differences between European and Indian ideas of human and animal being-in-the-world” (11). Recent animal studies scholarship is critical of the human-centric bias in European thought.¹³ Adam Weitzenfeld and Melanie Joy, in

¹³ Weitzenfeld and Joy explain how anthropocentrism is an ideology that “functions to maintain the centrality and priority of human existence through marginalizing and subordinating nonhuman perspectives, interests, and beings” (4). They explain how anthropocentric cultural hegemony is reinforced through both Judeo-Christian creation stories that say humans “are ordained to have dominion over other creatures in the service of the divine” (5) and through humanism, “a belief system that defines

their essay “An Overview of Anthropocentrism, Humanism, and Speciesism in Critical Animal Theory,” maintain that anthropocentrism is intricately related with other systems of oppression:

Predicated upon the dominant understanding of the human ‘us,’ anthropocentrism fundamentally intersects with other centrisms such as androcentrism and ethnocentrism. Together, they operate through a self-referencing conceptual system of oppositional dualisms (e.g., human-animal, man-woman, civilized-savage) in which the implicit, taken-for-granted associations between subordinated identities mutually reinforce one another’s subordination as Others.

(9)

Thus, if animals are included amongst ‘Others’ who are deemed as subordinate, the door is opened to Euro-Western justification of genocidal acts against animals, including the buffalo, due to anthropocentrism. Dakota scholar Waziyatawin calls anthropocentrism “human-supremacist thinking” and says that “such views are harmful to life — and not just a little harmful: the kind of genocidal harmful that makes species go extinct and ecosystems collapse” (218). It is specifically the anthropocentric bias of nineteenth century Euro-Western leaders that gave them the justification to commit buffalo genocide in order to consolidate political power in the Great Plains.

Buffalo genocide and Indigenous genocide are intricately related. As Sherene Razack asserts, violence is an integral part of North American imperialism and colonialism, and the perpetrators of violence “invoke theories of degeneration to maintain the view that there are two

human beings as ontologically free through a universally shared essence such as reason, and considers humans as the source of knowledge and value” (5).

levels of existence — the fully civilized human and the subhuman other” (qtd. in Goldman *Dispossession* 65). These systems of hierarchy place people of European descent at the top and racialized peoples at the bottom, occupying a shared category with animals. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh explains how this hierarchy justifies colonial genocide: “Those who perpetrate genocide need an explanation for their actions, a system of justification to provoke the social machinery of brutality and ameliorate the collective guilt that follows” (114). Indeed, when Americans began to eye the Great Plains as part of the imperialist project, they identified two major obstacles to claiming the land and fulfilling their mandate of Manifest Destiny: Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. Shane Breen summarizes how Lemkin included Indigenous experience in the Americas and found that “colonial genocide involved the destruction of the foundations of the collective life of hunter-gatherers and their subsequent extermination” (73). In other words, if imperialist forces destroy the buffalo, they destroy the foundation of plains Indigenous collectivity and their very lives.

Nineteenth-century imperialist thinkers and leaders shared what Sven Lindqvist, in *“Exterminate All the Brutes,”* calls “the conviction that imperialism is a biologically necessary process, which, according to the laws of nature, leads to the inevitable destruction of the lower races” (141). Through philosophers and so-called ‘thinkers’ of the mid-nineteenth century, the foundation was laid for the justification of genocidal violence in the name of progress. Charles Lyell, in his *Principles of Geology*, written in the 1830s, advocated for imperialists to not feel any guilt for their actions which resulted in extermination, as they only mimicked what species in nature do. Lyell, fully believing in the superiority of European man, naturalizes the extermination of lesser beings, whether it is racialized humans or animals. While discussing the arrival of Europeans in Australia, Lyell predicts rapid extinctions in a brief period: “a mightier

revolution is effected in a brief period than the first entrance of a savage horde, or their continued occupation of the country for many centuries, can possibly be imagined or continued” (157). The notion that imperialism brings rapid change is naturalized by this mode of thinking. Thus, Lyell lays a foundation for the natural “ascendency of man” (154) that bolsters imperialistic efforts to colonize North America.

Herbert Spencer, in his 1850 treatise *Social Statics*, goes further to connect imperial logic to expansion to the western plains through his terminology, including use of the words ‘savage’ and ‘brute.’ According to Patrick Brantlinger, “savagery itself was often, by definition, a sufficient explanation for the extinction of some, if not all, savage races” (18). Spencer maintained that imperialism is “the great scheme of perfect happiness” and the Indigenous peoples were obstacles to achieving said happiness; thus “Be he human or be he brute — the hindrance must be got rid of” (416). Brute can both encompass animals lower than humans, or animal nature in humans, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. The application of these labels are easily transformed into justification of genocide.

Through the language of imperialism, Indigenous peoples and buffalo became conflated, both categorized as brutes that needed to be erased. General Nelson A. Miles wrote the following of the buffalo slaughter: “This might seem like cruelty and wasteful extravagance but the buffalo, like the Indian, stood in the way of civilization and in the path of progress” (135). Savagery, represented by the Indian and the buffalo, must give way to civilization, represented by the Euro-Western man and his agrarian ideal. Justice posits that the necessity for erasure “provides the philosophical and legal justification for land and resource theft, cultural and spiritual appropriation, subversion of social and political sovereignty, degradation, dehumanization, abuse, misrecognition, and slaughter” (“Relevant” 66). Genocide of the buffalo

was an integral part of Western expansionism, similar to the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples.

Peter Erasmus, a Métis guide and translator from Manitoba, wrote about his time with the Palliser Expedition in the 1850s. Despite his familiarity with the buffalo hunt, he could not help but be overwhelmed by the numbers of buffalo on the Great Plains. Scholars debate the exact number of buffalo that ranged from what is now central Saskatchewan and Alberta down to Mexico, but a generally accepted number falls between 30–70 million. Their sheer numbers made them a keystone species, influencing almost every other living being that inhabited the plains, humans included. Coming-Day, quoted in Bloomfield, tells the following story of the buffalo numbers: “The old-time buffaloes, for a distance of some ten miles the earth was not visible, as the buffaloes covered it. This story is not old, perhaps fifty years ago it was, when the buffalo were so many” (103). LaDuke explains the impact of the buffalo on the land in the following way: “Buffalo determine landscape. By their sheer numbers, weight, and behavior, they cultivated the prairie, which is the single largest ecosystem in North America” (143).

Palliser and Erasmus travelled on the northern edge of that ecosystem, and Erasmus observed the following:

Our journey was frequently interrupted by the need to wait for the huge herds of buffalo that blocked our passage. These vast herds were the greatest I had ever witnessed. I only then realized that we had been in the extreme northern edges of the great herds that grazed along our borders and away south into American territory. It was then beyond my imagination to believe that the next fifteen years would see the last period of the buffalo’s existence in our country. (71)

Erasmus notes that the buffalo slaughter was a topic of conversation with Palliser and others on the expedition: “Both the captain and Dr. Hector believed that a policy of buffalo extermination had been adopted as the quickest way to break down Indian resistance to American authority. The Indians obtained all their needs in food, clothing, and shelter from the buffalo” (71). In specifically examining the late nineteenth-century U.S. history, recent research draws a firmer line between the army and the slaughter of the buffalo. Sarah Carter explains this recent development in scholarship that suggests that the army’s involvement in the buffalo extermination was part “of a well-calculated policy to subdue Native Americans and drive them onto reserves” (96). This was done “by employing and providing assistance to non-Aboriginal buffalo hunters, by routinely sponsoring and outfitting civilian hunting expeditions that slaughtered on a massive scale, and by encouraging troops to kill large numbers of buffalo using artillery and cannon” (96). The army, representing the colonial U.S. interest in erasing buffalo in order to clear plains Indigenous peoples from the land, engaged in the genocidal process through policy and action, and at the same time, allowed genocide to happen by encouraging civilian sport hunters and hide hunters to indiscriminately slaughter the buffalo.

General Phillip Sheridan can be understood as one of the engineers of buffalo genocide. His biographer Paul Hutton refers to Sheridan’s “pragmatism and elastic ethics,” which made him “the perfect frontier soldier” (180). Thus, Sheridan was completely willing to undertake gruesome tasks in order to fulfill his frontier goals. Mark Levene, in *The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide*, says that “Sheridan authorized a conscious extermination of the remaining bison (and, where appropriate, horses too) to starve intractable tribes into submission” (96).

Sheridan and other military leaders fostered an atmosphere of national pride, with the understanding that killing buffalo was patriotic practice.¹⁴

David Smits, in his article “The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo: 1865-1883,” not only outlines the details of the slaughter, but posits that the slaughter was unwritten official army policy, whereby “the decree had gone forth that they must both give way” (333), referring to Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. Because of Sheridan’s past practice of issuing kill orders without written documentation, Smits says, “It is probable that Sheridan deliberately refused to issue the relevant written orders knowing that orally conveyed orders could be more easily concealed or more plausibly denied.... Why subject himself and the army to avoidable Indian enmity and humanitarian disapproval?” (333). And indeed, according to Smits, when one officer admitted that he had indiscriminately killed buffalo while out on a hunting party, his superior responded, “Kill every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone” (328).

Much has been written about “The Indian Wars,” the culmination of U.S. conquest and its efforts to, arguably, commit genocide. Smits explains clearly that the Army conflated the buffalo with the Plains Indigenous peoples—if one target was difficult to attack, the Army would switch to the other:

Frustrated bluecoats, unable to deliver a punishing blow to the so-called ‘Hostiles,’ unless they were immobilized in their winter camps, could, however, strike at a more accessible target, namely, the buffalo. That tactic also made curious sense, for in soldiers’ minds the buffalo and the Plains Indian were virtually inseparable. When Captain Robert G. Carter of the Fourth Cavalry

¹⁴ The infamous General Custer of the Seventh Cavalry is known to have taken his troops out to use buffalo as target practice for his new recruits.

referred to the ‘nomadic red Indian and his migratory companion, the bison,’ he linked the two together in a manner typical of military men. Soldiers who associated the buffalo with the Indian so inseparably could even occasionally pretend that slaughtering buffalo was actually killing Indians. (318)

General Custer provides a good example of this, as he is known to have described the tactics of a buffalo hunt in the same terms as a military action against Indigenous peoples for a Russian Grand Duke and his hunting party (Smits 319).

There was also collusion between official U.S. government representatives and the army to decimate buffalo in order to decimate Indigenous peoples. Robert Utley and Wilcomb Washburn explain that in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the “government agreed to abandon the Bozeman Trail and its guardian forts and to look upon the Powder River country as ‘unceded Indian territory’ in which the Sioux might continue to roam” (233). However, according to Steve Rinella, wording was included in the treaty to ensure the right to this territory only existed “so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase” (81). As soon as the treaty was concluded, the military looked the other way as the hide hunters went in and began slaughtering buffalo. With their food sources depleted, the Lakota were forced to ask for provisions, suggesting the buffalo numbers no longer justified the chase, as was stated in the treaty. Rinella explains the depletion of the buffalo “effectively undid the treaty and opened the door for more hide hunters to go down there with military protection and kill whatever buffalo were left” (81).

The army and the government had a third party with which to enact buffalo genocide: hide hunters themselves. Records exist of a speech Sheridan delivered before the Texas legislature, which was contemplating a bill to protect the buffalo in 1875. He said:

[The buffalo hunters] have done in the last two years and will do more in the next year to settle the vexed Indian question, than the entire regular army has done in the last thirty years. They are destroying the Indian's commissary, and it is a well-known fact that an army losing its base of supplies is placed at a great disadvantage. Send them powder and lead, if you will; for the sake of a lasting peace, let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated. (qtd. in Dary 129)

The words “kill, skin, and sell” are an appropriate mantra for the hide hunters, whose efforts had begun in earnest in 1871. According to William Hornaday, a former hunter turned conservationist, “the buffalo country fairly swarmed with hunters, each party putting forth its utmost efforts to destroy more buffaloes than its rivals” (494). While buffalo had been hunted in significant numbers prior to 1871, what focused the efforts was capitalism: M. Scott Taylor, in an economic analysis of the buffalo trade, notes the high demand coming from Europe along with the development of new tanning technologies set the stage for the shift from subsistence and small-scale trade hunting to the flint (hairless hide) trade, noting that “by 1872, a full scale hide-boom was in progress” (12). Buffalo leather was in demand in England and Europe for a variety of purposes, including shoe leather and industrial factory belts. It was an opportunity that was quickly seized upon. According to Roland Wright, “The United States government realized it could subdue the Plains tribes by letting freelance hunters (many of whom were Civil War veterans) kill off their food supply” (164). The genocide of the buffalo and the subsequent use of

their hides became fuel for the overall genocidal project of colonizing the entire Western territory.¹⁵

The numbers are stunning. Richard Irving Dodge, a colonel in the U.S. Army, gives his version of the above events in his work *Our Wild Indians*:

[B]y 1872 the buffalo region had been penetrated by no less than three great railroads, and the Indians had been forced from their vicinity. About this time too it was discovered that the tough, thick hide of the buffalo made admirable belting for machinery, and the dried skins readily commanded sale at three to four dollars each. The news spread like wild-fire, and soon the Union Pacific, Kansas Pacific, and Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe railroads, swarmed with hunters from all parts of the country, all excited with the prospect of having a buffalo hunt that would pay. By wagon, on horseback, and a-foot, the pot-hunters poured in, and soon the unfortunate buffalo was without a moment's peace or rest. Though hundreds of thousands of skins were sent to market, they scarcely indicated the slaughter. From want of skill in shooting, and want of knowledge in preserving the hides of those slain, one hide sent to market represented three, four, or even five dead buffalo. (293)

Another tactic had repercussions in the northern plains, north of the medicine line: fire. Sarah Carter explains that there is evidence of the U.S. military setting fires along the border in order to prevent Sitting Bull from taking refuge in the aftermath of the Battle of Little Big Horn.

¹⁵ It should be noted that once the buffalo were slaughtered, hides taken and flesh rotted away, what remained were their bones. Settlers and even Indigenous peoples both gathered bones in exchange for money. The bones were then used charred as a filtering agent or were rendered into gelatin for food, glue and photographic emulsions. Nicole Shukin, in *Animal Capital*, discusses the notion of rendering as “arguably entwined in the material and discursive conditions of possibility within modern capitalism” (67).

She maintains the fires may also have been set by hide hunters trying to move the buffalo herds to a more advantageous hunting spot (96). As a result of the slaughter and disruption of buffalo movement and breeding, by 1883, the buffalo were effectively removed from the Great Plains. The herd of millions was reduced to remnant herds of orphan calves, a few animals in captivity, and a refugee herd in Yellowstone. Estimates put their numbers as low as a few hundred animals by 1889.

Patrick Wolfe's discussion of the colonial "logic of elimination" and the ways in which "[s]ettler colonialism destroys to replace" is especially relevant in this case (387). The buffalo were now essentially destroyed, the destruction facilitated in part by their replacement with cattle. Chris Magoc explains: "Only the smaller northern herd [of buffalo] remained by 1879. Its destruction by 1883 resulted from a combination of hide-market (and 'sport') hunting, drought, and the arrival of nearly a half million head of cattle in Wyoming alone, whose appetite for grass and water competed with that of the diminishing bison" (92). The imperialist endeavor was to remove the existing species, and replace it with one of European origins in order to solidify ownership of the land.

There is dissent from some scholars about the primary cause of the buffalo's near extinction. There are those, including Shepherd Krech and Dan Flores, who posit that Indigenous peoples share equal (or more) responsibility for the destruction of the buffalo herds, thereby minimizing the actions of government, armies, and hide hunters. Georgia Sitara, in her PhD thesis "Humanitarianism in the Age of Capital and Empire: Canada, 1870-1890," researched the origin of the Indigenous wastefulness narrative and found that it only began after the buffalo were extinguished and whites started to view themselves as protectors of animals and Indigenous peoples as those "from whom animals needed protection" (27). She also finds that Krech and

Flores looked at sources such as studies done on cattle, the 1910 agricultural census, and estimates on Indigenous caloric intake, rather than written evidence from observers of the slaughter. She explains why there has been a resurgence of blaming Indigenous peoples: “The destruction of the buffalo made the west ripe for settlement and colonization; blaming Indians for the destruction of the buffalo provided justification for both” (141). She finds that the evidence of Euro-Western culpability in the overall destruction of the buffalo remains intact. Others agree, including Magoc, who asserts that “even with some profligate hunting, estimates are that all Indian tribes on the Great Plains killed no more than half a million bison annually” (90). The sustenance-based hunting, trade hunting, and some instances of wastefulness carried out by Indigenous peoples pales in comparison to the systematic slaughter carried out by the government-supported hide hunters. Sitara discusses the wastefulness narrative in her dissertation using biologist Charles Mair’s report to the Royal Society of Canada:

Mair argued that ‘no doubt’ the Red River Half-breed hunt ‘involved great waste; but food and leather were the objects of the plain hunters, as well as robes, and, hence, their destruction bore a small proportion to the immense slaughter in recent years, by the American pot-and-hide hunters.’ It was with the arrival of these men that ‘the work of extermination speedily began... it is estimated that in three years nearly six million animals were destroyed’. (Sitara 71-72)

Indeed, according to Michael Punke, there were an estimated 10,000 and perhaps as many as 20,000 hide hunters working on the Great Plains in 1872 (60). After a financial crash in 1873, thousands more buffalo hunters came west, most using precision rifles and killing as many as one hundred animals in a single stand. Frank Mayer, a buffalo hide hunter hunting the southern herds, used a Sharp rifle he called Old Reliable: “With a German-made, twenty power

scope, Mayer claimed (credibly) to have killed 269 buffalo with 300 cartridges at a range of 300 yards” (Punke 64). By 1880, buffalo numbers had severely decreased, and hunters had to move northward towards Montana. The *Sioux City Journal* reported on the hunt for that year:

The past severe winter caused the buffalo to bunch themselves in a few valleys where there was pasturage, and there the slaughter went on all winter. There was no sport in it, simply shooting down the famine-tamed animals as cattle might be shot down in a barn-yard. To the credit of the Indians it can be said that they killed no more than they could save the meat from. The greater part of the slaughter was done by white hunters, or butchers rather, who... left the carcasses to rot.¹⁶ (qtd. in McHugh 277)

As for instances of Indigenous overhunting of the buffalo during the trade era, there is Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) scholarship about the breakdown of the intricate relationship between buffalo and Indigenous people due to colonization. Bastien is a good example: she explains a shift from what she calls *ihtsipaitapiiyop* to materialism, calling it an era “of imbalance and colonization” (20). However, these kinds of incidents are understood to be relatively recent developments, in contrast to the centuries of Indigenous self-regulation to avoid over-hunting, explained by Tinker:

In the hunt most Indian nations report specified prayers of reciprocity involving apologies and words of thanksgiving to the animal itself and the animal’s spirit nation. Usually this ceremonial act is in compliance with the request of the animals themselves as the people remember the primordial negotiations in

¹⁶ The *Sioux City Journal* archives are in the Dewitt Library in Orange City, Iowa.

mythological stories. Thus, formal and informal ceremonies of reciprocity are a day-to-day mythic activity that has its origin in mythological stories in which human beings were given permission by the animal nations to hunt them for food. The resulting covenant, however, calls on human beings to assume responsibilities over and against the perpetration of violence among four-legged relatives. (“American” 162)

There are some Indigenous sources who take responsibility for the buffalo’s disappearance. They admit to failing to stop the eradication of the buffalo, or they acknowledge their rejection of Indigenous values. These stories, rather than calling for blame, need to be taken in the context of their understood responsibility to protect the buffalo.¹⁷ Yet most Indigenous peoples understood that they were not the only ones to blame, such as with George Cattleman’s interview in Cree with the *Indian Film History* project: “[T]he buffalo wasn’t dealt with in a good manner by the white man, so he has left us. There aren’t too many buffalo left with us anymore. He too [the buffalo] was dealt with unjustly.” Cattleman alludes to oral stories of the buffalo, who realized their demise was imminent at the hands of colonial forces, and thus went underground or into the waters, where small groups of survivors would remain until they felt it safe to return.¹⁸

The destruction of the buffalo by the unified efforts of the government, army, and hide hunters is genocide, under the Indigenous epistemology that applies “peoplehood” to the buffalo. Colonial genocide includes the removal of children as part of the destruction of the future of a

¹⁷ See, for example, the narratives of the Cree during the Treaty negotiations of 1876. Several chiefs, including Big Bear and Sweetgrass, spoke of the need to protect the remaining herds. See John Leonard Taylor. “Treaty Research Report – Treaty Six (1876). Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985. http://econet.ca/sk_enviro_champions/chiefs.html

¹⁸ For a discussion of this, see Neal McLeod’s *Cree Narrative Memory* on page 25.

people, and this also happened to the buffalo, as their children were taken away. Smits discusses the removal of calves from their herds: “The sportsmen [*sic*] adventurer John Mortimer Murphy claimed to have seen a troop of cavalry lasso one hundred buffalo calves and bring them to a corral near the post barracks. Although the little ones had sufficient room to run about and an abundance of hay and grass, ‘few of them lived more than a week’” (320). Accounts abound of the removal of calves from the herds for both sport and curiosity. Chris Powell explores the parameters of the concept of genocide: “[G]iven that a *genos* is a network of practical social relationships, destruction of a *genos* means the forcible breaking down of those relationships” (538). The army, in effect, broke down the family relationships of the buffalo by removing the calves, contributing to the genocidal project. The destruction of the buffalo’s social relationships did not stop with the removal of calves from the herd. Isenberg discusses the impact on the buffalo’s ability to reproduce, which depended on the ability to gather together: “Reproductive success likely declined with group size in the 1870s, as unceasing predation (by hide hunters) prevented the congregation of the herds in the rutting season, upsetting the bison’s patterns of migration and reproduction and thus inhibiting a recovery of the bison’s population” (136).

In the latter days of the buffalo slaughter, much of the buffalo’s social relationships did break down. Hide hunter accounts provide a lens into the impact of the genocide on the buffalo themselves, albeit through a Euro-Western filter. In *The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains*, hide hunter John R. Cook wrote about his days as a hide skinner. He chronicled the hunters’ practice of surrounding available waterways, forcing the buffalo to approach anyway, and gunning them down. For those buffalo who managed to find a water source that was free from hunters, this was their behavior: “they would rush and crowd in pell-mell, crowding, jamming, and trampling down both the weak and the strong, to quench a burning

thirst. Many of them were rendered insane from their intolerable, unbearable thirst” (198).

Instead of living cooperatively in their herd society, the buffalo were tortured prior to their death at the hands of the hide hunters. Cook also wrote about other ways in which constant hunting changed buffalo calf behavior:

When Charlie and Jimmie drove out the next morning to get the hides, there was a young calf standing by one of the carcasses, its mother being one of the victims of yesterday’s work. It still had the reddish color that all buffalo calves have in their infancy, not obtaining their regular blackish brown until in the fall of the year, when they are very fat, plump and stocky, and take on a glossy look. I have watched buffaloes many times during my three years’ hunt, not with a covetous eye at the time, but to study the characteristics of the animal, and I do not remember ever seeing buffalo calves frisky, gamboling, and cavorting around in playful glee like domestic calves. Perhaps their doom has been transmitted to them! Yes, this was the pathetic side of the question. And thousands of these little creatures literally starved to death, their mothers being killed from the time they were a day old on up to the time they could rustle their own living on the range.

(249)

The offspring of the buffalo carried the trauma of the loss of life.

Buffalo feel grief for their dead, according to the late Narcisse Blood and the long-time buffalo warden at the Grasslands National Park, Wes Olson.¹⁹ Olson has observed the behavior

¹⁹ I entered into a relationship of teacher and learner with the late Narcisse Blood in 2009. I went to him to learn more about the buffalo from the Blackfoot perspective and he shared knowledge with me during long conversations. Also, during the making of my short film, *Buffalo Calling*, I spent two summers

of the wild herd and their reaction to a death. Rather than abandon the body, buffalo will sit with the deceased, attempt to revive their family member, and make audible sounds of mourning. The hide hunters' practice of "still hunts" or shooting from a hidden location, with a high-powered rifle, did not give warning to the buffalo about the coming danger. Olson's observations are echoed by hide hunter accounts of what happened after they shot down their first victims: "When one of their number was killed the rest of the herd, smelling the blood, would become excited, but instead of stampeding would gather around the dead buffalo, pawing, bellowing and hooking it viciously. Taking advantage of this well-known habit of the creature, the hunter would kill one animal and then wipe out almost the entire herd" (Magoc 95). Hornaday's account also supports the concept of buffalo bereavement: "They cluster around the fallen ones, sniff at the warm blood, bawl aloud in wonderment, and do everything but run away" (469). Hornaday concludes in his work that the buffalo were stupid; he did not understand the strong family bonds that exist in buffalo herds.

walking the hills of the Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan with Park Warden Wes Olson, now retired, and he talked about buffalo behavior he had observed over a period of thirty years.



Fig. 5. Harney, Ricky. "Grief Runs Deep" 2015. JPEG file.



Fig. 6. Herney, Ricky. "I Will See You Again." 2015. JPEG file.

Several Indigenous accounts of the buffalo slaughter describe buffalo genocide as a war fought by the buffalo, which they eventually lost. Note the account told by Old Lady Horse in “The Last Buffalo Herd”:

There was a war between the buffalo and the white men. The white men built forts in the Kiowa country, and the wooly-headed buffalo soldiers [the Tenth Calvary, made up of Negro troops] shot the buffalo as fast as they could, but the buffalo kept coming on, coming on, even into the post cemetery at Fort Sill. Soldiers were not enough to hold them back.... But then the whites came and built the railroad, cutting the people’s land in half. The buffalo fought for the people, tearing up the tracks and chasing away the whites’ cattle. So the army was sent to kill the buffalo. The army brought in hunters, who killed until the bones of the buffalo covered the land and the buffalo saw they could no longer fight. (170)

Indigenous peoples also saw the buffalo as their protector, one who took a position on the front line in the genocidal war against Indigenous peoples. LaDuke, in her exploration of the destruction of the buffalo, has discovered that “[m]any native people view the historic buffalo slaughter as the time when the buffalo relatives, the older brothers, stood up and took the killing intended for the younger brothers, the Native peoples” (154). LaDuke contextualizes buffalo genocide as an example of colonial war on nature, “a war on the psyche, a war on the soul” (149).

When such a profound event as buffalo genocide is inflicted upon the earth and its people, Indigenous literature can express the subsequent depths of bereavement as a result of the loss. Bereavement can be understood as the deprivation “of an important relationship” (Corr and Corr 238). The kinship relationship between buffalo and Indigenous people meant that the buffalo’s

erasure resulted in a period of extreme grief. Indigenous psychologist Eduardo Duran describes the destruction of nature as a “soul wound.” He remarks that Elders understand such circumstances as the erasure of the buffalo from the land as an earth wounding: “[W]hen the earth is wounded, the people who are caretakers of the earth are also wounded at a very deep soul level” (16).

Grief at the loss of the buffalo and disruption of kinship relationships with the buffalo form the core of Dumont’s poem, “Les Animaux.” She builds the poem from a line in Jordon Zinovich’s *Gabriel Dumont in Paris*, using it as her epigraph: “This summer I planted ten acres in potatoes and barley. The ferry gave me more work than I wanted. We lived pretty good without the hunting. In 1880 or 1881, I led the last Saskatchewan hunts, but les animaux were gone and our ancient ways went with them.” The poem then becomes a lament for the buffalo from the perspective of Dumont’s ancestor, Gabriel Dumont, the Métis leader.

The speaker calls him “Uncle,” thereby respecting the kinship laws that govern how people name each other within a family. Dumont positions Indigenous peoples and the buffalo within a kinship relationship:

the brothers that have left us they have moved to another plain (5).

She uses spacing to force the reader to pause and consider the connection of family with the buffalo, before moving into the spatial loss described by “another plain.” This technique is reminiscent of oral traditions in which Indigenous peoples, unable to fathom that the seemingly limitless buffalo could be reduced to a handful, instead thought the buffalo had moved into a different space.

There are several oral stories of buffalo realizing their days are numbered and choosing to leave the land. This had far reaching consequences to plains Indigenous peoples, according to

Acoose: “Plagued by *e-mayihkamikahk*, a psychic disease that spread throughout their territory after thousands of buffalo drowned themselves, Nêhiyawiwîn endured *pastahowin*, or the transgression from Nêhiyawiwîn to colonial order” (223). During a 1975 group interview with several Cree Elders from Saddle Lake, Henry Cardinal and Richard Shirt spoke of a similar story they had both heard: “I heard a story from our old people when they claimed the buffalo entered an opening in a mountain....I too have heard stories from elders. They said that when they went to bed at night they would hear sounds from the ground; they were caused by the vast herds that were here” (Lightning). Dumont’s poetic version echoes the Elders’ sentiments about the buffalo. The land was seemingly overfilled with buffalo at one time, the survivors of genocide have been forced to leave, and now the emptiness looms over everyone.

Dumont’s speaker’s conception of the land and buffalo’s interconnectivity is disrupted by the loss, and she reveals a shift from a dynamic moving symphony of life to complete stillness and silence:

uncle, on the last hunt instead of seeing a moving sea of brown backs, a
rippling ground
now, you see only a few stumps feeding on grasses
now, their great size is swallowed by the bigger prairie
prairie that once seemed like it couldn’t hold all
les animaux their sound like distant thunder will never reach your ears again
(6-11)

The moving sea disappears, and the rumbling thunder is quiet: “gone, and now the prairie is mute” (24). By combining the loss of the buffalo with a silencing of the land, Dumont mixes French and English languages with Cree cosmology, creating what Renate Eigenbrod and

Jennifer Andrews describe as “a eulogy not only for the buffalo herds displaced by the settlers — ‘the new herds’ — but also for the potential loss of a linguistic and aesthetic heritage that uniquely combines French and English along with Cree” (6). I am interested in their use of the term eulogy to describe Dumont’s poetic process. Brantlinger tells us that the proleptic elegies of the late nineteenth century that mourned the vanishing Indian and even the buffalo can be understood as a “nation-founding genre” (3). Thus Dumont’s appropriation of this poetic form is an example of the ways Indigenous poets appropriate Western forms: “Incorporating aspects of the sonnet, Western rhyme schemes, or the elegy can be seen as a form of counting poetic coup, a symbolic but telling manifestation of triumph” (Rader 145). I would agree that the appropriation is a symbolic manifestation, not necessarily one of triumph, but one that shifts the form of elegy away from the false sense of nostalgia by European colonial settlers to a sincere expression of mourning by Indigenous peoples.

By composing an elegy, Dumont is pushing her readers to understand the depth of the loss experienced by her ancestors. The loss is personalized and internalized when Dumont’s speaker tells us that with the loss of the buffalo “something in us goes too.” Dumont names the loss without being specific, using “something,” so that it is not clear what exactly is lost. Near the end of the poem, Dumont also compares the loss of the buffalo with the loss of a body part:

uncle, how sad that day when no one spoke of them
as if speaking their name
could slice an arm from one’s own body
because they were you. (12-15)

Dumont articulates a loss that her uncle and his contemporaries were in too much pain to begin to express. Donella Dreese says we can understand Dumont’s memorializing process as “the

claiming of space for oneself and an understanding of the place's history, its physical constituents, and one's own psychological reaction to these aspects" (115). Unlike those who witnessed the buffalo's dying days, the speaker is able to mourn while at the same time acknowledging the buffalo's rightful place on the land by highlighting what happens when it is gone. In her introduction to *Appalachian Elegy*, bell hooks discusses how poems of lamentation "allow the melancholic loss that never truly disappears to be given voice. Like a slow, solemn musical refrain played again and again, they call us to remember and mourn, to know again that as we work for change our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting" (8).

Dumont's poem functions like the refrain hooks refers to, calling the reader to mourn the buffalo. Dumont speaks to her motivation for writing poems like "Les Animaux" in an interview with Maja Pasovic: "I recognize that I write about historical injustices not just for myself, but for generations that came before me and those that come after me" (n. pag). By speaking to an ancestor who was directly affected by the loss, Dumont brings the past into the light of the present. She also reminds those of us living in the present that there is something integral missing from the land, and there is unexpressed grief at the loss of the buffalo, facts that perhaps her readers have not considered before.

Indigenous literature can also speak for the buffalo in order to articulate the effect of genocide on their psyche. Louise Erdrich's novel *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* describes the last buffalo hunt as part of a written history retold by the masquerading priest Father Damien Modeste. He has tended to the people of the Turtle Mountain reservation for decades; but now, at the end of his life, he is writing a confession in order to reveal a secret he has kept since he arrived at the reservation. His letters and his experiences reveal the tension between traditional Anishnaabe beliefs and the Catholic church. Margaret Huettl, in "Re/creating

the Past: Anishinaabe History in the Novels of Louise Erdrich,” explains Erdrich’s approach in the novel overall: “Taking into account multiple perspectives, her novels sift through these tangled events of the past and provide meaning within a larger cultural and historical context” (30). The buffalo hunt, while marking the end of an era, also provides Erdrich with the opportunity to explore the grief and trauma that comes from such an event.²⁰

Erdrich prefaces the novel with a quotation from Nanapush. He speaks of the word *nindinawemaganidok*, which means ‘my relatives.’ He explains that by saying that word, “we speak of everything that has existed in time, the known and the unknown, the unseen, the obvious, all that lived before or is living now in the worlds above and below” (n. pag). Nanapush, as the keeper of traditions and knowledge, sets the tone for the novel, sharing the lesson that Father Damien learns through the years he spends with the Ojibway people. Father Damien, along with his confession, is also writing what he calls “History of the Puyats.” During his conversations with Father Jude, he hands over the written version of the oral story of the Puyat family. In it, he tells of what his predecessor Father Lacombe witnessed during the dying days of the large-scale buffalo hunts. He begins his history with a description of the hunt itself and how the Anishnaabe and Métis families processed the meat and hides and bones, as they had done for centuries. But it is the aftermath of this particular hunt, “one of the last,” that stands out (157). He says how witnesses told of seeing how “the surviving buffalo milled at the outskirts of the carnage, not grazing but watching with an insane intensity, as one by one, swiftly and painstakingly, each carcass was dismantled” (157). Like the hide hunters’ accounts of buffalo

²⁰ Erdrich also explores the notion of the last buffalo hunt in *Tracks*.

refusing to abandon their dead, and like Father Lacombe, Erdrich's buffalo are forced to witness their own death.

Erdrich also shows the buffalo's subsequent grief, specifically the buffalo mourning fallen family members: "Even through the night, the buffalo stayed, and were seen by the uneasy hunters and their families the next dawn to have remained standing quietly as though mourning their young and their dead, all their relatives that lay before them more or less unjointed, detongued, legless, headless, skinned" (157). Their own internal bonds of kinship are so strong that they are unable to abandon their dead. Father Damien's last words of his written history tell of the aftermath of buffalo genocide: "'The buffalo were taking leave of this earth and all they loved,' said the old chiefs and hunters after years had passed and they could tell what split their hearts. 'The buffalo went crazy with grief to see the end of things. Like us, they saw the end of things and like many of us, many today, they did not care to live'" (158).

Like Dumont, Erdrich also uses sound to instill in the reader how profound the loss was. She begins with a parody of a solar eclipse during which the sun becomes hidden behind hordes of buzzing flies, and ends with a horrible sound made by the remaining buffalo. The importance of the sound itself is established through repetition, as Erdrich repeats the word "sound" seven times in the following short passage:

It was a sound never heard before; no buffalo had ever made this sound. No one knew what the sound meant, except that one old toughened hunter sucked his breath in when he heard it, and as the sound increased he attempted to not cry out. Tears ran over his cheeks and down his throat, anyway, wetting his shoulders, for the sound gathered power until everyone was lost in its immensity. That sound

was heard once and never to be heard again, that sound made the body ache, the mind pinch shut. (157)

The sound is so powerful that it affects the witnesses physically, mentally, and emotionally, even reaching the heart of the “toughened hunter” who would normally be immune to grief. Erdrich’s sound is as relentless as the grief of the buffalo, described as “unmistakable and violent,” with an aural experience approximating a grief-stricken mother mourning a dead child: “it was as though the earth itself was sobbing” (158).

Erdrich shifts from aural to visual as Lacombe, as witness, describes the site of the buffalo descending into madness by charging their dead: “Slightly at first, then more violently, the buffalo proceeded to trample, gore, even bite their dead, to crush their brothers’ bones into the ground with their stone hooves, to toss into the air chunks of murdered flesh, and even, soon, to run down their own calves” (158). The genocide of the buffalo has destroyed its nature, as they even stop protecting their young, a mainstay of buffalo behavior. Erdrich moves back to the relentless “sound” that is so horrendous “that the people were struck to the core and could never speak of what they saw for a long time afterward” (158). The Métis and Anishnaabe are witnesses to the buffalo acknowledging their own demise, and Lacombe documents the experience. Erdrich’s haunting description echoes the expressions of grief from the buffalo depicted in the hide hunters’ journals and through buffalo experts’ observations.

Father Damien tells Father Jude of the “great pain of the end of things that lives in every family” (Erdrich 158). The destruction of the buffalo and the corresponding disruption in buffalo life-ways found in Erdrich reminds me of Waldau’s claim that cultural imperialism affects both human and nonhuman animals (“Pushing” 636). Her novel reminds us that there is a legacy to the kind of loss experienced from buffalo genocide. LaDuke explains it in this way:

When you take a buffalo, there is a Lakota ceremony, the Buffalo Kill ceremony. In that ceremony, the individual offers prayers and talks to the spirit of the animal. Then, and only then, will the buffalo surrender itself. That is when you can kill the buffalo. That was not done for the 50 million buffalo decimated by U.S. agriculture and buffalo hunters.... To kill incorrectly, many would say, affects and disrupts all life. (148)

Erdrich shows in haunting detail the disruption that echoes across the plains.

Chief Plenty-Coups, a major chief of the Crow people in the later nineteenth century, was known as Buffalo Bull Facing the Wind as a young man. He met writer Frank Linderman in the last few years of the nineteenth century, and agreed to tell Linderman his life-story. Plenty-Coups tells of life before and after buffalo genocide: “[O]ur bodies were strong and our minds healthy because there was always something for both to do. When the buffalo went away we became a changed people. Meat-eaters need meat. Other food is strange to them. Idleness that was never with us in buffalo days has stolen much from our minds and bodies” (138). The loss of the buffalo results in an imbalance amongst the people. In fact, according to Maria Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn, “subsequent generations of American Indians also have a pervasive sense of pain from what happened to their ancestors and incomplete mourning of those losses” (68). Plenty-Coups also demonstrates the immense grief as a result of the loss of the buffalo: “But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened. There was little singing anywhere” (169). Pretty Shield was a Crow medicine woman who was born in the last half of the nineteenth century and died in 1944. She too describes the aftermath of buffalo genocide in terms of deep mourning: “Ahh, my heart fell down when I began to see dead buffalo scattered all over our beautiful

country, killed and skinned, and left to rot by white men, many, many hundreds of buffalo.... Our hearts were like stones” (qtd. in Calloway 131). The hurtful legacies from the loss of the buffalo remain as generational trauma for Indigenous peoples.

The work of Dumont and Erdrich expresses what Justice categorizes as “an understanding of nationhood that’s fully rooted in broadly ecosystemic concepts of Indigenous kinship” and which includes a kinship with the buffalo that intertwines their respective and interrelated genocides (“Relevant” 63). As a result of buffalo genocide, despair becomes interwoven into peoples’ notions of themselves and their history. This kind of work reminds us that we carry grief from the loss of the buffalo.²¹ Dumont and Erdrich encourage the process of mourning for the buffalo in their texts. Arnold Krupat discusses Indigenous elegy in *“That the People Might Live”: Loss and Renewal in Native American Elegy*:

[W]hile death and loss were inevitably felt personally, they were intensely felt socially: someone who had contributed to the People’s well-being was now gone. Native American elegiac expression, traditionally, orally, and substantially in writing as well, offered mourners consolation so that they might overcome their grief and renew their will to sustain communal life. (3)

The loss of the buffalo continues to reverberate on the plains, but elegies found in Indigenous literature encourage the survivors to both mourn and “renew their will” to continue to live, despite the pain. The suffering and loss foretold by Nêhiyaw elders after the removal of the

²¹ In his Grade Two classroom, my son was shown images of buffalo bones piled up high. He was immediately struck down with grief, unable to articulate why the tears were flowing, and his teachers called me to come in. I explained to them that he has been taught that the buffalo are our relatives, and that showing him the photos of thousands of bones was highly traumatic for him. It took him three days to be able to speak to me about the photos.

Manitou Stone in 1866 were proven correct, but the Stone's continued presence teaches Indigenous people about continuing on, despite on-going colonial trauma.

During the summer of 2013, my son and I visited the area near Hardisty where the Stone had originally existed. I had coffee with two elderly amateur historians, and they remembered the settler family who had purchased the land where the Stone had sat. They told me that for years after the Stone had been stolen, Cree people would still come to the site and leave offerings, keeping their relationship with the buffalo spirit alive, even after the buffalo were gone.

Chapter Three: “‘You Can’t Run Away’: Buffalo Confinement in Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea*, D’Arcy McNickle’s *The Surrounded*, and Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*”

Before the imposition of the reservation system, Cree territory spanned much of the northern prairies, including the Milk River in north central Montana. Near the river, there is a large gap in the rolling hills, known as Cree Crossing, the colloquial name for the north-south corridor used by the Cree to follow the buffalo south to the Missouri River, a recurring event based on migration patterns and Indigenous knowledge. A ridge overlooking Cree Crossing was once the home of the Sleeping Buffalo Stone, a large stone in the shape of a buffalo resting on the ground. It marked an important ceremony site for the area’s various tribes where they enacted their obligations to the land and those who lived on it with them. In 1932, the Stone was “discovered” by a local rancher, moved into the nearby town of Malta, and placed in a city park, surrounded by settlers’ homes and businesses.

The removal and displacement of Sleeping Buffalo is symbolic of the end of the time when the buffalo and the peoples who relied on them were able to freely move across their territories. After the buffalo slaughter subsided in the last decades of the nineteenth century, buffalo and Indigenous peoples continued to be in relationship with one another into the twentieth century. Once a symbiotic shared existence where the people offered prayers to the buffalo in exchange for livelihood, the relationship was altered by colonialism to one of mutual hardship. One Lakota medicine man explained it this way: “If brother buffalo could talk he would say, ‘They put me on a reservation like the Indians.’ In life and death we and the buffalo have always shared the same fate” (Lame Deer, qtd in Geist 128). Cree Elder Gladys Wapass recalls her father’s reaction after he was asked by a young White man to translate the folk song “This Land is Our Land” into

Cree. Her father refused to cooperate, and instead named the similarities between what happened to both the buffalo and Indigenous peoples. According to Wapass, her father said “You know looking back in history our people were free like the buffalo they traveled across the prairie and the buffalo were free to roam. We were in big herds before and big bands and then we were put in reservation lands that are not good for anything” (n.pag). The reservation era began after disease, the buffalo slaughter, and mass starvation forced people to rely on what governments gave out, leaving both buffalo and people in the same situation: each was no longer able to travel through the land that had been their home for thousands of years. The remnant Indigenous and bison population seemed fated to an existence marked by fences and restrictions. The Sleeping Buffalo, Lane Deer, and Wapass’s father all convey the difficulties of coming to terms with the loss of the land, but they also depict the survivors of buffalo and Indigenous genocide as existing in a state of spatial limitation.

Limits on Indigenous people’s freedom include segregation to reserves, part of a widespread policy in both the United States and Canada. According to Madelaine Jacobs in *Assimilation Through Incarceration: The Geographic Imposition Of Canadian Law Over Indigenous Peoples*, the continued physical existence of Indigenous peoples was unsettling to “colonial ideological claims to the lands that became Canada” (2). She adds that governments responded to this unsettling by devising “programs of geographic segregation” to remove Indigenous peoples from the land. Jacob further explains these systems of confinement were used “in order to contain perceived threats and hasten the resolution of ‘the Indian problem’” (2). Geographical removal and confinement was intended to serve a purpose: contain Indigenous peoples until they died or succumbed to assimilation policies such as residential schools, and then ceased to be a barrier to colonial claims to the land.

McLeod, in his essay “Nêhiyawewin and Modernity,” writes of an elder recalling his father looking at the land, which was increasingly being fenced as settlers moved in: “The old men looked depressed as they sat there smoking their pipes. They were being deprived of a way of life” (39). In *Cree Narrative Memory*, McLeod expands on his ideas of what happens when Indigenous people experience literal and symbolic removal from the land. Using the concept of exile, he writes that spatial and spiritual exile result from a colonial presence that is represented by the fences, boundaries and restrictions placed upon the land, the people, and the buffalo. He goes on to explain that the effects are devastating, “as the alienation exists both in our hearts (spiritual exile) and in our physical alienation from the land (spatial exile)” (56).

Often the concept of exile is discussed in terms of physical removal from the land itself, such as the forced migrations of the Cherokee, or the lesser-known re-location of the Thunderchild First Nation.²² These peoples were deprived of the relationship they shared with their territory. Vine Deloria Jr. widens the scope of exile in “Out of Chaos” to include restrictions on land usage by Indigenous peoples, and calls this “as much a deprivation of land as actual loss of title” (245). He explains that exile can be both territorial and symbolic, both of which result in the “destruction of ceremonial life” (244). His discussion of the impact of loss of ceremonial and cultural connections to the land echoes the experience of McLeod’s Cree elders, giving us a way to understand the feeling of deprivation of those who still live in their territory, but who are restricted in how they interact with the land, and whose ways are threatened and changed by oppressive systems of colonialism.

²² Jack Funk’s *Outside, The Women Cried* chronicles the 1908 collusion between federal, provincial, and municipal governments to coerce the Thunderchild First Nation to move from arable farmland near Delmas, Saskatchewan to northern rocky soil, resulting in long-term hardship.

David Moore, in his article “Return of the Buffalo: Cultural Representation as Cultural Property,” says that allusions to both the survival and revitalization of the buffalo should challenge readers of Indigenous literatures to “trace key dynamics, both aesthetic and ethical, textual and contextual, of that literature as it strives to envision cracks of reversal in the linear engine of history and manifest destiny” (56). Linear engines are forces of forward propulsion; ‘manifest destiny,’ coined in the middle of the nineteenth century, was the belief that European settlers were destined to expand from coast to coast in the Americas in a forward and westward motion. The buffalo were obstacles in the goals of manifest destiny, and were systematically destroyed. Including the survival of the buffalo in Indigenous literature forms cracks of reversal and provides an alternative notion of history that includes the inherent injustice embedded in settler mythologies. Indigenous authors D’Arcy McNickle, Mourning Dove, and Linda Hogan explore exile and confinement in their novels, setting their work in the first few decades of the twentieth-century and engaging with the figure of the buffalo in doing so.²³

In this chapter, I compile and synthesize the complicated history of the survival of the buffalo and in particular, the history of the Pablo-Allard herd. The herd, once recognized as the last herd of free buffalo, is widely recognized in conservation circles as the main genesis herd for North American efforts to save the wild buffalo. I explain how the Dawes Act, a colonial land policy that enforced private ownership on collectively held Indian reservations, resulted in the sale of the herd to the Canadian government after a three-year round up period. I then focus on the way three novels, all set in the years following the Dawes Act’s implementation, explore the notions of confinement and exile of the buffalo. I show how D’Arcy McNickle’s *The*

²³ I’d like to acknowledge Niigaan Sinclair, who pointed out to me that D’Arcy McNickle and Mourning Dove had both attended the Pablo buffalo round up; this fact is the seed of this chapter.

Surrounded, Mourning Dove's *Cogewea* and Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* engage, with varying degrees of specificity, with "textual and contextual" elements of the early twentieth century history of the buffalo. I also analyze how the texts reflect the ways the buffalo were forced into a newly contained existence, one that exemplifies and mirrors the debilitating effects of exile and confinement on Indigenous peoples. Moreover, echoing Moore, I maintain that the novels all gesture towards potential "cracks" in the barriers that contain them that ultimately challenge the overall imperialist project.

After the wide-scale buffalo slaughter reduced the buffalo numbers from tens of millions to several thousand, the practices of poaching and collecting museum specimens succeeded in clearing most of the last surviving buffalo off the land. What few buffalo remained became symbols of success of transitioning the west to domesticated space. Yet a small herd lived in relative freedom in the plateau region of the western Rockies on Flathead Reservation land.²⁴ A Salish man named Atatice',²⁵ living on the Flathead Reservation in the 1850s, dreamed that he and his people should bring buffalo calves back to their territory west of the Rocky Mountains. He went to the Flathead's leadership council and told them of his dream and requested that he be able to fulfill it. They debated on what should be done, according to David Rockwell: "The people could see that the numbers of the buffalo were already declining, and inter-tribal conflicts

²⁴ The Flathead Indian Reservation, on the west side of the Rocky Mountains, was home to the Kootenai, Salish and Pend d'Oreille people, who had been allies for many years. They had a long-standing relationship with buffalo that began with the little-known intermountain buffalo who may have moved into Yellowstone in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. The second element of their relationship came about through their journey over the Rocky Mountains every year to hunt the buffalo on the plains: "Going to buffalo" was part of the traditional cycle of life. The elders say that when the wild roses bloomed in late spring or early summer, they knew that the buffalo calves were fat, and it was time to move east to hunt" (Rockwell 42). Like Plains Indigenous peoples, the Salish and Pend d'Oreille/Kootenai peoples had profound respect for the animals they considered to be a gift from creator.

²⁵ The Salish language spelling of his name is correct, including the single quotation mark.

over the dwindling resources were intensifying” (43). However, the leadership of the Flathead could not come to a consensus of whether they should follow the dream’s instructions because it represented “a fundamental change” as they felt the buffalo should not be domesticated and the proposal was dropped.

By the 1870s, the Flathead could see the consequences of the buffalo slaughter. The Flathead band leadership told Atatice’s son to carry out his father’s dream to bring calves over the Rockies to their territory. While estimates of the number of calves vary, Rockwell maintains, based upon the oral testimony of elders, that “six calves survived the journey west” (43). The son’s stepfather, Samuel Walking Coyote, sold the herd to Michel Pablo and Charles Allard, and the herd quickly flourished.²⁶ Salish elders were interviewed about this event in the 1930s, and according to Antoine Morigeau, Michel Pablo purportedly said, “We have thousands of acres covered with native grasses, streams of pure water, high mountains shielding the valley against severe winters. Above all else, Indians who love the shaggy brutes. Yes, our valley will be the safe home for the buffalo” (qtd. in Whealdon 79). Pablo speaks in terms of protection rather than hunting. The story of this particular buffalo herd marks a shift in the relationship between Indigenous people and the buffalo. Indigenous peoples become protectors, and the people of the Flathead Nation collectively ensured the survival of the plains buffalo.

Perhaps concerned with poachers, as well as with repercussions from landowners if the herd left the reservation, Pablo set into place measures to keep the herd safe: “Pablo employed several riders, or ‘buffalo herders’ as they were known, to keep an eye on the animals to see that

²⁶ Most of the published accounts of this occurrence credit Samuel Walking Coyote, a Kootenai man, with this action, and give various reasons he brought the calves over the mountains. However, official Salish and Kootenai tribal oral history disputes Walking Coyote’s role in the original action of bringing the calves over the Rocky Mountains.

none traveled far from their home range. These riders had little to do except watch them, as there is no record that the buffalo ever attempted to leave the valley” (Whealdon 86). Marcia Pablo, Pablo’s great-granddaughter, told me when I visited her territory that her great-grandfather always made sure there was someone from the tribe with the buffalo to keep them safe. With thousands of acres to roam, albeit on a much smaller scale than the millions in the past, the buffalo had found both a refuge and a means of survival. The Pablo-Allard herd became well known across the prairies in both the United States and Canada, and in the popular imagination it was considered to be the last free herd of plains buffalo. Jennifer Brower explains the significance of the Pablo-Allard herd: “[T]hese animals represented a link not only to the region’s past, but also to the Canadian West as a whole” (38).

One other herd of buffalo existed outside of captivity, although it was much less protected than the Pablo-Allard herd. The Yellowstone National Park had been a refuge for buffalo, but many succumbed to the hunt, including the herd that inhabited the Yellowstone River valley immediately north of the park, exterminated during the 1860s. Those on the park’s northern range were gone by the early 1890s (Meagher n. pag.). One small herd of twenty-three animals survived the slaughter by staying out of sight in the remote Pelican Valley in the park. According to Mary Ann Franke, heavy snowfall in the winters made survival difficult, but the small herd stayed close to the hot springs, which kept areas clear from snow (56). Only this herd remained at the turn of the century. Some have speculated that those bison were actually a separate species of intermountain buffalo mentioned in the oral history of the Salish/Kootenai. Carling Malouf elaborates: “From the evidence at hand it appears the intermountain buffalo ranged before the 1700s as far west as Oregon and Washington. Apparently they did not live in large herds, as they did on the Great Plains, but roamed alone, or in small groups” (143).

Regardless of their origins, the small Yellowstone herd moved into the twentieth century in a state of a precarious existence within the park boundaries, with poachers ignoring new laws prohibiting hunting of bison.

Aside from the Pablo herd and the Yellowstone herd, the last few buffalo remaining on the plains in the last decade of the nineteenth century were targets for poachers and, ironically, conservationists, such as William Hornaday, who wanted to preserve perfect specimens for posterity. Some cattlemen, most of them reformed hide hunters, captured buffalo orphan calves and yearlings to start small herds. The most well known are James McKay and Charles Alloway of Manitoba; Charles “Buffalo” Jones of Kansas; Frederick Dupree of South Dakota; and Charles Goodnight of Texas. All had captive bison herds during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Brower provides some details on the capture: “In each case, the captured calves were fed domestic cow milk to sustain them on the journey back to the respective ranches” (55). All of these men, whether by design or accident, carried out crossbreeding experiments between buffalo and cattle. Jones and Goodnight, in particular, had plans to create a super breed of cattle. Goodnight’s biographer, J. Evetts Haley, provides some insight:

“Goodnight, considering the breed the hardiest of common cattle, and the buffalo the smartest and hardiest of Plains animals, conceived the idea of crossing them to produce a beef breed that might ‘stand the high altitude and severe winters as the buffalo themselves do’” (443). Jones made similar efforts but lost most of his herd to disease, and sold the remainder of his animals to Pablo and Allard in 1893 (Neufeld). George Coder maintains that experiments in crossbreeding continued into the first few decades of the twentieth century but eventually were stopped, and buffalo herds were kept separate from cattle or sold to conservation herds and zoos, but the majority retained the cattle DNA as a marker of how they survived, and many living bison’s

ancestry can be traced back to these captive herds (40).

Charles Allard died in 1896 and his share of the herd was sold, but Pablo maintained his portion of the herd, and by 1904, it numbered around 800. Although the buffalo had survived and lived relatively freely amongst the Salish and Kootenai peoples, their freedom was soon in peril because of the desire of settlers to access Indigenous lands. According to Rockwell, there had been “pressure mounting outside the reservation, where non-Indians were beginning to control increasing portions of Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai aboriginal territories. In time, they began to eye lands within the Flathead Reservation itself” (22). The desire to take over reservation lands undermined previous treaties, which guaranteed on-going exclusive use of the land within the reservation boundaries.

Despite existing treaties, those settlers eyeing Indigenous lands for their own use had an effective weapon in their fight to access those lands: the 1887 General Allotment Act. It became commonly known as the Dawes Act, named after its author, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts: “The law allowed for the President to break up reservation land, which was held in common by the members of a tribe, into small allotments to be parceled out to individuals. Thus, Native Americans registering on a tribal ‘roll’ were granted allotments of reservation land” (“Dawes”). Once the allotments had been distributed to individual band members, usually a quarter section or 160 acres, vast tracts of reservation land were left over, deemed as surplus, and then made available to white settlers. Reservations forced into the Dawes Act often lost over half of their land base. Colonial agents such as the government and settlers believed that Indigenous peoples were incapable of using the land to its full capacity and that the best thing for Indigenous peoples was assimilation. They intended to keep Indigenous peoples confined to smaller and smaller parcels of land and “surmised that ‘civilization’ would thus swiftly occur under a

regimen of private land ownership, farming, schooling, and religion” (Ruppel 27). The Dawes act was eventually imposed on over 100 reservations across the United States.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Dawes Act threatened the Flathead Reservation. The Salish and Kootenai resisted; however, according to Robert Bigart, they “were unable to counter the assault launched by Congressman Joseph M. Dixon in 1904” (221). Note the following passage from an article written by Dixon, found in *The Missoulian* newspaper in 1903: “No one denies that they [Flatheads] are the rightful owners, but as they are unable to control society, society must control them. The individual Indian must make sacrifices for the good of society in general, as well as the individual white...” (qtd. in Fahey 280-281).²⁷ Dixon’s arguments proved to be effective: the Dawes Act for the Flathead Reservation passed in 1904, private property was imposed, and the Salish and Kootenai lost approximately two thirds of their reservation land. Nez Perce scholar Beth Piatote, in *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, says the implementation of private property “could do the work of domestication that military conquest alone could not” (102). The Salish and Kootenai people were forced to adjust to another assault on their collective existence.

Pablo resisted the Dawes Act on Flathead territory. Brower notes that prior to the Act’s passage, Pablo had not sold any of the buffalo (56). He knew that the coming changes meant he would have to sell the herd, but the issue was finding a buyer. While there was some interest from the U.S. government, Congress was unwilling to pay the asking price and only offered a small parcel of land that was deemed inadequate for the herd’s needs (Franke 61). Through a

²⁷ *The Missoulian* archives are available on microfilm in the Missoula Public Library but I have yet to access them in person. Similar editorial arguments in favour of the Dawes Act were made in other newspapers across the country regarding reservations where the Dawes Act was applied, including the Osage Reservation, where Hogan sets *Mean Spirit*.

Canadian land agent stationed in Montana, word of Pablo's dilemma reached Canadian officials and Pablo started to look northwards for a solution. Ken Zontek notes, "Pablo signed the final agreement with Howard Douglas, the commissioner of Dominion Parks, which indicated that the Canadian acquisition relied on the Canadian national government's sponsorship of a bison recovery program in its parks" (58). Through internal negotiations, an agreement was struck that saw Pablo being paid \$245 per live buffalo upon arrival, along with a down payment to fund the roundup. Pablo estimated it would take a few weeks to complete the capture and shipment of the entire herd. However, it became apparent that herding and transporting 800 wild buffalo was a much more challenging endeavour than originally thought. In fact, it would take over three years to herd the buffalo to the nearest rail station and send them north.

Pablo employed a large number of local "buffalo boys," all seasoned range cowboys (and one lone woman) in order to round up the animals, and he assumed the round up would take a few weeks. Oral history compiled by Bon Whealdon in the 1930s tells of the difficulties they encountered: "The more the buffalo were herded up and driven, the more unmanageable and agitated they became" (93). Multiple stories tell of the herd being moved further towards the goal, only to have the animals run in the opposite direction. Witnesses also spoke of the buffalo stampeding or climbing cliffs that seemed impossible for the animals to scale. Eventually, the unsuccessful drives ceased and instead Pablo came up with a new plan to push the buffalo into a large enclosed area, load them onto carts that were then pulled by horses to the train station at Ravalli. Large corrals were built to hold the buffalo until it was time to be shipped. They were then loaded onto specially-made rail cars and taken to their destination: Elk Island National Park, Alberta, Canada, 1,200 miles (1,930 kms) away. According to Franke, "the shipments contained fewer bison as the animals grew wary of capture, but the herd continued to grow and five years

passed before the last shipment was made (61-62). Finally, the last shipment of buffalo went out in 1910, and Pablo's contract was considered fulfilled.²⁸

The removal of the Pablo bison herd from western Montana was billed in the newspapers as the "Last Roundup," and attracted photographers wishing to capture images of the "last" free herd of buffalo losing their freedom, as well as general spectators (see fig. 7). Clara Peone, an eyewitness, noted in an interview that "many prominent people from all over the United States came to see the buffalo in the big corrals near Pend Oreille River" (Whealdon 132). One unnoticed spectator was five-year old D'Arcy McNickle, later the author of the novel *The Surrounded*.

²⁸ The Pablo buffalo, bought and paid for, remained in confined spaces upon their arrival in Canada. For the first two years, they were housed at Elk Island National Park, in pens designed for elk. In the latter years of the roundup, the majority of the herd was placed directly in the newly formed National Bison Park, in a traditional bison wintering ground near Wainwright, Alberta. Brower notes that the government spent \$60 000 on fencing the new park, and that "the necessity for a fence around the park created a closed ecosystem, which did not take into consideration the most important characteristic of the bison species — its migratory nature" (23). Breeding experiments and introduced disease resulted in many of the animals needing to be slaughtered during the park's existence. When the park eventually closed in 1939, the remaining animals were killed or shipped north to Wood Bison Park, introducing disease to that herd.



Fig. 7: Forsyth, N.A.. “Another Buffalo Wanted For the Car.” Date unknown. Stereograph. Montana Historical Society Research Center.

McNickle was born in 1904. According to James Ruppert, his mother’s family was adopted into the Flathead tribe after his grandfather sought refuge from persecution for his part in the Riel Resistance (5-6), and, as a result, McNickle was an enrolled tribal member. He left the reservation as a young man, using the sale of his allotted land to fund his education in

Europe. He returned to the United States and established a career as a bureaucrat but had aspirations to write. *The Surrounded* was eventually published in 1936 after many years of revisions and editorial challenges. John Purdy, in his biography of McNickle, refers to the novel as “the survival of tribal cultures, using his own family history (the Metis diaspora) and his experience with the Salish as representative of the continuation and articulation of tribal identity despite trying times” (51). These trying times include spatial and spiritual exile for the Flathead characters in *The Surrounded*, who are burdened with the loss of their land and cultural ways. Despite the earlier decade of publication, the novel is viewed as a precursor to the Native American Renaissance novels of N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko published in the 1960s and 70s, as it features the protagonist’s return to the reservation and tribal values. Archilde Leon, a character loosely based on McNickle himself, returns to the Flathead Reservation for a last visit to see his parents²⁹ after getting an education at boarding school and before pursuing a career in the city of Portland. Once he arrives at his homeland, he is conflicted between the individualistic impulse represented by the city and the core values of tribalism represented by the elders and his mother. He quickly becomes embroiled in his family’s battles with the institutions of church and state, and by the end of the novel, he is in handcuffs.

Through Archilde’s fate, the novel shows the inescapability of the Flathead people being surrounded and overcome by Indian policy, colonial law and hopelessness. Robert Dale Parker maintains that “the history of allotment” is a contextual event that “underlies the novel” (68).

²⁹ Dorothy Parker, another McNickle biographer, discusses the plot of *The Hungry Generations* and concludes that “many of the characters were drawn from people he had known as a boy” (41). Louis Owens speculates that McNickle had Michel Pablo in mind when he created the character of Archilde’s father, Max Leon, due to a reference in the earlier novel that states Leon had “many buffaloes” (*Other Destinies* 63).

The imposition of boundaries on the land along with the influx of settlers results in the Flathead people surrounded both literally and metaphorically, much in the way the Pablo buffalo herd had been rounded up and surrounded by fences. Alicia Kent notes that the novel explores Archilde and his people as characters “who cannot run away from colonialism” (37). There is no freedom from its influence and direct action.

The Pablo buffalo herd roundup is another contextual event that influences McNickle’s narrative. Dorothy Parker explains that in addition to being a young witness to the roundup, McNickle had access to photographs of the event as shown by this excerpt from a letter, thanking the sender of historic roundup photographs:

I was especially pleased by the photos of the scenes at Ravalli, where they were shipping the Pablo-Allard buffalo herd. As a child of five or six I stood watching, amazed and terror stricken, through the heavy timbers of the corral. One buffalo cow had been gored and her insides were pouring out. I either saw or was told about the great bull who went charging up the ramp and right through the other side of the stock car. (16)

Parker goes on to explain how the round-up photographs were accessible to the public “because, even then, the vanishing herds had become part of the western mythology” (16). The mythology of the inevitability of Western expansionism underlies McNickle’s depiction of the seemingly futile efforts of Archilde’s people to resist. As McNickle witnessed such a dramatic event of the buffalo in their last moments of freedom and had access to resulting photographs, I argue he would have seen the potential of connecting the fate of the buffalo with the fate of his people.

Just as the Pablo buffalo were forced into enclosures and into a state of confinement, the Flathead characters in *The Surrounded* find themselves struggling to retain agency. The mission

town of St. Xavier has existed for sixty years, the narrator tells us, “but the division was deeper than years” (35). The divide between Indigenous peoples and the settlers is profound, and it widens after more settlers move in and take over the land. McNickle explains that the boundary between the two groups is a creek called “Buffalo Creek” (35). He also makes reference to the National Bison Reserve.³⁰ He uses Archilde’s disconnect from the buffalo to portray the spatial and spiritual exile that has occurred amongst the Flathead peoples in the years since the Pablo herd was dispersed. He sets himself apart from his family, despite his mother Catherine’s hopes: “[a]n Indian boy, she thought, belonged with his people” (2). Modeste, the community’s spiritual elder, also wants Archilde to feel connected to his people and his territory. Yet Archilde’s experiences of living in the city and internalizing Euro-Western prejudices of Indigenous peoples results in disrespect for his own people left on the reservation. The buffalo are used as a signal of the divide between the generations represented by Modeste and Catherine, as they are the only ones to continue to see the buffalo as important, and Archilde, who can only see them as emblems of the past:

Actually, in the way he was learning the world, neither Modeste nor his mother was important. They were not real people. Buffaloes were not real to him either, yet he could go and look at buffaloes every day if he wished, behind the wire enclosure of the Biological Survey reserve. He knew that buffaloes had been real things to his mother, and to the old people who had come to eat with her tonight.

³⁰ The U.S. government created the National Bison Reserve shortly after the Pablo herd went to Canada. It purchased buffalo from other U.S. herds, and annexed some of the “surplus” land on the south side of the Flathead Reservation after the allotment process was finished. Thus, after decades of protecting the buffalo, the Flathead peoples were forced to lose some of their land for the Reserve and then were not allowed to have any input in the management of the herd.

To him they were just *fenced up animals that couldn't be shot*, though you could take photographs of them. (62, italics mine)

The buffalo, once a symbol of freedom, is reduced to an oddity to be confined indefinitely. The passage shows how Archilde has removed himself from his homelands, a kind of self-imposed cultural and physical exile. His people's culture now seems outdated to him, rather than something living and breathing, reflecting popular Euro-Western opinions of Indigenous peoples. Louis Owens agrees: "In this powerful juxtaposition, McNickle subtly underscores Euramerica's centuries-long attempt to turn the Indian into an artifact, an unthreatening image that, like a photograph of the buffalo, can be contained and controlled within the national metanarrative" (*Other Destinies* 63). Archilde does realize that his disconnect from his mother is not her fault "and neither were the buffalo to blame for no longer being free" (62). Instead, it is implied that forces too powerful to overcome are what hold this new system in place.

Despite his initial dislocation and exile, Archilde slowly experiences a shift as the novel progresses, as explained by Purdy: "At first he too seems limited by the fatalistic misconception of the doomed Indian that permeates the popular literature of the time, but he is also actively engaged in a re-initiation into tribal life" (68). At the feast held in honour of his return, Modeste tells stories of how the people received flint in order to hunt the buffalo. Archilde responds positively but superficially: "The story had amused him in spite of himself. It left a spark of gay remembrance in his mind" (66). McNickle uses the metaphor of a fire that has seemingly been extinguished to show Archilde's relationship with his culture. Yet there remains enough heat and fuel for a spark in Archilde's consciousness. Modeste shifts the storytelling tone to a bleak historical narrative of how the people lost their way that includes their inability to continue to hunt the buffalo. It reads much like a cautionary tale that exemplifies what Kent calls their

current state of “disorientation and disjuncture of the modern era” (22). However, by the end of the story session with Modeste, Archilde begins to view his culture in a new way, as the story itself “destroyed his stiffness toward the old people. He sat and thought about it and the flames shot upward and made light on the circle of black pines” (74). The fire of remembrance is now lit, and the barriers Archilde has built up against his people begin to weaken.

Through witnessing his mother’s rejection of Christianity and subsequent return to her traditions, Archilde slowly rediscovers the core of his culture: “Archilde sat quietly and felt those people move in his blood” (222). His ancestors have reached out to him through the buffalo stories and caused him to shift towards his people and what is described as “unaccountable security” (222). The experience is so new that he can’t fully understand what has happened, only that the fire is beginning to burn within him.

The process of reconnecting with his peoples’ beliefs and values occurs as prior events begin to take over Archilde’s fate. Earlier in the novel, he expresses that he feels he has been promised a “special existence” because of the choices he made of education and a career: “But something had gone wrong, uselessly, without reason. The end had come almost before a beginning had been made. He would wind up like every other reservation boy — in prison, or hiding in the mountains” (150). Although Archilde perceives that things are happening in this way without reason, McNickle reveals that it is a larger system of oppression that engulfs young Indigenous people like Archilde, and it is the same system that eventually engulfed the buffalo. By the end of the novel, Archilde, despite his talent and abilities, meets the fate that colonization prescribes for many young Indigenous men: incarceration. Alicia Kent explains that confinement, represented by jail or exile, is “the controlling metaphor for modernity” (37) within the novel. Other characters in the novel are the ones who kill authority figures like the warden

and the sheriff, but it is Archilde who is ultimately blamed and arrested. The Indian Agent Mr. Parker, representing prevalent governmental and societal attitudes, tells Archilde as he is being led away to jail, “It’s too damn bad you people never learn that you can’t run away” (297). As settlement increasingly domesticates the lived space of Indigenous peoples, they become unwelcome in their own territory, mirroring the buffalo who are also not welcome on the land except as curiosities behind enclosures.

Archilde meets a terrible fate at the end of the novel, but McNickle offers the slight possibility of a person being able to escape incarceration, whether in jail or in boarding school. This is illustrated through Archilde’s young nephews, Narcisse and Mike. At the beginning of the novel, they are in boarding school, subject to its abuses that result in Mike’s nightmares and fear of the dark. However, they, like some of Pablo’s buffalo, evade confinement by running up into the mountains. Archilde attempts to find them, but it takes him several days, having to “go deeper into the woods, higher on the mountain foothills” (245). By going metaphorically deeper and higher, away from colonial influences, the boys move into a space that holds out hope for the survival of Indigenous culture. And because of this, Narcisse reveals that the fear they once felt is lifting: “Indicating Mike with a nod, he said, ‘He’s not afraid of the dark now’” (246). Their escape from boarding school and being temporarily free on the land has healed Mike’s fear of abuse.

Owens describes the boys’ precarious freedom as breaking “away from the oppressive machinery of white America that seeks to obliterate their identity as Indian” (*Other Destinies* 73). He goes on to say that it is still made clear by McNickle that this fragile survival is precarious. Survival is indeed painful: Mike and Narcisse eventually return to their homes, and the omnipresent Catholic priests entrenched in the communities once again instill fear in them

both. Archilde, already trying to negotiate his own freedom, puts thought into how he can keep his nephews away from the Fathers, but is left with the question of what to do with them: “He might turn them loose in the mountains, like the birds let out of a cage, or like a pair of buffaloes turned out of the Government reserve; he had no doubt that they would survive” (273). Archilde compares the boys to birds and buffalo who have a kind of precarious freedom, but no guarantee of continued security: “But there ought to be something better” (273). McNickle is implying that mere survival is not good enough; the two boys, the birds, the buffalo, and all Indigenous people deserve to live with freedom and dignity.

Given the opportunity, Mike and Narcisse ultimately choose a life of uncertainty over containment. Near the end the novel, during the shootout with the sheriff and the subsequent arrest of Archilde, the boys take the opportunity to run: “Just then there was the sound of galloping horses. Everyone turned to look down the trail — and there they saw Mike and Narcisse mounted and running away. They had slipped away, probably in the excitement of the shooting” (296). Archilde will shoulder the blame and consequences for others’ actions and will not escape the fate of being surrounded by walls and bars, but a younger generation at least has a chance. Mike and Narcisse end the novel with a refusal: they choose to live in the mountains rather than face the certainty of a hostile civilization project on the reservation. Moore tells us that Indigenous literature can show “cracks of reversal in the linear engine of history and manifest destiny” (56). Through the act of refusal, and demonstrating the power of their ceremonies to maintain their well-being, the boys represent cultural endurance in the face of colonial destruction. Just as those few Pablo buffalo refused to submit to being corralled and shipped away to a new land, Mike and Narcisse are positioned in the novel as the exception to Indigenous peoples’ fate of being confined and surrounded. John Purdy points out that Modeste

feels that “the future resides in his grandchildren” (78). Potentially, McNickle is saying subsequent generations will benefit from these small but not insignificant acts of refusal to submit.

Similar to *The Surrounded*, Mourning Dove’s³¹ *Cogewea: The Half Blood* uses the Flathead Valley as a space to critique the effects of colonization on Indigenous people. Published in 1927, and heavily influenced by dime-store western novels, *Cogewea* follows the young mixed-blood woman Cogewea’s attempts to find her place on the Flathead range in the years immediately following allotment. Her father is white and her mother is Salish, and thus Cogewea, like Archilde Leon, is in conflict with her origins. Much of the scholarly work on the novel discusses the eponymous heroine’s mixed blood identity. Susan Cannata elaborates: “*Cogewea* is one of the first novels to present the problems of conceptualizing a Native American identity in a white world and of balancing the influences of tribal culture and white America” (711). Cogewea attempts to reconcile her Salish grandmother’s spiritual guidance with her white father’s heritage, while adapting to the changes that white settlement has brought to the land, but very often identifies with the Salish, especially when speaking in terms of what they have lost.

³¹ There is considerable debate about the novel’s authorship due to the insertions and revisions done by Lucullus McWhorter, Mourning Dove’s patron and editor. Described by Alanna Brown as being “rent by two voices and two purposes” (275), the novel and the circumstances of its publication mirrored those of many women writers of colour in the same period who relied on white male assistance: “Their assumptions as well as their editorial work deeply colored, even altered, the tone and substance of Mourning Dove’s original manuscripts” (274). McWhorter not only edited the manuscript, but made ethnohistoric insertions about the political plight of Indigenous people. Jace Weaver acknowledges McWhorter’s edits and insertions, but points out that Mourning Dove “had already completed a draft of the book, probably in 1913, while at Calgary, before she ever met the Amer-European” (106). More recently, Susan Cannata acknowledges the weight of McWhorter’s discourse, but concludes that it “does not subsume her voice” (703), and I recognize Mourning Dove as the author of the text.

Like McNickle, Mourning Dove, also known as Christine Quintasket, had a connection to the Pablo buffalo herd that inspired elements of the novel. She met Hector McLeod of the Flathead Indian Reservation at the Fort Shaw Indian school. Her biographer Jay Miller explains in the introduction to *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*: “According to the census, they were married in 1909 and lived at Polson, at the southern tip of Flathead Lake. There Christine witnessed the 1908 roundup of the last free-ranging bison herd, and it had such a profound impact on her that she based her first novel on it” (“Introduction” xvi-xvii). Throughout the novel, Mourning Dove makes direct textual reference to the Pablo herd, such as when Cogewea reminisces about “Meschell Pablo, the ‘Buffalo King of the Flathead’” and likens him to her people as annual buffalo hunters (148). Cogewea, like Mourning Dove, remembers the “sight-seeing” of “the last buffalo round-up” of the animals “taken to Canada” (148). With this passage, Mourning Dove locates Cogewea, Pablo, and the buffalo within the territory, asserting they all have a long relationship to the land that has now been interrupted.

Margaret Lukens, in her essay “Mourning Dove and Mixed Blood: Cultural and Historical Pressures on Aesthetic Choice and Authorial Identity,” posits that Mourning Dove “perceived the connection between the dwindling numbers of wild buffalo and the fate of the Native people whose traditional lifestyles centered around them” (415). Furthermore, Lukens maintains that Mourning Dove saw the Pablo roundup as a symbol of “the violent circumscription of the lives of Native and mixed-blood people by encroaching white settlement” (415). I agree with this assessment, and wish to explore in detail the way Mourning Dove uses the buffalo as an emblem that represents Indigenous peoples’ exile from the land, one that results in both Cogewea’s lament and a spectral presence that evokes remembrance and respect of the buffalo’s role.

Cogewea begins her narrative ruminating on her liminal position as a mixed-blood woman, caught between the Salish, who have been “brushed aside, crushed and defeated” and the white settlers who shun her because of her mixed blood (17). She observes that the waters are empty of Salish canoes, and the banks of the shore are “grey and somber” (18) now that the campfires have been extinguished. She adds the absence of the buffalo to this list, in what Justine Dymond calls “reminiscence of what has disappeared as a result of land theft, extermination, and relocation” (“Modernism(s)” 302). Besides the empty waters, Cogewea notes that “[t]he buffalo no longer drank of its cooling flood, nor thundered over the echoing plain” (18). Cogewea’s observation of the accumulated trauma, including the buffalo’s absence, causes her to lament that her world is “receding,” causing her to “suppress the sob which welled to her lips” (18). The buffalo are now dead, exiled, or confined to specific spaces. A few remain on settlers’ walls or in museums, frozen in place through the process of taxidermy, unable to return to the ground as their ancestors always have.

Pauline Wakeham, in *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*, explains how the rise in the practice of taxidermy occurring in the Americas in the early years of the twentieth century is embedded in the colonial mindset: skins and mounted heads are legitimizing tools of colonial discourse that position “westward expansion as part of the inexorable tide of progress while simultaneously purporting to mourn the casualties of civilization’s destiny” (18). This kind of colonial discourse takes place in the ranch house that is owned by Cogewea’s brother-in-law John Carter. Cogewea describes the house as “typical of the pioneer homes of certain parts of the West” (31). The living room of the log mansion is marked by taxidermic symbols of conquest: “The floor was bare, save for the buffalo, bear, and mountain lion skins scattered about” (31).

These skins are souvenirs of the achievements made by colonization, proving the land has been cleared for domestication.

One particular figure particularly holds Cogewea's attention: a large buffalo bull's head. Mourning Dove's experience at the Pablo round-up provides the source material for the buffalo head. McWhorter, in his note to the reader, tells of the sympathy she felt with the buffalo: "the one remaining link with an era forever past. The animals fought desperately before at last driven from their native haunts. Some burst from the railway cars in the process of loading; one being dashed to the ground with a broken neck" (11). A photograph of this animal exists in the Montana Historical Society archives, taken just as the buffalo bull breaks through the reinforced wooden slats, barreling to its death rather than remaining confined in the railcar (see Fig. 8).



Fig. 8: Forsyth, N.A. “Making A Last and Fierce Struggle for Freedom.” Date unknown. Stereograph. Montana Historical Society Research Center.

Mourning Dove transforms the image of the buffalo head coming through the railcar into the buffalo head that is mounted on the wall. This particular buffalo is rendered as what Wakeham calls “a synecdochic specter of a vanished population” (5). The buffalo have been cleared from the land with the buffalo head remaining as a reminder of past presence of both buffalo and Indigenous peoples. Mourning Dove reminds the reader that Carter has this ranch as a result of displacement and that the ranch house is “constructed on allotted Indian lands” (31). The buffalo head is then also a reminder to Cogewea of the past: “Indeed, Cogewea never looked upon this trophy without a pang of regret. The fixed glassy eyes haunted her, as a ghost of the

past” (31). The head reminds Cogewea and thus the reader of the enormity of the losses experienced by Indigenous peoples and buffalo herds: “With her people had vanished this monarch of the plains. The war-whoop and the thunder of the herd were alike hushed in the silence of the last sleep — and only the wind sighing a parting requiem” (31). In her mind, the buffalo and Cogewea’s ancestors are united in their fate.

The language of past losses is continued when Cogewea takes her suitor Densmore out on the range. They come upon a skull of a “former mighty buffalo bull” with “time-roughened” horns that are “all bleached and grey with age” (143). The description of the buffalo reminds the reader that this animal occupied this space long before the arrival of settlers. She goes on to regard the skull as “the last piteous wreck” of an animal that once ruled the plains. She then once again likens the buffalo to the Salish: “Colleague of my race, with him went our hopes, our ambition, and our life. A gift from the source above of all existence, the buffalo was valued by the tribes above all animals. My nation was ruined when this, its larder, was destroyed by the invader” (143). The buffalo skull becomes a loaded symbol that references a lost past and the removal of the buffalo. Bison skulls, like taxidermic buffalo, held a particular significance in people’s imaginations at the shift between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. George Grinnell, a leading conservationist of the time, wrote in his monograph *The Last of the Buffalo* about buffalo skulls: “On the great plains is still found the buffalo skull half buried in soil and crumbling to decay. The deep trails once trodden by the marching hosts are grass-grown now, and fast filling up. When these most enduring relics of a vanished race shall have passed away, there will be found, in all the limitless domain once darkened by their feeding herds, not one trace of the American Buffalo” (286). Grinnell’s words are a strong example of the way the extermination of the buffalo supports the trope of the Vanishing Indian. The skull he

memorializes is “crumbling to decay,” which positions the skull itself as disappearing into the same lost history of Indigenous people and the buffalo.

Mourning Dove’s own language regarding the skull is calculated to remind readers of the intricate connection the Salish and the buffalo share, and the tragic circumstances they are left in now that the buffalo has been wiped out by colonization. Cogewea is unable to move past the injustice of that act: “I can not forgive the wrong” (143). Furthermore Mourning Dove uses words like “ruined,” “piteous,” and “destroyed” to pull the reader along into a state of sympathy not shared by Densmore. He, as a colonial signifier, is unable and unwilling to listen: “This lofty sentiment received scant consideration in the calculating reply of the covetous Densmore” (143). In keeping with the concept of land theft and destruction, Mourning Dove positions Densmore as an easterner seeking his fortune. In his desire to possess and ruin Cogewea in order to secure her resources, he represents the occupying intent of settlers. Densmore is a character, according to Dilia Narduzzi, that is “written by Mourning Dove as personifying the malevolence of colonial destruction,” and I would add colonial confinement (68).

Densmore counters and attempts to overpower her sentiment with a litany of imperialist discourse, mimicking the narratives of manifest destiny and progress. He tells her, “[C]hange was inevitable” and admits, “the transition from savagery to the civilized state has been a stormy one,” all of which are justifications that obfuscate the brutality of conquest and the tragedy of the aftermath (144). Despite Densmore’s attempts to change Cogewea’s thinking, she is, as Narduzzi observes, “an advocate for the land and the wildlife that inhabits this land, a political agent and an active speaker against the wounds and damage that her land has suffered” (63). Cogewea refuses to concede to Densmore; she once again reminds him of the genocide that has occurred in her territory: “I can hear the death chant and wailing of spirit Indians whose bones are being

disturbed by the homesteader's plow" (147). Densmore, as a settler colonialist, is unwilling to hear this kind of truth and abruptly changes the subject to the buffalo skull, giving Cogewea the opportunity to tell him more details about the Pablo roundup.

Cogewea describes the roundup as a "never to be forgotten sight" but adds that "it was pitiful to see the animals fight so desperately for freedom" (148). She continues by speculating on the buffaloes' awareness: "They seemed to realize that they were leaving their native haunts for all time. To the Indian, they were the last link connecting him with the past" (148). She wishes out loud for a different outcome but realizes this became impossible when the land was lost during the allotment process: "The reservation had been thrown open to settlement and the range all taken by homesteaders" (148). Reservation boundaries and the Pablo buffalo refuge had once seemed like safe geographical spaces for Indigenous peoples and the buffalo, but both were encroached upon by colonial governmental policy. Piatote explains the result: "trauma of loss of ancestral lands, of the buffalo, and the life ways exists within the same site as the promise of continued occupation" (103). It is the state of occupation that pushes Cogewea into a state of spiritual exile from the territory she loves.

Mourning Dove ends the novel with a short quotation from "The Passing of the Trail," a poem by Badger Clark, a cowboy poet: "The Prairies wild are tame and mild / All close-corralled with wire" (Clark). The first line of this poem is an expression of both nostalgia and victory, as it reads as a lament at the changes that settlers have wrought but simultaneously celebrates Manifest Destiny and the re-making the Prairies into domestic space. The fences, made with a wire that chokes at the necks of Indigenous peoples and buffalo, are both a physical and a metaphorical reminder of their new lack of freedom. The poem as a whole is about the choice left to those who inhabited the wild: fade away or become tamed. Thus the excerpted poem is a

reminder of the predicament that Cogewea and her half-breed lover Jim are in, seemingly left with a choice to die or assimilate.

Yet similar to the boys heading for potential freedom in McNickle's *The Surrounded*, *Cogewea* also contains several cracks in the structural makeup of the modes of confinement such as walls and fences. Gillian Rose's notion of paradoxical space is helpful in this discussion. In *Feminism and Geography*, she explains a sense of space that is "multidimensional, shifting, and contingent" (140) while at the same time is paradoxical, meaning the inside/outside or centre/margin "are occupied simultaneously" (140). Using this lens, the buffalo who crashed beyond the wall of the train car is also inhabiting a paradoxical space, existing both inside and outside of the walls of confinement. This could be seen as a metaphor for Indigenous refusal to submit to confinement. Mourning Dove saw the possibilities of meaning from the tragedy of the buffalo's death, but the head can also be seen as a symbolic refusal of the colonial project as it transgresses the walls of the ranch house. Piatote posits that the buffalo head has the role of "a former presence, a preoccupation, of both Indians and buffalo upon the land" (105). By entering into the domestic space of the ranch house, it maintains some of its agency, as it becomes a means of remembering what the land held prior to settlement.

The notion of paradoxical space can be applied to the metaphorical corral Cogewea references when she talks to Jim on Buffalo Butte at the novel's end. She tells him of her anxieties that result from their current confined existence: "We despised breeds are in a zone of our own and when we break from the corral erected around us, we meet up with trouble. I only wish that the fence could not be scaled by the soulless creatures who have ever preyed upon us" (283). The fences, built by the colonizers, restrict freedom but they can also function as protection from the ugliness of settler colonialism. Relating this concept of paradoxical space to

the corral allows us to see that it may keep Cogewea and Jim, as Indigenous peoples, contained. At the same time, the corral functions as a space where they are free to be themselves in the face of the continued imperialist project. Jim recognizes the value of this space and encourages Cogewea to understand the corral in this way. When Cogewea says yes to Jim's marriage proposal, he replies, "Yes! It is jus' 'bout right — when not too cold nor not too hot — nor nothin' wrong with the corral fencing. But the best rider of the Flathead ain't a worryin' 'bout this durn 'old world anymore! And I sure do b'lieve in them there hot rock signs of the sweathouse" (284). Thus, he both confirms the potential of finding refuge within their corral while immediately following this with an affirmation of the ceremonies they are a part of, ceremonies that will continue on.

The potential for exceptions in the exile and devastation for both Indigenous peoples and buffalo is slim in the novel, yet significant spaces of refusal exist, according to Piatote:

The novel recognizes the role of the imaginary in contests over space (and, in a sense, sovereignty) and actual mappings of the land. In the same way that the American conservationists employed the buffalo as markers of national domestic space, *Cogewea* asserts an alternative indigenous imaginary that ties past practices with future possibilities. (109)

The walls of the ranch house and Jim and Cogewea's corral could also be seen as boundaries that simultaneously restrict Indigenous freedom and yet protect their historic memory and identity as Indigenous peoples. These paradoxical spaces function in the same way the corrals do for the buffalo, as the enclosures and containers built for the Pablo buffalo during the roundup ended their freedom but ensured their survival. Adapting to shifts in geographical range and even exile

is part of the process of leaving the metaphorical corral gates open for the continued existence of the buffalo and Indigenous peoples' spirituality and epistemologies.

Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*, like *The Surrounded* and *Cogewea*, is grounded in the aftermath of the Dawes Act and, to a lesser but not insignificant extent, the history of captive buffalo. Published in 1990, the novel uses the conventions of the mystery novel genre to depict the murders of Osage people in the 1920s for their oil-rich allotments. In the novel, two generations of Blanket women hold lucrative oil leases, and the novel illuminates settler corruption that threatens the women, their families, and those who wish to protect them. Hogan uses historical events in her novels in order to "offer insight into the repercussions of those events on individual communities" (B. Cook, "Hogan's" 36). She makes adaptations and insertions into those histories, a practice which has garnered her both critics and defenders, particularly regarding *Mean Spirit*.³² She describes her process this way: "I pick these events and make them stories because only then will people listen" (B. Cook, "An Interview" 12). *Mean Spirit* is similar in theme with much of her poetry and essays, which work to make readers aware of the interconnectivity of people, animals and the land.

The novel begins with a description of the demarcating of land and its subsequent use, telling readers that due to allotment, the Osage are forced to choose "a parcel of land" (8) and that "numerous tracts of unclaimed land became open property for white settlers, homesteaders,

³² Eric Gary Anderson's article "States of Being in the Dark: Removal and Survival in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*" skillfully discusses the debate over Hogan's novel, laying out the arguments given by Robert Warrior, who criticizes the novel for its departure from the "particulars of history" (57) regarding what he sees as inaccuracies about the Osage, and Betty Bell, who reminds readers that this kind of criticism "assumes there is a sole and accurate historical narrative to every event and that truth resides only in that narrative" (58). Anderson does not privilege either perspective but points out that this discussion raises "questions and issues about the nature and indeed the reliability of both history and literary criticism, considered as western systems of thought and knowledge" (58-59).

and ranchers” (8). The novel takes up what is deemed to be proper usage of the land by settlers with thoughts of oil and cattle: “it’s best not to leave the land laying idle” (213). Dymond, in her article “Bodies of Law and Outlaw Bodies: Deforming the Mystery Genre in *Mean Spirit*,” describes Hogan’s technique: “Indeed, by incorporating references to legal texts — such as the General Allotment Act — and their impact directly in the narrative, Hogan allows the ‘murder mystery’ to encompass the legacy of legalized displacement and cultural genocide” (86). Hogan also uses the historical figure of the buffalo as a way of symbolizing the aftermath of genocide, both as representation and embodiment of confinement and sorrow.

The figure of the buffalo first appears in the novel in a painting that hangs in the courthouse, a building that offers no justice to Indigenous people. It is a significant choice of space, as it represents what Gail Valaskakis calls a “discourse of subordination” where Euro-Western laws like the Dawes Act are used as a colonizing tool (68). The Forrest family brings Nola Blanket, an oil heiress after her mother Grace’s murder, into the courthouse so that she can sign over the rights to her land to them. Nola is not a willing victim, rather she has been kidnapped from the boarding school and brought to the courthouse, but she recognizes the futility of resisting. Inside the courthouse, she observes disconcerting imagery: “Nola glanced up at the paintings on the high walls where naked Indian women offered grain and meat to the white men around them, and one of them rode on the back of a buffalo” (134). The women in the painting are conflated with the buffalo, both represented as disempowered figures within the conquering narrative of colonialist America. Yonka Krasteva explains: “These paintings are materializations of white men’s fantasies about Indian women offering themselves to white men” (56). The figure of the buffalo plays in to the fantasy of Manifest Destiny, where the land and all that it contains are there for Euro-Western benefit. Moore says Euro-Western symbolic

representations of buffalo can be understood as “the sign of America’s self-contradictory fantasy: to both possess and to destroy the American land and its original peoples” (63). Hogan uses the painting to highlight the irony of the situation where the courthouse is viewed by the townspeople as a place of justice, and where Indigenous women and the buffalo are domestic beings offering themselves to the colonizer, but, in reality, they are harmed or killed in order for the colonizers’ goals to be achieved.

John Hale, an oil baron and cattleman, is based upon the real life character of William Hale. William Hale was implicated in the historical Osage murders by arranging marriages for his family members with Osage women, and then killing the women and other Osage to gain control of their land.³³ The fictional Hale represents the destruction of the land: “He was one of the first men to bring cattle to the Indian Territory. They were a good investment. Hale had hired Indian men to help him cut, burn, and clear their own land” (54). Part of Hale’s intention for the land is to crossbreed cattle with buffalo, mirroring Goodnight, Conrad, and other historical figures who attempted the same. Hale leases Belle Graycloud’s land without her permission, showing his unrelenting obsession to make land into money. This is in keeping with Hogan’s critique of Euro-Western ways of understanding the land and those who live on it. Alix Casteel explains: “Just as Euroamerican values permitted the decimation of the buffalo herds, they also explain the ability to view the herd as a large deposit of raw material rather than as a collection of individual animals” (52). I would go further than Casteel, and say that the buffalo are reduced

³³ Molly Stephey, in “The Osage Murders: Oil Wealth, Betrayal and the FBI’s First Big Case,” outlines the ways in which Hale used land head rights and strategic marriages to gain control of more land. He was eventually implicated in only one murder, and served eighteen years in jail.

to material goods, and in the process, their subjectivity as relatives to Indigenous people is also removed.

Belle is one of the few Watona residents to remain defiant of Hale and his plans, despite her relative powerlessness: “She hated the money-hungry world and how her land had involved her in it, and she hated without limit the man named Hale” (242). She fights the order to give over her land, but is overruled by the Indian Agent. Hale does not waste time: “only a day later, a cattle truck roared up the road, turned around, let down a chute, and delivered a herd of the large, dark wooly buffalo. The ragged animals were docile and slow and they walked without resistance through the gate into the fenced pasture on Belle’s land. It was as if they, too, had given up” (213). Hogan’s descriptors of the buffalo, like “docile,” “ragged,” and “without resistance,” show the ways in which the buffalo’s experiences have scarred them. Furthermore, by using the word “too,” Hogan connects the buffalo to the Osage people, as most have also been scarred to the point of giving up.

Hale is not content with gaining control of one section of land; he continues on to gain control of every piece of land Belle owns: “They were almost surrounded by the leased-out land” (242). Hogan uses language of containment such as “surrounded” in order to show the effect of Euro-Western land policies such as allotment. Furthermore, with the colonizer’s push to utilize every square inch of land in order to make money, the land itself becomes altered and potentially destroyed. By discussing the way in which the buffalo damage the land after being confined, Hogan shows readers that “[t]he drive to utilize every inch of land ends in destruction and death” (B. Cook “Hogan’s” 42). Bison are meant to graze the land, uproot grasses and aerate the soil, and then move on so new grasses can germinate and the land is renewed. This is not possible if they are held prisoner within fences, as Hogan shows in the following passage: “The land was

bare. In only a few days, the buffalo had pulled the tall grass up by its roots and eaten the land down to nothing, and now they were standing on the desolate-looking earth and their own manure with vacant eyes” (226). The “desolate-looking” earth is reminiscent of the lament that Cogewea makes for a land that is altered by colonial practices. However, the buffalo’s eyes are vacant, not because they are dumb beasts, but because they are beings that have survived genocide and devastation, to which Hogan alludes with the words “eyes that had seen too much” (226). Hogan attributes peoplehood to these buffalo: “They were on their way down in the world, were themselves fallen people, and they knew it and so did all the others who looked sadly on” (226). They are both wounded witnesses and embodied victims of destruction, and they are completely aware of their dire situation.

Hogan also depicts the buffalo mismanagement of early conservationists and cattlemen like Conrad that resulted in their buffalo herds’ demise. Hale separates the buffalo bull from his herd in order to impregnate his cows, but the bull dies before breeding can take place. Belle watches as Hale’s men try to deal with the carcass of the dead buffalo bull: “[S]he knew the bull had died of sorrow. He died longing for his life on the land, for his freedom, for his buffalo women. And the other Indians agreed with her” (251-52). Later in the novel, the buffalo bull’s ghost continues to walk the land, lamenting for a life and a land that is lost, but still contained, even in death: “The crying ghost of the buffalo walked across the closed-in field. The bellowing kept Belle awake. She was filled with a longing kind of sorrow” (290). Hogan has Belle mourn for the buffalo just as she would mourn for her own people, as she knows the interconnectivity between humans and other animal peoples.

The buffalo referenced in *Mean Spirit* do not find an open gate, nor do the characters find it easy to adapt to a new existence. They survive, but look out at the world with “dark, tragic

eyes” (226). Their life of suffering is equated with the scorched lands and scarred earth when Nola tries to reassure herself that her new baby might mean that, despite these hardships, “life would continue” (226). Hogan does end the novel with small promises of hope, and sees the fires as potentially renewing: “The night was on fire with their pasts and they were alive” (375). “They” encompasses all beings on the land. They may be in difficult times, but they endure and continue to live. The physical buffalo may be living a tragic existence, but Hogan also tells the reader that the buffalo are more than a physical presence. They are a spiritual presence, represented in the paintings in the sacred cave where the Osage can “hear the breathing of the earth” (284). The cave represents a birthplace of life, a small space of renewal in a novel about death, and the buffalo are an integral part of that.

The character Michael Horse, adding what he thinks the Christian bible is missing in “The Book of Horse,” also resists the goals of manifest destiny such as destruction and erasure. He writes that the Osage people are “wounded and hurt” (362) like the land itself, and will continue to take various difficult journeys filled with fire and obstacles. Because of the onslaught of colonial atrocities and policies, the people may have to retreat as part of their survival strategy, just as the buffalo retreat to the mountains. One must first refuse to die, then survive, then endure and adapt and wait for the time “when all the people return and revere the earth and sing its praises” (362). Thus the novel ends with what Dymond describes as “an echo of a beginning” which is a process of “re-grouping and re-inventing identity, collectively” (“Bodies” 93). She explains that it is not a return to the same past, but is a “re-constituted return” that results from the endurance of the people, even those people who have experienced immense change but who have retained their voices (94).

McNickle, Mourning Dove, and Hogan use the buffalo to show the loss of a material

provider and of the damage done to interrelated spiritual relationships with the buffalo and the land. But they also take up the buffalo as a signifier of loss, confinement, and even destruction. The buffalo in the novels are remnants and reminders of the herds of millions, suffering under a new regime marked by diaspora, containment, and hardship. Despite the overwhelming representations of walls and fences found within *The Surrounded*, *Cogewea*, and *Mean Spirit*, light does show through the cracks. The buffalo's continued existence, despite overwhelming hardship, functions as a metaphor for the potential of continued Indigenous survival. The buffalo, and the Indigenous people who are connected to them, break through barriers, enact strategic spatiality, and refuse to relinquish life, however limited. According to Moore, buffalo, in Indigenous writing, become "a positive differend — witness to and symbol of a silence across difference that is the key to survival of Native communities and their cultural property" (64). These three novels all allude to the potential of the retention of Indigenous ways, knowledge and imagination, despite the onslaught of colonialism. Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman explains: "Responsibility, respect, and places created through tribal stories have endured longer than the Western fences that outlined settler territories and individual properties that continue to change hands" (34). Narratives of survival such as these are an integral foundation for remembering, retaining and renewing Indigenous cultural expression.

The Sleeping Buffalo in Malta is also a symbol of survival for Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. It refused to be resigned to its confinement within the town's boundaries. It began to move around, grunt and snort so loudly that the townspeople became frightened. Eventually, the town elected to move the glyphstone to a site several miles outside of town, closer to its original home of Cree Crossing. Another sacred stone was moved to the same location in 1987, and a wooden corral was built around them. They remain there now, under a small wooden structure

built to shelter them from the elements (see fig. 9). The last time I stopped to see the Sleeping Buffalo was on a late June afternoon, and during my visit I decided to pick up some litter from the surrounding area. I looked up from my task to witness an elderly woman, assisted by her granddaughter, conduct a ceremony at the site. The Sleeping Buffalo continues to have a relationship with Indigenous peoples. It is no longer located out on a windswept ridge overlooking the Milk River, but this adaptation to a new territory, along with refusal to give up and die, means Indigenous peoples can and will continue their relationship with the buffalo.



Fig. 9: Hubbard, Tasha. "Sleeping Buffalo." 2014. JPEG file.

Chapter Four: Buffalo Land: Intersections in Indigenous Geography and Indigenous Women's Literature

You — woman — will you take me? I am powerful! Buffalo is our medicine.

(Hungry Wolf 164)

Beverly Hungry Wolf, in “The Woman Who Brought Back the Buffalo,” tells of a time long ago when the buffalo had left the land and Blackfoot people were starving. A woman, walking the land alone, hears a voice call to her. Seeing no one, she becomes frightened, but eventually notices a small stone in the shape of a buffalo sitting on a bunch of buffalo hair. The stone tells her to take it home, so she does, and after she falls asleep, it talks to her again in her dreams. It says, “I have come to you and your people because I pity you” (164). Often Indigenous elders will talk about human beings as pitiful, meaning that they are in need of help from the spiritual realm, and the stone recognizes this. The stone makes it known that it is an intermediary between the buffalo spirit and the people: “My power is able to communicate with the buffalo and bring them here. I have chosen you to bring me to camp because you are humble and I know your thoughts are good” (164). Because the woman has exhibited exemplary behavior such as humility and maintaining a clean mind free of jealousy or anger, she is given the opportunity to help her community in a difficult time. The stone tells the woman that a strong storm will precede a lone buffalo's arrival at the camp, and no one is to harm that buffalo, despite the starvation. She is also given songs to sing and instructions to fulfill, including telling the camp to tie down their tipis in anticipation of the storm. She is told to ask her husband to hold a ceremony, during which she carries out her instructions, and together they sing the songs that will reach the buffalo. As a result of the woman's faithfulness and belief, the lone buffalo is not

harm; those who had prepared their tipis as per the stone's instructions see their belongings survive the storm, and the buffalo herds indeed return: "The people cried with happiness for having real food again" (166). The buffalo is the only "real" food, in that it is the kind of food that fully sustains and nurtures the people.

The stone is known as the Iniskim, or Buffalo Stone,³⁴ and its story is told and retold, reminding the Blackfoot people that although the buffalo once left the territory of the Blackfoot, they eventually returned due to the people living in a good way. It also highlights the important role of women in Blackfoot society, as it was a woman who was chosen to hold the gift of calling back the buffalo, showing a strong connection that women have to the buffalo. Hungry Wolf shares her inspiration to write this and other stories down in her collection *The Ways of My Grandmothers*: "I do it in an effort to fill a space in history that has been empty for too long" (16). The collection of stories includes interviews with elderly Blackfoot women, traditional narratives, and first person reflection. The stories are often of hardship, but are also about survival in difficult times. She also wants to emphasize that Indigenous women have important knowledge of the land: "I think it would help the present world situation if we all learned to value and respect the ways of the grandmothers — our own as well as everyone else's" (17).

Hungry Wolf's stories from her grandmothers are part of an Indigenous epistemology that counters Euro-Western notions of ownership and boundaries. Some Indigenous women's writing reveals a historical connection to place that predates colonial national, provincial, and state boundaries, and their subsequent narratives and mythologies. Emma LaRocque, in *When*

³⁴ I had planned to visit Kainai territory on the invitation of the late Blackfoot Elder Narcisse Blood. He wanted me to walk their sacred sites, including where the original Iniskim stone was found. Tragically for all who knew him, he passed on in a car accident in early 2015, before the visit could happen. This chapter is dedicated to him and his partner, Alvine Mountain Horse.

the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990, says “My bones have known this land long before Alberta was born.” With this statement, she undermines the authority placed upon contemporary political borders and instead grounds herself and her Indigenous ancestors in the land. Anthony Tyeme Clark, Lumbee, and Malea Powell, Miami/Shawnee, discuss how “continuing to think spatially” is a way for Indigenous peoples to “creatively negotiate and imaginatively resist colonialism” (10). Settler colonialism has limited Indigenous peoples’ relationship to their own lands, but has not eradicated it. LaRocque reminds us that “land remains central to Aboriginal ethos, even to those who are distanced from it” (136).

In this chapter, I am interested in the potential of engaging with Indigenous, feminist, and postcolonial geography theory to discuss Indigenous women’s writing that features the buffalo. Helen Hoy describes Hungry Wolf’s stories of her grandmothers as a “cumulative layering of relational mappings” (112). I wish to build on the idea of relational mappings to assert that stories like the buffalo being lost and coming back to the people through the strength and power of women re-inscribe the interconnectivity between women, buffalo and the land. I first investigate two works of poetry, including Beth Cuthand’s “Four Songs for the Fifth Generation,” which reminisces about the interaction of the buffalo and the speaker’s people, and Louise Halfe’s long-form poem *Blue Marrow*, which revives the voices of the buffalo and tells of the ways in which they still reverberate across the prairies. Then, I examine Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*. This novel uses the concept of the prophesized return of the buffalo to offer a map that reminds readers of what existed prior to colonial mapping, and what has survived the colonial process. Cuthand, Halfe, and Silko all write within their respective knowledge bases, and their work attempts to counter Indigenous physical and psychic dislocation from the land. Goeman writes of the “imaginative possibilities” in their texts

and how they function as “imaginative modes” that “unsettle settler space” (2). I show that these women’s writing, like Hungry Wolf’s, can be viewed as knowledge maps that re-inscribe and replace the buffalo within territories and within imaginations. The maps guide people back to the original understandings of Indigenous peoples’ relationships to place and those with whom they share their place with.

Colonizers saw the Great Plains as a space that needed to be emptied of undesirables and then demarcated with the straight lines and sharp edges of individual ownership. Colonial government officials and settlers included Indigenous people and buffalo as the undesirable obstacles to these goals. By the 1880s, the buffalo was eradicated, Indigenous peoples were close to being contained, and the empty space was free to be “civilized” and claimed through mapping. The next decades leading into the twentieth century saw the land being parceled into farms, ranches, and industrial space, with Indigenous peoples primarily living within reserve boundaries and the remnants of the great buffalo herds living behind fences. The vast space that is the Great Plains became claimed and mapped, and subsequently, Euro-Western depictions of place and literature about place became a way to solidify patriarchal notions of space. In coordination with Euro-Western mapping practices, Euro-Western imperialist narratives erase what already exists and replace it with alternative stories, revealing what Timothy S. Oakes and Patricia L. Price describe as the intricate relationship between the making of place and the making of meaning (254).

Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, in their introduction of *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, elaborate on the ways imperialist maps both describe and legitimate colonies, but point out the maps “also discipline them through the discursive grids of Western power/knowledge” (15). Western concepts of geographical place and knowledge are

meant to impose on existing Indigenous land and story knowledge. And as Graham Huggan explains, imperialist mapping is a process of “reinscription, enclosure, and hierarchization of space,” all of which provide justification for the “acquisition, management, and reinforcement of colonial power” (115). Imperialist mapping encouraged a reordering of knowledge of the land that privileged Euro-Western values at the time of conquest; those values have remained largely unaltered. In their text “What Difference Does Difference Make to Geography,” Katherine McKittrick and Linda Peake say that imperialism “has been centered on the figure of the white, heterosexual and patriarchal Western man with all others deemed to be ‘outside’ this orienting figure” (40), which means Indigenous women are placed in the margins.

Feminist geographer Doreen Massey, in “Space, Place, and Gender,” claims a deep intersectionality exists between geography and gender and that each is involved in the other’s formation (177). She goes on to explain how the gendering of space and place happens: “From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood” (179). Indigenous women’s mobility became limited as colonial power was solidified, just as their identities were eroded. In the eyes of the colonizer, accessing Indigenous women became a way of accessing the land: “The association of indigenous women with colonized land legitimated perceptions of both women and land as objects of colonization” (Blunt and Rose 10). Indigenous women and the land are all understood to be open territory in the making of Euro-Western geographical space.

Indigenous geographers make a concentrated effort to decolonize a discipline of study that has a long history as a colonizing tool brandished against Indigenous women and other-than-

human people. In “Resisting Exile in the ‘Land of the Free’: Indigenous Groundwork at Colonial Intersections,” D. Anthony Tyeme Clark and Malea Powell push beyond the boundaries usually set by Western geography: “We think of the physical landscapes and Indigenous geographies as they connect and constitute the world above, below, and on the earth as a series of mutually constitutive and interdependent relations” (10). These relations constitute more than human relations, corresponding to an understanding of kinship to water, animals and other beings who live on the land. Understanding peoplehood to be inclusive of other beings besides humans can shift our relationship to the world around us to one of respect. Bastien explains kinship in this way: “The natural world with its various resources are experienced as interrelated in a manner that respects all its beings — whether the wide-open grass plains for the buffalo or other four-legged animals, or forested hills for shelter, or timbered river valleys for winter camps, or roots, berries, and plants” (12). Experiencing the world this way reminds human beings that all life is important and has a role. According to Deloria Jr., “everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it” (“Relativity” 34). This is what constitutes an Indigenous geographical practice: engaging with, and living with, everything that exists on the land in a respectful way.

People and the landscape do not exist in individual stasis bound by arbitrary border lines and boundaries; rather, people understand themselves to be within an interconnected and dynamic place filled with history and meaning. According to Kovach, “Place links present with past and our personal self with kinship groups. What we know flows through us from the ‘echo of generations,’ and our knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our experience with our places” (61). For Indigenous writers, echoes through countless generations are not a romanticized concept. Instead, they are a tangible sign of connection to the land;

according to Clark and Powell, “[a] distinctive peoples’ connections and prolonged existences within their unique territory in turn yield a history — a shared memory and an organic peoplehood — that imaginatively links pasts to presents to futures for the people emergent from a particular place and accumulate a set of reciprocal responsibilities” (6). The concept of peoplehood extends to life forms living on the land, including buffalo.

Goeman elaborates on the practice of colonial mapping and the way it affects Indigenous women’s relationship to the land: “The mappings of boundaries in colonial discourses coincide with writing the Native out of history and are mechanisms of control. The maps of the nation-state do not represent real boundaries or settlement, but rather they become the tool of domination” (180). She joins other Indigenous theorists who wish to reclaim the notion of geographical mapping in order to be inclusive and reflective of those who share the land, including all genders and both human and non-human. She advocates for the act of (re)mapping. She defines this act as “the labor Native authors and the communities they write within and about undertake, in the simultaneously metaphoric and material capacities of map making, to generate new possibilities” (3). Indeed, despite being physically and metaphorically erased, covered up, or confined to specific spaces, Indigenous women’s stories have survived and are renewed through contemporary Indigenous literatures. Indigenous women’s creative expression acknowledges their geographic displacement but also their recovery and reclamation of metaphorical and physical homelands shared with the buffalo and other beings.

The land itself and an Indigenous understanding of the complexities of our connection to the land profoundly influence the creative expression from those writers who seek to repair or rejuvenate relationships damaged by colonization. Cuthand and Halfe, both from the prairies, use their poetry to remap their own understanding of the land over the Euro-Western narratives that

have been inscribed onto their specific geographical territory. Warrior discusses the ways poetry has been adopted, adapted, and used by Indigenous writers for its transformational potential against European systems: “Poetry has provided a vehicle for such resistance because of the way it can unsettle prevailing ideologies and give voice to what is not being spoken within a culture” (117). In other words, poetry has the potential to unravel imperial mappings’ web of erasure.

Dean Rader, in *Engaged Resistance*, suggests Indigenous poetry pushes back against Western poetic forms that are about “demarcation, borders, and boundaries” (128). He argues conventional expectations of genre and form are imposed on poetry and that “genre absolutely functions as a controlling and totalizing structure” (129). Using the language of geography, Rader attempts to open up a dialogue on how Indigenous poetry can function as “compositional resistance” (129) to the borders and boundaries on the page, and, I would argue, on the land itself. Indigenous poets’ work seeks to overturn terra nullius and other mythologies, what Jennifer Andrews calls “the very basis upon which dominant narratives of discovery and nation-building were constructed” (141). Critiquing and questioning dominant national myths eventually creates space for an Indigenous poetics to reflect Indigenous conceptions of self, nation, land, and relations. Rader discusses Navajo poet Lucy Tapahonso and how she “elicits an utterly original perception of how a geographic space becomes part and parcel of the language spoken within it and the people who live on it” (139). While Rader is discussing Tapahonso’s specific Navajo poetic sensibilities, there are commonalities with the way plains Indigenous poetics are influenced by the geographic space of the prairies, specifically as acts of resisting colonial boundaries and (re)mapping Indigenous presence.

Indigenous presence has been erased from the maps of the territories of the Blackfoot, Cree, Nakota, Métis and other tribes, territory that is now known as Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Jenny Kerber, in *Writing in the Dust: Reading the Prairie Environmentally*, discusses the poetry and novels of early prairie writers in Canada, including Robert Stead, who wrote from an understanding of “a new West” emerging “from the marriage of fertile land and an incoming population assimilated to a decidedly Anglo-Celtic set of values” (34). Often, within these settler narratives, the fertile land is an empty surface to be altered and commodified, thereby contributing to the agrarian myth that remains entrenched in contemporary prairie narratives, even as the current settler-narrative seems to be shifting its focus from farming to resource extraction, such as mining for uranium and potash, or drilling for oil. The prairies as empty space has inspired a body of prairie literature that ignores or writes over long-standing Indigenous women’s narratives such as Hungry Wolf’s stories. Kerber reminds readers of prairie literature to employ a historical consciousness about both the intersecting, oppressive legacies that form the foundation of this kind of writing: “In the prairie region, these legacies have been profoundly shaped by colonialism — a fact that becomes clear when one considers how much of the canonical literature and criticism about prairie landscape or nature-related writing has been entrenched in a white male settler tradition” (16). Female and Indigenous voices have little room to be heard as a result.

However, Indigenous peoples of the prairies continue to understand their own systems of knowledge regarding place. McLeod defines “Cree space” as a “metaphorical way of describing the narratives, the land, and all the things that allow the nêhiyawak to express themselves in relation to their ancestors” (86).³⁵ This way of expressing of space necessitates the inclusion of all who exist within it. In keeping with this, Cuthand and Halfe’s Indigenous poetics respond to

³⁵ nêhiyawak is the plural form of word Cree people use to refer to themselves.

dominant narratives with voices that went unheard at the time of nation (or province) building, and replace them with narratives grounded in Indigenous belief systems, including a notion of place that goes beyond borders and boundaries.

Cuthand's poem, "Four Songs for the Fifth Generation," is similar to the work of Creek poet Joy Harjo in its use of reminiscence, whereby her poetry engages with memory "as the means to re-connect with the past world wherein self is not isolated from nature" (Bryson 176). It is from Cuthand's second collection of poems called *Voices in the Waterfall*. The collection is divided into four sections: Our Sacred Spaces, Invasion, Revolution and Return to Our Sacred Spaces. In keeping with the cyclical theme of the collection, "Four Songs for the Fifth Generation" explores the way experiences of one generation continue into the next ones. She breaks the poem into four generations, with a speaker from each generation sharing her particular experience in the lands she knows as home. By grounding the poem in the generations of one family, Cuthand brings the associated values and understandings in past times into the present. For example, the first speaker, the grandmother of the family, places the buffalo in a tripartite relationship with the people and the land. So entrenched are the buffalo in the past lives of the people, the grandmother does not feel the need to mention the buffalo by name, confident that Indigenous readers will know of whom she speaks:

They were our life the life,
 of the prairies

We loved them

And they loved us. (63)

The gap in the line between "our life" and "the life" shifts the connection from a subjective viewpoint of the Indigenous speaker to the land itself. It highlights the buffalo's importance to

Indigenous life, history and culture in a more expansive way. The grandmother's description of the buffalo as "the life of the prairies" acknowledges their status as a keystone species that profoundly influences the well-being of other species, both plant and animal. By using the definite article "the," in "the life of the prairies," she positions the buffalo as central to the health of the land. Finally, she, as a grandmother teacher, invokes the reciprocal love between buffalo and Indigenous peoples and reinforces the kinship bond that existed between the buffalo in Cree and Blackfoot belief systems.

The next three lines of the poem establish the ways in which buffalo were integral to an Indigenous geography. The sheer magnitude of their numbers, almost unimaginable today, transforms them into a part of the landscape itself:

Sometimes they were so many
they flowed like a river
over the hills into the valleys.

Each line has a similarly placed gap, with the resulting space recalling specific sites across the prairies, often called "buffalo gaps," denoting corridors in which the buffalo migrated from north to south and back again. The reader is visually prompted to compare the buffalo to a river, one that interacts with the "hills" and "valleys" of the prairies, all words denoting landscape.

However, the grandmother uses the past tense, foreshadowing the destruction to come, as the next line shows the buffalo's removal: "they are gone," fated to become "ghosts" as a result of the slaughter. All that remains are the memories preserved by her senses:

Sometimes I think I hear
their thunder smell their dust
at night my girl

at night I dream
dream of their warm blood
their hides covering
Aye, covering all my children
in their sleep. (64)

The first generation suffers the trauma of the loss of their relative, the buffalo, which functions as a legacy for her daughter, as shown by the Cree endearment “my girl.” She dreams of the buffalo protecting her children in their sleep, but those days are over.

In the rest of the poem, now that the buffalo have been removed, the next generations in the family feel unwelcomed in the lands that are their home. The mother still tries to maintain their ties to the land, saying, “we hadn’t cut up our trees/or tore up our land” (65). The mother speaks of her inability to live fully, describing a process of withdrawal:

Me, I just retreated,
and retreated
until I couldn’t
find myself. (68)

The lines of the poem move to the right as she describes her sense of self and her identity as an Indigenous woman, mimicking a retreat. The trauma that the family is living with in the poem’s present is a direct result of the slaughter of the buffalo and the severing of the people’s connection with the land. Cajete explains that the trauma resulting from the dislocation can only be healed “through reestablishing meaningful ties” (*Native Science* 188). Kinship bonds are bonds that are not meant to be broken, and when they sustain damage it takes time and effort to

reform the bond, including reminding people of the bond's existence in the first place, which Cuthand's poem accomplishes.

Louise Halfe's long poem *Blue Marrow* also strips back layers of history to reveal the injustices, understanding itself as a necessary part of the recovery of Indigenous ways of knowing. It is her second publication, and uses narrative voice in strategic ways, often imagining the voices of Indigenous women who have been on the receiving end of the ravages of disease, oppression from the state, and callousness from the men of the fur trade. Yet the women's strength is woven into Halfe's words, and she explains how the voices of her grandmothers guide her own poetic voice.

In an article co-written with archaeologist Ernie Walker, Halfe explains her process and the ways in which language becomes a metonym for colonial struggle: "Through dreams, ceremony, and the recollection of memory, my community continues to battle the rift between our Native tongue and the foreigner's language.... There are times when community would rather express itself in the safety of the drum, song, and dance, its skeletal wounds often too penetrating" (Walker and Halfe 6). The wounds may be penetrating, but Halfe does not shy away from exposing those wounds, or what caused them. LaRocque writes that Halfe's poetry "takes us to the marrow of shadows and light that humans are — she lifts the rocks and makes us look at what is under there" ("Reflections" 169). By lifting the rocks that scatter across the prairie landscape like a literary archaeologist, Halfe reveals a history of death that is the underbelly of settlement, a history that many would prefer to remain covered.

Halfe's speaker begins by invoking her many Grandmothers of this land, women who were not named by colonial history and who are her ancestors, waiting to be called. She names each Grandmother and invites her to be a part of this ceremony of revelation and recovery of stories.

Azalea Barriese and Susan Gingell, in “Listening to Bones that Sing: Orality, Spirituality, and Female Kinship in Louise Halfe’s *Blue Marrow*,” determine that the focus on female kin “animates the retrieval of female stories from the colonially imposed silence, thus recuperating Cree women’s power as the life-giving force acknowledged in her people’s oral creation stories and other forms of oral history” (70). Halfe repopulates the literary landscape with these women’s stories and voices in order to tell us how colonization shaped the land once buffalo and other peoples had been removed and silenced.

The primary speaker is identified as the “Keeper of Stories” and is bestowed with the responsibility of both telling and caring for these women’s narratives. Kerber reminds us that “[o]ne cannot be a good caretaker of the stories of the ancestors without also being a good caretaker of the land from which they come, for the voices that the narrator brings forth are not only those of human ancestors but also those of the non-human environment” (136). In the poem, a ceremony begins where voices that have been silenced, including the buffalo, are asked to speak: “Voices / filled with bird calls, snorting buffalo, kicking bears, mountain goats” (Halfe 17). The animals and birds from all directions and from different lands come together to be heard once again. It is a painful process because the stories that need to be told are stories of theft and erasure. The Keeper questions whether the women of the past knew what was to come: “Did they know our memory, our / talk would walk on paper, legends told sparingly?” (98). The poem becomes a response to the memory gap forged by colonization.

As we listen to what both human and animal have to say, they release a litany of historic injustices against women’s bodies and subsequently, against Indigenous peoples as whole, ending with the following: “The land weeps. I am choking, choking. / The buffalo are a mountain of bones. / My son is shot for killing their cow” (18). The land is a witness to the

atrocities that come with colonization and grieves alongside the people. The buffalo, once relatives and livelihood tied together to sustain life, transform the land with their death, as their bones create new terrible silhouettes on the landscape. Halfe's Grandmothers also reveal the ways in which the buffalo's death resulted in starvation for the people. In their hunger and desperation to keep their children from dying, men would shoot the animals that had replaced the buffalo. This resulted in persecution from the settlers, who saw this as a transgression of property boundaries, while ignoring Indigenous peoples' desperate bid to stay alive. These are the stories embedded in the bones of both human and animal people.

Kerber refers to the prairie in *Blue Marrow* as being a "graveyard of story" (126). These stories may have been buried, yet they are not dead. Halfe finds Indigenous narratives embedded in the land, and "lifts the rocks," the earth, and, yes, the gravestones—of people, the buffalo, and other beings. However, the reader is given instructions what to do once the bodies are revealed: "Listen to the bones" (Halfe 19). Their stories remain a part of the landscape and point to a possibility of the land's inhabitants starting a different way of relating to one another, "one that, instead of burying and ignoring the bones of those who have trod the prairie landscape before us, names and honours them as seeds of knowledge about how to construct more sustainable relations between prairie people and prairie place" (Kerber 136). The bones represent the layers of story that are a part of the land.

Indigenous women's poetry is inevitably a site of what Dreesse, working from Deleuze and Guattari, terms reterritorialization: "Part of the reterritorialization effort involves recovery of lost stories and cultural practices, but that effort also involves imagination and invention" (114). The poetry of Cuthand and Halfe marries the land with survival of Indigenous women and the spirits of the stories long suppressed. They provide alternative maps as guides to living with the land

that push against settler constructs. Goeman elaborates on this: “Alternative conceptions of borders, nations, and place are subversive to the masculine project of empire building. American Indian women are seeking to (re)map first encounters and mediate ongoing spatial projects seeking to solidify nation and power relations by writing in the form of these alternative maps” (29). Cuthand and Halfe’s poetry are knowledge maps that demonstrate loss but also on-going survival of peoples’ connection to their territories.

As such, Cuthand and Halfe’s poems provide guidance on how to move towards healing through ceremonies that re-establish and reinforce pre-existing knowledge maps. Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear discusses Indigenous mapping in “Aboriginal Relationships to the Land and Resources”:

Our stories arise out of the land. Our ceremonies occur because of the interrelational network that occurred all over our land. Our way of mapping our territory is through our stories. There is a story about every place. There are songs about each place. There are ceremonies that occur about those places. The songs, the stories, these ceremonies are our map. (19)

Cuthand’s chorus provides the reader with such a map, and it announces the shift between generations, evoking an earlier time when the buffalo ran across the territory:

Drums, chants, and rattles

pounded earth and

heartbeats

heartbeats. (63)

Renate Eigenbrod describes the subsequent shift between generations “as a process of moving freely, like the buffalo” (128), despite each generation’s speaker struggling to find a place in the

changed landscape. The fifth song belongs to the next generation, the future. The pounded earth under the buffalo herd's hooves is still animated with their spirits, even if they are no longer able to nourish the people with their bodies. Tinker describes it this way: "Like humans, each buffalo has its own life spirit — that is, a spirit that is given to it at the moment of its conception. That spirit is indestructible and, as with any species, including humans, survives even the physical death of the animal. Indian people have always understood this reality" ("Stones" 116). The heartbeats, repeated twice in Cuthand's chorus, remind us that life continues on the land through ceremony.

Similarly, Halfe evokes this renewal with several references to the Ghost Dance:

I will not lose my Pipe.

This holy war I stitch to my dress.

This Skull Dance, this Ghost Dance. (21)

The Keeper of Stories remembers the intent of the Ghost Dance.³⁶ Sakej Henderson writes that the origin of the Ghost Dance from an Indigenous perspective was to "renew the land" (57). By stating she will not lose her pipe, the Keeper is claiming a ground of battle, preparing to fight for the jeopardized stories and the peoples' future on the lands they know as home. Halfe is acknowledging the precariousness of the stories of the land, but her words help ensure their survival and renewal because her readers become listeners, entering into the oral story relationship. She ends with creation stories of the Nêhiyaw to remind people that their origin is

³⁶ The Ghost Dance, begun in the 1880s in the United States as a response to the devastation wrought by colonization, was performed to return life to the way it was before contact, including the return of the buffalo, so life would be renewed. Originally begun by the prophet known as Wovoka, versions of the dance were taken on by different tribes. According to Stephen Cornell, "the tribes that took it up interpreted it in their own ways, fitting the fundamental prophecies into their own cultural designs and practice and orienting it to their own situations" (62).

one of interconnectivity with the land: “All my relations” (99). These relationships include all animated beings, like the buffalo, who must live with mutual responsibilities to each other.

Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* similarly stakes out a battle ground, but the novel extends the metaphor of homelands to include all of the Indigenous lands in the Americas. With a myriad of characters moving over the colonized space of the American south and Mexico, Silko presents vast and intertwining narratives of the corruption, degradation, and destruction. She begins the novel with an actual map that pushes back against the dominant American narrative of mapping the land in the name of conquest. Finally, she uses prophecy to tell of the potential for the rise of revolutionaries who will drastically reclaim Indigenous territories.

Silko re-presents the territory now known as America by using the position that history is, in essence, what Daria Donnelly calls “the struggle for domination between competing stories” (245). Further to this narrative struggle, Goeman says Silko’s novel calls out for the “need for a return to stories” (171). But many of these stories are not for the faint of heart, as Silko cracks open the thin veneer of civilization to reveal the extent of “environmental and moral degradation” that exists due to colonization (Powers 261). The world she creates is filled with violence, pornography, and corruption that Silko says will ultimately result in the colonizer’s destruction. Angelita, the revolutionary leading the fight against the colonizer, reminds us that Karl Marx stole his ideas about tribal values from Indigenous people so Silko in turn “counter-appropriates” Marx (Hunt 268). Angelita then takes up his words on storytelling for her own revolutionary journey: “Generation after generation, individuals were born, then after eighty years, disappeared into dust, but in the stories, the people lived on in the imagination and hearts of their descendants. Wherever the stories were told, the spirits of the ancestors were present and their power was alive” (Silko, *Almanac* 520). Stories outlive individuals, but the agency of the

stories depends on whether they are being told, a view also supported by Yoeme, the Yaqui grandmother: “Yoeme had believed power resides within certain stories; this power ensures the story to be retold, and with each retelling a slight but permanent shift took place” (581). Her granddaughters Zeta and Lecha remember her stories and retell them throughout the novel. Through these tellings, the stories continue to exist, and they are therefore animate and capable of enacting change upon the lands. Donnelly discusses “Silko’s ongoing interest in the processes by which marginal stories gain value and thus the strength to overthrow the hegemonic narrative and dominant power” (251). *Almanac* imagines the way a revolution might begin, one that links the stories to the land and erases colonial demarcation.

One of the ways in which dominant power in the Americas is reinforced is through the imposition of borders and boundaries placed on the land through mapping and ignoring preexisting geographical relationships. Silko’s map is a reordering of colonial maps (see fig. 10). Placed at the beginning of the novel, goes beyond the “quasi-geographical, single-dimensional map of the white people, based on precise calculation of longitudes and latitudes by chronometer and triangulation” (Powers 263). In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Silko posits that the almanac is actually a map constructed of stories of the past five hundred years, noting that each narrative is bound to a specific site on the land. She drew the map that begins the novel as a “‘glyphic’ representation of the narrative,” which reunites the Americas as one, and where “the spirits of the places are known by the narratives that originate in these places” (119). The Americas are filled with glyphic narratives such as petroglyphs, pictographs, and other forms that show a continuous relationship with the land through story. The representation of the map as a glyphic narrative is a visual reminder of Indigenous peoples’ claim to the land. According to

Ann Brigham, it can also be understood as “the inscription of a struggle” (30) that has been going on for five hundred years.



Fig. 10: Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead*. Illustration. 1999. JPEG file.

Silko’s map is also a reminder that “no legal government could be established on stolen land” (*Almanac* 133). Huhndorf explains that Indigenous cartographies can “redraw American geographies to support indigenous land claims” and “subvert the radical logic of imperialism” (144). Alex Hunt asserts that the map pushes past America’s claim to land: “Silko deterritorializes the imperial center and assertively maps another America, the presence and power of which reveal the dominant culture as a temporary imposition on a thoroughly

indigenous terrain” (272). In addition to her discussion of remapping discussed earlier, Goeman explores the notion of countermapping, which is privileging “Indigenous resistance to colonial spatial restructuring” (167).

Mindful of the theoretical discussions on mapping occurring in Huhndorf, Hunt, and Goeman, I am also interested in Sherene Razack’s concept of unmapping: “To unmap means to historicize, a process that begins by asking about the relationship between identity and space. What is being imagined or projected on to specific spaces, and I would add, on bodies” (*Race* 128). Both with the map and with the narrative of the novel, Silko is uncovering an existing notion of Indigenous geography that includes and references Indigenous knowledge and the Ghost Dance prophecy. One significant aspect of the prophecy is held within the reference made in the upper left corner of the map, which says in a large italic font: “The wild herds of buffalo return.” This is a map that calls not only for the return of tribal land to Indigenous peoples, but also for a return of those who for thousands of years lived upon that land in a relationship with it, including the buffalo. The reference is an example of what Hunt says exemplifies “the power of radical fiction to transform — on the level of the map — our sense of familiar terrains” (257). The Ghost Dance at its core was about “resurrection and transformation” and “the coming of a new world” (Cornell 63) and, as such, it strove to transform a terrible situation of massacre, land loss, and the destruction of the buffalo.

While the Ghost Dance may not have halted colonial destruction in the 1890s, its legacy continues to be felt. In an interview with Coltelli, Silko says, “The spirits of the dead already whisper in the dreams of the living on these American continents. The prophets of the Ghost Dance on the Plains remind us in our continuing struggle against the colonialists” (130). If the map can be a glyphic guide to the novel, it refers to the possibilities inherent in regeneration of

Indigenous occupation of the land. Huhndorf points out that the meaningfulness of the map is created through spiritual and cultural regeneration, but also by long-term Indigenous presence: “In contrast with blank spaces and disembodied perspectives of colonial maps, this is a landscape made meaningful by longtime Laguna occupation” (169). This can also be applied to the time that the buffalo have occupied the land, which Silko encompasses with her map.

One of the revolutionary possibilities suggested by the map is the idea of “buffalo as renewal” which emerges at the Holistic Healer’s Convention. There, the attendees have come together with a common goal: “to develop a better sense of the ways in which traditional tribal communities, like the Acoma and Laguna, recognized their responsibilities toward and connections to each other, to the total community, to nonhuman species, and to the land” (Clarke 15). Silko encourages her reader to move beyond the human condition and extend the notion of kinship (and the corresponding responsibilities). Buffalo reciprocity is enacted through the words of Winston Weasel Tail, the poet lawyer who grew up near Wounded Knee, the site of the massacre that ended the Ghost Dance movement, at least in public perception. He turns to poetry and the power of words to “set the people free” (713) by calling forth the ancestors, especially those who danced the Ghost Dance (Huffstetler 11), and I would add, those whom the Ghost Dance was intended to help, including the buffalo.

In Weasel Tail’s speech to the convention audience, he criticizes anthropologists who misunderstood the Ghost Dance: “The ghost shirts gave the dancers spiritual protection while the white man dreamed of shirts that repelled bullets because they feared death” (722). The people sought protection for their minds, hearts and spirits in the ongoing war for the Americas. Glenda Moylan-Brouff says this desire “also operates at the symbolic level” (322) where Indigenous peoples demand self-representation in the stories of the Americas, specifically stories which

“emphatically privilege Native American epistemologies, cosmologies and narrative modes” (322). Weasel Tail is reciting lines from Ghost Dance songs, which also operates on a symbolic level in order to remember and honour the spirits of those who have passed on, often in violent circumstances:

We dance to remember,
we dance to remember all our beloved ones,
to remember how each passed
to the spirit world. (722)

Janet Powers discusses Silko’s ongoing message of the ways in which white culture is a destroying force: “Silko has staked her life, her tribal loyalties, and her commitment to the earth on getting this message across to an increasingly violent world” (270). Thus, the references to the Ghost Dance are Silko’s way of illustrating the long continuance of colonial violence. She references the slaughter of the buffalo by equating that act with contemporary violence in Weasel Tail’s speech: “the crazed young white men with automatic rifles who slaughter crowds in shopping malls or school yards as casually as hunters shoot buffalo” (723). She draws a direct arrow from the buffalo genocide to the massacre of children in schoolyards. Furthermore, her use of the words “slaughter” and “casually” highlight the destructive forces at play in contemporary America. Her juxtaposition of these two acts in different times also demonstrates the link that still exists between buffalo and the people.

Weasel Tail makes specific reference to the buffalo in another excerpt of a Lakota Ghost Dance song that collapses time and announces the return of the buffalo:

Over the whole earth they are coming.
The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming,

The Crow has brought the message to the tribe,

The father says so, the father says so. (724)

Just as the map has announced, the “wild herds of buffalo” (14) are returning. Weasel Tail follows the song with a speech that reminds his listeners that the songs’ promises are beginning to come to fruition:

Have the spirits let us down? Listen to the prophecies! Next to thirty thousand years, five hundred years look like nothing. The buffalo is returning. They roam off federal lands in Montana and Wyoming. Fences can’t hold them. Irrigation water for the Great Plains is disappearing, and so are the farmers, and their plows. Farmer’s children retreat to the cities. Year by year the range of the buffalo grows a mile or two larger. (725)

Silko uses the figure of the buffalo to show how the prophecies are living and breathing.

According to Moylan-Brouff, she is also showing the ways in which Indigenous systems of belief push back against anthropological authority (320) that criticizes the Ghost Dance’s “failure to produce results overnight” (*Almanac* 721) rather than understanding the Ghost Dance movement as extending into the future. The prophecy of the buffalo returning to the land functions as a signifier of a future state of balance. The map introduces the message and Weasel Tail performs it.

Near the end of the novel, Sterling, the Pueblo who was exiled for failing to protect a sacred site, emerges as a character who experiences growth and reconnection. During his process of remembrance, he recalls Lecha talking about the buffalo’s return to the land “just as the Lakota and other Plains medicine people had prophesied” (767). He himself is going through a rebirth (L. Smith 157) and is realizing he must now listen more closely to the animals and to the

women. He is then able to see the buffalo in his imagination, moving further and further out onto their homelands:

Sterling had to smile when he thought of herds of buffalo among the wild asters and fields of sunflowers below the mesas. He did not care if he did not live to see the buffalo return; probably the herds would need another five hundred years to complete their comeback. What mattered was that after all the groundwater had been sucked out of the Oglala Aquifer, then the white people and their cities of Tulsa, Denver, Wichita, and Des Moines would gradually disappear and the Great Plains would again host great herds of buffalo and those human beings who knew how to survive on the annual rainfall. (759)

Sterling acknowledges what he sees in his imagination may yet be in the distant future, and thus Silko is advocating what Moore calls “radical patience” (74). It is the understanding that a rebalancing may not take place immediately, but that the land will eventually find a way to heal itself. Furthermore, while terrible destruction is sure to take place, Sterling realizes the buffalo and other beings living close to and with the land will survive.

The map, as glyphic guide, functions similarly to the iniskim stones of Hungry Wolf’s story: it is putting out a call. It is a call to Silko’s readers to reinforce, or even rediscover, their own kinship ties and responsibilities to their lands and to the other beings who live upon it. According to Goeman, the “always-in-process” map helps to provide “a backdrop to think of decolonization not as a spectacular event but one that entails the everyday and constant readjustment of structures” (158). These structures include the storytelling process, which underlies Silko’s novel and Cuthand and Halfe’s poetry. Huhndorf discusses what stories do to colonial geographic structures: “Indigenous histories reveal borders to be recent inventions that

bear little relation to hemispheric social interactions and Native connections to the land that stretch back into the pre-contact period” (142). Viewed with this lens, colonial geography cannot compare to the depths of understanding inherent within Indigenous geography.

The knowledge maps brought into existence by Hungry Wolf’s grandmothers continue to exist within the stories that women tell. Indigenous women, represented by the woman in her story, hold the key to this knowledge: “The Iniskim, or Buffalo Stone, told her that he had many relatives about the prairie, and that all of them were in contact with the same power as he” (164). Hungry Wolf’s story continues to give hope as it potentially gestures towards a contemporary return of the buffalo to the land, restoring it and the people living there back to health. Blackfoot storytellers tell the story again and again on visits to the site where the original iniskim stone revealed itself, thereby renewing their relationship to their territory. Faith Spotted Eagle tells LaDuke of a project in the Lakota territories that is working to restore the connection between women and buffalo, through the restoration of “the traditional societies, their teachings, and the mentoring that is a result of formal women’s societies” so that young women remember their responsibilities as well as the respect they deserve as women (LaDuke 162).

The stories held within the work of Hungry Wolf, Cuthand, Halfe, and Silko are brought to the page in an effort to bring the strength of remembrance to peoples and lands that have been under colonial assault for the past two centuries. LaRocque explains: “Textual debasement is a powerful weapon of colonialism and, much like material invasion, it has many faces, fronts, and forms. So does resistance to it” (*Other* 95-96). Colonial geographical violence left little on the prairies unmarked, with disastrous results, and certain species such as the buffalo are only beginning to recover. By listening to the stories of the land, including women’s buffalo stories, readers, especially newcomer readers, may also gain insight into how life can continue on this

land in sustainable ways. Human persons have responsibilities to maintain balance in their relationships with the more than human persons sharing the land. Halfe, Cuthand and Silko draw on similar teachings that have survived in order to embed kinship knowledge maps into their work. In so doing, they give space to grieve, remember, and honour those who saw their culture and lands defiled, but whose spirits have survived to provide guidance. This absolutely must include the buffalo. Indigenous geographies, found in Indigenous women's creative expression, show how the land and its inhabitants can continue to live in kinship with one another.

Chapter Five: Imagining Back to Reality: Plains Indigenous Buffalo Artists

Many stories are written directly on the land such as at Aisinai'pi (Writing-on-Stone, Alberta) where petroglyphs and pictographs cover the sandstone cliffs. (Chambers and Blood 261)

Writing-On-Stone is a well-documented “rock art” site, a “sacred place in the landscape” (Whitley 11) where thousands of pictographs and petroglyphs live in a valley filled with hoodoos and rock formations. Since archaeologists first became aware of their existence, much work has been done to establish classification and a chronology of images found at the site. Michael Klassen, an archaeologist, discusses some of the discipline’s challenges of studying these kinds of sites in “Spirit Images, Medicine Rocks: The Rock Art of Alberta”: “Without accurate dates, rock art sites cannot be placed confidently into a chronological framework, making it difficult to determine temporal relationships between sites and developments in style, or relationships between styles and archaeological cultures and ethnic groups” (160). His is a language of classification that is common to his discipline, but it is in contrast to the ways Indigenous peoples understand the images.

The academic community, after decades of scholarship imposing categorization and chronologies without discussing their significance to Indigenous peoples, is starting to realize “knowledge of petroglyphs and pictographs is still extant” and are of “critical spiritual and sacred value” (Francis and Loendorf 21). In a subsequent essay, Klassen acknowledges the Indigenous perspective on Writing-on-Stone as emanating “from a sacred concept of landscape” (“Converging” 15). Klassen’s frequent collaborator James Keyser also acknowledges there is a sacred element to the site: “At Writing-On-Stone the unique geology combines with wind and

shadow to create a sacred landscape noted by numerous Indian informants. Voices of ghosts, shadows of the dead, and homes of the spirits are described by Blackfeet who made pilgrimages to this place” (26-27). Tribes across North America hold similar beliefs in the sacred power of pictographs. Phillip Cash Cash, Cayuse and Nez Perce, shares the following: “To us as indigenous people, these pictographs are very sacred. They hold dear our teachings and our history. In the same way, they continually speak to us from the land” (143). Polly Schaafsma, an archaeologist who works closely with Indigenous peoples, says that “paintings and carvings on stone are yet another form of visual legacy created to communicate and reaffirm symbols and metaphors of stories, cosmologies, and world views, projecting conceptual universes, cultural values, and social concerns” (4). This visual legacy contributes to the survival of Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies.

Rader argues that there is a need to discuss the inclusion of sites like Writing-On-Stone within dialogues about Indigenous art:

One of the great absences in the already-meagre discourse about Native public art is any consideration of the first forms of public art — petroglyphs, pictographs, and geoglyphs. Though there is widespread debate about what various forms of cave painting, rock art, and mounds actually mean, most thoughtful scholars agree that one of the functions of this early symbolic action was to express something specific about a culture and a place. (204)

Rader goes on to describe pictographs, petroglyphs, and other instances of rock art as “aesthetic communication,” which can be understood also as a visual legacy, intended for renewed generations of Indigenous peoples.

I visited Áísínai’pi/Writing-On-Stone with a Blackfoot/Niitsitapi friend who comes from Kainai First Nation, the closest reserve to the site. The traditional Blackfoot name, Áísínai’pi, translates as “it is written, it is pictured,” and according to the Blackfoot, it has been a site where the spiritual world and the physical world intersect. When we stopped in at the information centre, because my friend is from Kainai and because I am Nêhiyaw, the guide, Bonnie Moffat, offered to take us on a private tour. We jumped into her truck and headed towards the area where most of the petroglyphs and pictographs can be found. As we walked along, viewing the battle scenes, warriors, animals, and symbols, I looked up and was amazed to see a large buffalo head in profile, shaped out of an outcrop of a sandstone cliff (see upper right side of fig. 11).



Fig. 11: Marchand, Marie-Eve. “Writing-on-Stone.” 2014. JPEG file.

The Mookaakin Culture and Heritage Society have been working with Parks Canada for the past few decades to influence the development of the site according to Blackfoot protocols. Their mission statement reads as follows: “Áísínai’pi represents the roots of our ancestors. The place is powerful, and going there triggers memories and emotions for our people. No other place is more important to the Niitsitapi, and it’s essential for the whole country to recognize the significance of Áísínai’pi” (Mookaakin 24). Cynthia Chambers and Narcisse Blood also explain the ways in which the Blackfoot understand sacred sites such as Writing-on-Stone, which are known as Kitáóowahsinnoo, or places with spirit:

For Siksikáítapiiksi, these places are not simply piles of rocks, cliffs or glacial erratics; they are places imbued with meaning and history. These places are the equivalent of books, encyclopedias, libraries, archives, crypts, monuments, historical markers, and grottos; they are destinations for pilgrims; places of sacrifice, revelation and apparition; and sources of knowledge and wisdom. For Siksikáítapiiksi these places are repositories for the knowledge left by the ancestors. Kitáóowahsinnoo— and the ancestors and other holy presences who inhabit this landscape — is an animate being with powers of its own.

Siksikáítapiiksi have played their part in keeping the memory and knowledge these animate beings bear alive through the continual enactment of the songs, ceremonies and stories. In this way, much knowledge has survived the onslaught of colonialism. (261)

I would respectfully add artwork to Chambers’ and Blood’s list of equivalencies, as Indigenous art that is inspired by sites like Áísínai’pi functions in similar ways and activates the spirit, memory and knowledge.

In this chapter, I am interested in the activation of spirit that places like Writing-on-Stone inspire and how that can be connected to an activating aesthetic in Indigenous art. I then argue that the buffalo art of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and Adrian Stimson attempts to activate the spirit of the buffalo. I use Rader's concept of "aesthetic activism" (50) to suggest that place-based Indigenous art of the buffalo employs an activating aesthetic. What I mean by this is that Smith and Stimson appropriate and re-imagine place-based form, such as landscape and site-specific installation art, to inspire remembrance of the connection to buffalo (and its loss), shared connection to land, and the re-activation of the kinship relationship with the buffalo. I also take up Thomas King's fictional artist Morris Swimmer, from *Truth and Bright Water*, and discuss how his buffalo art literally takes on life as an activation of culture and spirit for a community in dire need of remembrance of its connection to buffalo. The artists, real and fictional, take inspiration from specific sites such as Áísínai'pi, where the spirit of the buffalo exists within the rocky outcropping I saw that day, overlooking the valley and waiting to be acknowledged.

I should note here that there is some debate about using the word "art" to describe sites like Áísínai'pi. Some critics raise the issue of disapproval from certain circles, including Indigenous peoples, but do not directly cite their sources. I do not wish to debate whether the sacred sites should or should not be called rock art; instead, I am interested in the ways sites like Áísínai'pi can contribute to understanding the possibilities inherent in an inclusive and Indigenous concept of art. Mohawk curator Rick Hill, in *Creativity Is Our Tradition*, speaks of Indigenous art as "a way to express a people's struggle for cultural survival" (46). Hill quotes Lakota artist Arthur Amiotte, who puts forward the following: "The American Indian has tenaciously held on to his arts, not in the sense of the object alone, but rather as a fabric that binds and holds together many dimensions of his very existence. The arts are to him an

expression of the integrated forces that tie together and unify all aspects of life” (Hill 10). Art as an expression of relationality is useful for my discussion, as I wish to think of and explore Indigenous art that is inspired by and comes from the land.

Indigenous sacred sites, like Áísínai’pi, can be understood as creating places of consciousness and revelation. Similarly, Indigenous art has the ability to activate a realization of an alternative history that has often been obscured. Indigenous art, as a visual mode of knowledge, keeps memory and identity alive within Indigenous communities. Visual and aesthetic legacies are embedded within Indigenous artistic expression across North America. Lakota scholar Carmen Robertson posits that Indigenous peoples have “a strong aesthetic appreciation for art” that “relates to traditional notions of art, technology, and the interconnectedness of the spiritual and the everyday” (19-20). Chadwick Allen writes of the effect of engaging with “multiple Indigenous systems of aesthetics,” in that it “expands our appreciation and refines our understanding of how these texts produce meaning and pleasure for multiple audiences, including multiple audiences who identify as Indigenous” (*Trans-Indigenous* 136). Just as storytellers enter into relationship with their audience, some contemporary Indigenous artists, using a variety of media, choose to enter into a relationship with their viewers in ways that inform, shift, and potentially transform through their aesthetic practice.

Indigenous arts also have the potential to soothe open wounds left by colonization. Inuit curator Heather Igloliorte supports this idea: “It is by the dynamic engagement with and presentation of Indigenous arts and cultural practices that we contradict colonial narratives of our eminent disappearance or inevitable assimilation, otherness, stasis, and acculturation” (21). Indigenous arts give Indigenous peoples a rightful place on the page, the canvas and in peoples’ consciousness. In bell hooks’s *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, she says that “[l]earning to see

and appreciate the presence of beauty is an act of resistance in a culture of domination that recognizes the production of a pervasive feeling of lack, both material and spiritual, as a useful colonizing strategy” (124). I would add that the “lack” she references could also be applied to wounds that have opened up due to the trauma of colonization.

Indigenous art can be understood as an “act of resistance” of Indigenous artists that contributes to meaning-making, beauty-making, and identity-making for viewers. Their contributions are linked to the ways in which some Indigenous artists actively engage with complex notions of place through their own exploration of their land’s history. Robertson explains how Indigenous art is a reflection of the artists’ environment and functions as “a response to the land, plants and animals, to family history and to present circumstances” (9-10). Knowledge of these histories and beliefs in Indigenous ways of knowing then becomes embedded in Indigenous artists’ practice.

Ultimately, like Áísínai’pi and other similar sites, Indigenous art can reflect and reanimate the spirit. Cajete, speaking of traditional arts, says that “[t]he emphasis in the creation of traditional art is upon getting to the heart, the spirit, of an event or entity” (*Native Science* 46). hooks also refers to the potential of art to activate the spirit, and thus encourages her readers to “talk about art as the spirit moves us” (*Art* 107). Some Indigenous contemporary artists, like Smith and Stimson, employ the same emphasis on the spirit of their work.

Jaune Quick-To-See Smith is a Kootenai-Salish artist from the Flathead Reservation in western Montana. She is known for her collages, consisting of painted figures of animals and Indigenous peoples; zones of colours, often scrubbed and dripped; and use of archival photos, newspapers, magazine headlines and illustrations. Many of her works depict the land as their shared point of reference. The National Museum of Women in the Arts describes her work as

challenging modes of colonialism: “Through a combination of representational and abstract images, she confronts subjects such as the destruction of the environment, governmental oppression of native cultures, and the pervasive myths of Euro-American cultural hegemony” (“Jaune” n.pag).

In her dissertation entitled “Beyond Sweetgrass: The Life and Art of Jaune Quick-To-See Smith,” Joni Murphy writes “Smith often alludes to a return to a renewed Native culture. Smith and many others believe that people will eventually realize that Native views are more conducive to keeping the environment sound and the world safe” (54-55). In her own words, Smith explains: “Euro-Americans see broad expanses of land as vast, empty spaces. Indian people see all land as a living entity. The wind ruffles; ants crawl; a rabbit burrows. I’ve been working with that idea for probably twenty years now” (Smith qtd. in Millar and Farrar). In the only full-length work on Smith, *Jaune Quick-To-See Smith: An American Modernist*, critic Carolyn Kastner describes the majority of Smith’s work as expressing “a personal sense of place and connection to the land of North America,” and says Smith “recasts the American landscape as a site of cultural conflict” (27).

In her works *Genesis* and *Spam*, Smith uses collage and mixed media to subvert the colonial tools of mapping, portraiture, and landscape. She retells the story of the impact of colonialism on the buffalo and the peoples who are in relationship with them. She uses the outline of a buffalo as the focal point for each painting, which is then interspersed with images and textual reminders of both the buffalo’s importance to Indigenous peoples and its destruction by colonizing forces. These works juxtapose Indigenous symbols and narratives with reminders of how colonization has fundamentally changed Indigenous lives. In *Genesis*, her buffalo is positioned on a blue, yellow and black background, walking forward into the future (see fig. 12).

Smith also evokes the notion of beginnings: the buffalo stands on a banner that starts to map out the Salish creation story that is not yet complete. The story is cut off before it even gets started, signifying the way in which the buffalo's life on the land was interrupted by colonialism.

Archival photos of Indigenous people surround the outline of the buffalo. In the centre of the buffalo, Smith places the Chinook jargon word "skookum," which means brave or enduring, along with splashes of red paint, which mimics the blood of the buffalo during the slaughter. The words "To err is human" are prominently placed above the buffalo's back, referencing the error of the doctrine of human progress that resulted in the destruction of the buffalo. Above the buffalo figure, Smith also places the headline "LA riots could prompt new focus on poverty in Indian Country." Smith painted *Genesis* during the Los Angeles riots in 1992 and uses the core issue of poverty to link the historical destruction of the buffalo to contemporary poverty for Indigenous peoples.



Fig. 12: Quick-to-See Smith, Juane. *Genesis*. 1993. Oil, collage, and mixed media on canvas.

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

*Spam*³⁷ also comments on the long-term impact of the loss of the buffalo on Indigenous people. According to personal email correspondence with Quick-to-See-Smith, “*Spam* was about us having to trade buffalo meat for government commodity canned meat or spam — (like 40% salt) — a heart attack in the making” (JQTSS). She incorporates ironic phrases such as “Honouring Native Foods” and “Look What’s Cooking” cut from magazine headlines around the shape of the buffalo to show how buffalo was once a mainstay of a healthy people (see fig. 13). She includes the words “put your trust in the land” as a reminder that the land provided so much. She also references the Pablo-Allard buffalo herd from her own Salish territory, with the text reference to “The Last Round Up,” telling us that the buffalo was systematically removed from the land. Smith includes the word “e-co-nom-i-cal” in a prominent placement near the buffalo’s head, breaking up the word in the same way the buffalo economy was destroyed. What is most affecting is the colour contrast between the yellows and greys of the background, and the blood-red colour of the stencils spelling out the word “spam.” The painting reminds the viewer that as a result of the buffalo’s demise, Indigenous peoples live in a state of poverty that leads to early death, due to forced reliance on federally-provided commodities such as spam that are now contributing to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

³⁷ The protein source spam, developed during World War II, was included in the food supplements, along with cheese, corn syrup, evaporated milk and vegetable oil, given out in the mid twentieth century to Indian reservations. The supplements were much higher in fat, sugar, and salt than traditional foods (Chino, Haff, and Francis 282)

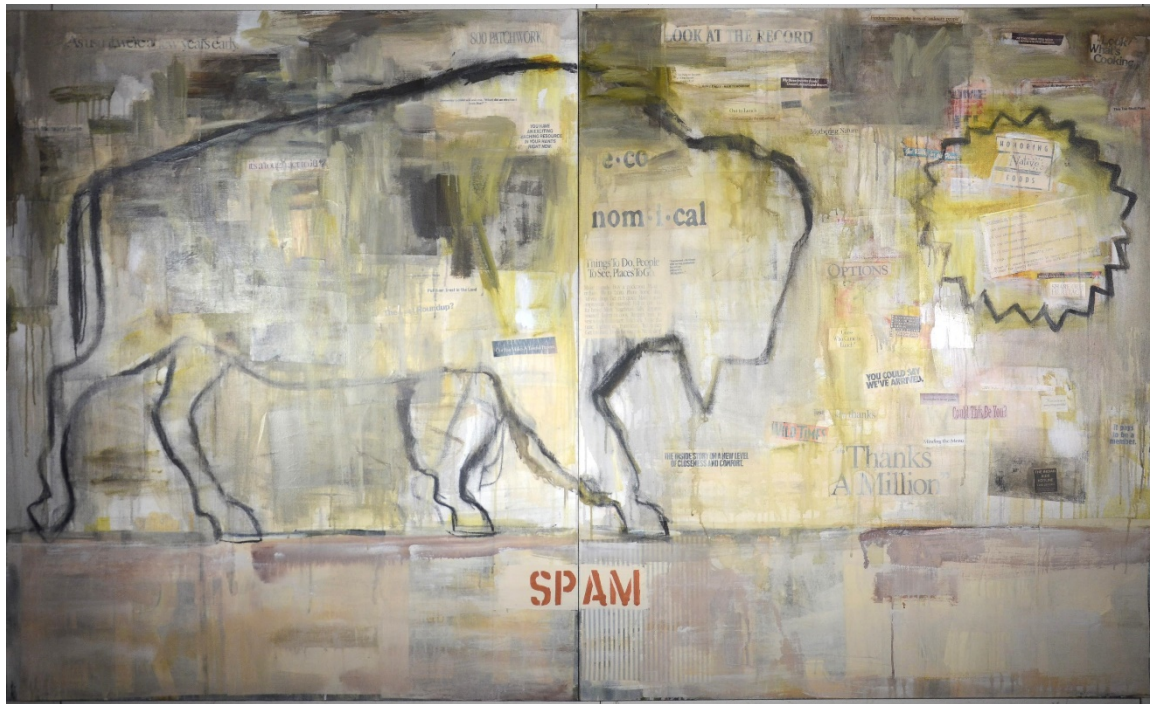


Fig. 13: Quick-To-See Smith, Jaune. *Spam*. 1995. Acrylic mixed media. University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ.

Rader includes a full chapter on Smith's work in *Engaged Resistance*, called "The Cartography of Sovereignty: Jaune Quick-To-See Smith's Map Paintings." He discusses the ways in which her work can be understood as "compositional and contextual resistances" (53). In both *Genesis* and *Spam*, her buffalo is on its feet, moving from left to right, in a forward motion, despite the hardships it has endured. Rader argues that her work can be understood as "aesthetic activism" (53) in the way that it melds the aesthetic elements of her work with her political activism which he calls "both a measure and a means of sovereignty" (53). The multifaceted nature of her work is exemplified in her map painting series. Most of these works, such as *State Names I and II*, *Echo Map I, II, and III*, *Tribal Map I and II* and *Indian Country Today*, re-

imagine the map of America by erasing colonial borders, renaming geographical areas and exposing layers of history and Indigenous realities.

The Browning of America (see fig. 14), re-inscribes several animal and human-figure petroglyphs and pictographs. Petroglyphs communicate stories and “nudge memories” (Stevenson 248). Smith’s painting brings the petroglyph images into contemporary spaces, nudging and encouraging connection to these sacred spaces. The piece is oil and mixed media on canvas and resembles a raw buffalo hide, evoking a long tradition of hide painting. American state lines are obscured with layers of paint, as is a list of groups who have invaded America, which is to the far right of the canvas. The layers of paint are a muddy red, simultaneously earthen and bloody. Smith uses drips of paint, which Aitali says represent “passing of time and fading memory” as well as “emphasizing alternative viewpoints” (Aitali). Interestingly, the drops of paint, rather than moving downwards, are reversed and move upwards towards the metaphorical sky, perhaps as a symbol of the need to look towards the spiritual world for guidance, or a suggestion that we need to approach our history in new ways.



Fig. 14: Quick-To-See Smith, Jaune. *The Browning of America*. 2000. Oil and mixed media on canvas. Crocker Art Museum. Sacramento, CA.

The paint also adds to the erasure of recent state borders, and, most significantly, towards the browning of the landscape itself. The painting's title, *The Browning of America*, is a reclaiming of the phrase made popular by Richard Rodriguez.³⁸ In Smith's realm, she uses the title to remind viewers of waves of invasion and their failure to eradicate Indigenous presence.

³⁸ Rodriguez, in his memoir *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, puts forward the idea Hispanics and other people of colour are "mixing" together with white people and will create a kind of post-racial existence in the United States. Ronald Sundstrom outlines his concerns with this premise in *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice*. He believes this focus can erase pre-existing claims to the land by Indigenous peoples.

Smith uses the gerund form of the word brown, calling attention to both the bloodstains and the figures in the painting, and gives both a contemporary status. Smith, in a lecture in San Francisco, said the following: “The browning of America is not coming — it is here” (“Whose Culture”). In personal email correspondence, she alludes to predictions that say the “continent would become Brown again which we are witnessing now” (JQTSS). In her view, the changes that America is undergoing are connected to the ancient sacred sites of the petroglyphs.

The petroglyph shapes include moose, antelope, and human figures that, unlike the borderlines or the invaders’ names, are not obscured by paint but are instead backlit with a warm glow, and dominate the map as if to acknowledge their significance. They, along with a buffalo who occupies a central position on the map, show their potential to continue to animate the land and the people within. Rader says, “Native maps can also be political statements, assertions of belonging and reciprocity” (49). These animals, figures, and spirits belong to the land and Smith replaces them on the map, despite invaders’ attempts to wipe them out, or to “white” them out. She “browns” them back into the lived space of what is now known as “America.” The renewal of the significance of petroglyphs is part of her aim to “animate the landscape, moving it from map to vision; the figures simultaneously inhabit and imbue land. They inscribe the reality that space is lived” (Rader 68). Smith’s work is continuing the activating aesthetic tradition embedded in the petroglyphs of the buffalo but it also attempts to activate the knowledge of Indigenous histories, such as the connection to buffalo, that invasions have attempted to erase.

Like Smith, Adrian Stimson’s work employs an activating aesthetic that involves history and acknowledgement of Indigenous relationships. Stimson is Blackfoot from the Siksika First Nation in central Alberta and uses participatory installation art to bring buffalo back to the land in a metaphorical sense in his piece, *Re-Herd*. Lynne Bell says Stimson’s work counters accepted

colonial narratives and is “intent on developing Indigenous and place-centred visual testimony” (“Buffalo Boy”). In particular, Stimson’s work gives testimony on the importance of the buffalo. He describes the animal as “a historically decimated mammal analogous to the people and their culture” (*Witnesses* 54). As such, Stimson, in his *Re-Herd* project (see Fig. 5 and 6), pushes people to engage with the world of the buffalo.

Re-Herd is a community-based installation in which spectators are invited to participate in the creation of the project (see figs. 15-17). Stimson builds raised maps of the three prairie provinces, sometimes individually or as a group, depending on the location of the installation. He hand-casts 4000 hydrostone buffalo, and then asks spectators who enter the space to hand-paint a buffalo, transforming them to participant. People are free to use any combination of colours and use any style. Once participants finish painting their buffalo, they are asked to place it onto the empty map, effectively “re-placing” the animal to a space that has been nearly emptied of their presence for decades, and metaphorically repopulating the land with a large herd of buffalo. Algonquin artist and curator Sherry Farrell Racette writes about the ways in which art reactivates story in the objects created: “New objects become the storied object, the story container. The gestures of art making that enfold memory and words move knowledge forward to another generation, while simultaneously engaging an audience beyond family and community” (43). Each buffalo becomes its own story container, with its markings reflecting the participant, but also as a way to remind participants of its existence (and non-existence) on the land. The audience is not only engaged through the viewing experience, but through the actual making of the art itself.



Fig. 15: Stimson, Adrian. *Re-Herd*. 2014. JPEG file.



Fig. 16: Stimson, Adrian. *Re-Herd*. 2014. JPEG file.



Fig. 17: Stimson, Adrian. *Re-Herd*. 2014. JPEG file.

Claire Bishop describes the possibilities inherent in such a project as having the desire to “set up specific relationships between them” to encourage “communication between visitors who are present in the space,” which moves the spectator out of isolation and into community (102). Indigenous art critics and curators often focus on the communal aspects of Indigenous art. Miwon Kwon’s term “invented community” is used by Candice Hopkins to describe Indigenous artists doing work that brings together a group of people to produce a communal project: “Aboriginal people have been doing community-based art since the beginning of time, and while this may be a relatively new concept in regards to the discourse of contemporary art, for Native people, art has always been a community activity” (201). Participants in *Re-Herd*, through the making of buffalo and the act of re-placing them to the land that was and still is their homeland, are also reminded of the factors that contributed to their demise, namely settler colonialism.

The agricultural locations of two of the *Re-Herd* installations are significant as well, as it was installed at public events such as the Regina Exhibition and the Calgary Stampede. These sites are celebrations of an agrarian economic system that is predicated on the buffalo’s destruction. According to Mark Rosenthal, artists like Stimson choose the site of the work strategically: “the installation’s role becomes a critique and perhaps even transgression on the site” (61). The installation, through its replacement of the buffalo on territory that sustained them for thousands of years, reminds participants that contemporary agricultural industries are recent developments in the prairies. Installation art like *Re-Herd* is both “a politicized aesthetic practice” (Bishop 102) and an activating aesthetic practice. Repopulating “buffalo” is an act of what Dreese calls reterritorialization: “Part of the reterritorialization effort involves recovery of lost stories and cultural practices, but that effort also involves imagination and invention” (114).

By using the imaginative space that the installation creates, Stimson reclaims the territory of the prairies for the buffalo.

The imaginative space that art creates is an important tool for transforming the land itself and Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land. hooks tells us the following: "Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice" (*Yearning* 152). By interrupting dominant narratives and gesturing towards the possibility of transformation, Indigenous artists such as Smith and Stimson use the buffalo in ways that activate shared history with the animal within the web of life that exists on the land.

Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* also engages with the notion of transformation. The novel centers around the return of artist Morris Swimmer to the reserve called Bright Water, which is across the river from the town of Truth. Swimmer has returned to his Blackfoot homeland that is disconnected from its history, with the youth having nowhere to go for support. This includes Tecumseh and Lum, two teenagers who do not have guidance from their parents' generation and are struggling as a result. Swimmer begins to remap the landscape of his territory by alternatively erasing colonial markers and replacing them with what existed before and what might exist again in the future. The two youth either find hope in this practice, or succumb to despair.

The novel opens with Swimmer, in disguise as a woman, conducting a ceremony on top of a rock outcropping that resembles Áísínai'pi, a place that King names "the Horns." Two teens observe the ceremony and mistake it for a suicide of a woman, and it opens up their search for secrets kept by the previous generation. Florian Schwieger asserts the following: "King's spaces of Native American cultural resistance form an alternative geography of the West that cuts

through the master-narrative of westward expansionism that formerly sanctioned the destruction of indigenous cultures” (31-32). King’s alternative geography in the novel comes from spaces that remain significant to the Blackfoot people. However, as the action in the novel shows, the recovery of what remained before is fraught with tension and must overcome complex obstacles. Marlene Goldman, in “Thomas King and the Art of Unhiding the Hidden,” explains that King’s novels work to “refuse the consoling illusion of a facile resolution; repair is bitterly divisive, hard-won, filled with unresolved grief, ambivalence, and real, irrevocable loss” (286-87). The town of Truth and the reserve of Bright Water co-exist and yet are separated by the Shield River that serves as a metaphor of the divide between settler and Indigenous narratives. Some of the Blackfoot people have forgotten or have rejected their own stories of their place in the web of relationships explained by the land.

More specifically, the Blackfoot people of Bright Water are disconnected from the buffalo and its important place in their spiritual and cultural lives. Teenaged protagonist Tecumseh attempts to learn his history but is unable to find assistance from the older generation,³⁹ as King is showing the reader that the path to awareness is not that simple. His is a name that holds the weight of history, but the young Tecumseh is just trying to find his place in his community while caught in the borderlands between a town and a reserve. He spends time with his transient and unreliable father Elvin, seeking parental guidance that Elvin is unable to

³⁹ According to Guy St. Denis, Tecumseh is named after the Shawnee leader who attempted to form a confederacy amongst several Indigenous nations in order to resist early 19th century land cessations. It is notable that King names the young Blackfoot man after a visionary leader who died during his attempt to protect the Indigenous way of life and Indigenous lands. There is also a connection to the bones in the novel to the historical Tecumseh. After his death in battle against the Americans, his body was never recovered, although a skull purported to belong to him was held at McGill University in Montreal.

give. Tecumseh is anxious for knowledge while Elvin is teaching him to drive, with the band's small herd of buffalo as witnesses:

“You know how to tell an old-time buffalo skull?”

“Something about the colour?”

“A hole,” says my father. “All the old-time buffalo skulls have a nice round hole in their heads.”

“Bullet-holes, right?”

“Naw,” says my father, “they’re air-conditioning ducts.” (94)

Tecumseh thinks he is about to receive knowledge of the history of the eradication of the buffalo. Elvin, an ineffectual father and disconnected from his Blackfoot culture, is unable to function in the role of guide or teacher and instead resorts to a black humour as a coping mechanism. When he notices the buffalo witnesses have left, he again demonstrates his unwillingness to engage in the painful history of the loss of the buffalo:

My father looks out the window at the empty prairies. “Soon as the smart ones got a good look at Whites, they took off.”

“So, where’d they go?”

“That’s the mistake we made.” My father settles into his seat, pulls his cap down, and closes his eyes. “We should have gone with them.” (95)

Elvin’s position comes from a place of pain and trauma at the loss of livelihood represented by the colonial destruction of the buffalo and how it also contributed to the destruction of men’s roles in the community. Because of the loss of his purpose as a father and as a Blackfoot man, he stays in a self-imposed state of disconnect.

Tecumseh's cousin Lum also has an ambivalent understanding of the buffalo. The boys are watching the band-sponsored industry of garbage storage. A bulldozer pushes the garbage into the land, and Lum's sardonic response wields humour like a weapon: "'Garbage,' he says, his voice hissing into the wind. 'The new buffalo'" (162). By equating buffalo with the garbage industry, he shows that he is unable to see the animals' worth beyond that of an ancient economy, replaced with contemporary business ventures. It is also an ironic commentary on the shift from a "no-waste" ethic of Indigenous hunting practices to where waste itself replaces the buffalo as a material source of livelihood.

The search for a new economy is the main priority for Chief Francis, Lum's father and abuser. Francis uses Lum to push another band-sponsored industry: replicating the buffalo hunt for the benefit of tourists. King ironically connects the nineteenth-century buffalo slaughter of the past with the fake buffalo hunt of the present. He further accomplishes this with the presence of Rebecca, a visiting spirit from the Trail of Tears. She refers to rumours of the buffalo slaughter from her historic perspective: "'We heard they were killing the buffalo for their hides and leaving the meat on the ground to rot,' says Rebecca. 'But we didn't believe it'" (157). Her words underscore the horrific nature of the slaughter that resulted in the near-extinction of millions upon millions of animals, a feat that no one could believe while it was happening.

Tecumseh participates in the "hunt," riding the motorcycle and picking out a buffalo cow to be his "prey." He shoots the cow three times with the paint ball gun used to approximate hunting rifles. Yet he feels a sense of shame at his actions, as though he knows this is a mistreatment of the buffalo and a mockery of the ceremonial aspects of the traditional buffalo hunt. His shame manifests in his perception of the buffalo cow's response: "As soon as we leave her, the cow slows down and stops, the white paint dripping down her shoulder. She swings her

head from side to side as if she's scolding me, and in that moment, she reminds me of my grandmother" (160). King connects the buffalo cow to Tecumseh's grandmother to compare how the matriarchs of both buffalo and the people hold the young accountable for their actions.

Through the cynicism of Elvin, the hopelessness of Lum, and the commodification and disrespect of the buffalo by some in the community, King shows the way colonization has badly damaged the relationship between the Blackfoot people and the buffalo. Tecumseh is the exception. He instinctively seeks a stronger connection to the buffalo and to his culture. By not fully participating in the disengagement or disrespect, he retains a sense of awareness, strong enough to shift towards empathy and honour in relation to the remaining live buffalo and their current fate once the tourists leave: "They stay in a circle at the centre of the corral, facing out. The only sounds are the seagulls squawking overhead and the wind cutting through the grass. The buffalo stand as still as stone. They keep their eyes open and their heads low to the ground as they blow into the dirt" (166). King represents the buffalo herd taking a defensive position, but not a defeated one. They are facing the present day in the same way they have faced potential threats for thousands of years: poised for survival. Perhaps, by describing them as still as stone, King is referencing the stone buffalo at Writing-On-Stone and other sacred sites, highlighting the endurance and survival of the buffalo, despite the onslaught of colonization and commercialization. King admits there are tears in the traditional relational web, but maintains that artists may just have the necessary elements to make repairs.

Once a romantic rival to Elvin, Monroe Swimmer left the reserve in order to successfully pursue becoming a "big time artist" in the city. Upon his return to Bright Water, he undertakes what he terms to be a "restoration" project, announcing to Tecumseh that despite his commercial success "[w]hat I was really good at was restoration" (King 137). Swimmer's idea of restoration

is to not only erase what the settlers created upon their arrival, but to replace it with what existed before. And instead of just restoring paintings as he did in the past, this time Swimmer sets his art in motion upon the land itself, and in the process, reconnects his people to their territory. Goldman claims that King provides the insight “that wounded individuals and communities possess the imagination and creativity to address the trauma of dispossession and violence” (“Thomas King” 283). Part of the reunification effort is reminding people they are connected to those they share the land with, specifically the buffalo, and Swimmer, as an artist, works towards that aim.

Swimmer’s art shows that the earth is capable of replacing buildings and infrastructure with grass and animal life, but he does what he can to help it along. The reader discovers Swimmer’s artistic project through Tecumseh’s experiences on his first visit to the church that Swimmer is in the process of transforming: “I don’t know how Monroe has done it, but he’s painted this side so that it blends in with the prairies and the sky, and he’s done such a good job that it looks as if part of the church has been chewed off” (King 44). Swimmer’s ability to use art to erase the structures of colonialism and replace it with the land represents the power of creative imagination. During this initial visit, Tecumseh discovers a buffalo sculpture: “It’s not real, and I know that right away, but it’s pretty good” (King 48). Very soon after, Swimmer tells Tecumseh that “[t]he real ones are on their way” (King 49), as foreshadowing and another nod to a future where the buffalo will eventually return to the land. It is in this moment that Swimmer recruits Tecumseh to be his assistant: “I’m planning on doing some restoration work.... And you can help me” (King 49). Tecumseh becomes a part of the efforts to restore the buffalo to the land, even if he doesn’t understand the double entendre of “restoration.”

By making Tecumseh his helper, Swimmer engages the boy as his apprentice, a long tradition in the passing on of artistic knowledge and skill. Cajete explains the ways in which apprenticeships work within the making of traditional art:

Apprenticeships, formal and informal, are the primary vehicles for learning a particular art form. In such apprenticeship relationships, the mentor often sets up conditions in which the apprentice would learn how to identify with the creation of an artifact. In the making of ceremonial art, these conditions were extended to include the 'transformation' of the apprentice to a requisite level of consciousness. In this way, art became a process of spiritual training. (*Native Science* 47-48)

Swimmer's guidance of Tecumseh does have a transformational aspect, as the boy begins to reconsider himself, his family, and his connection to the land. Later in the novel, Swimmer gives Tecumseh the wisdom that Elvin is unable to give him: "'Magic,' says Monroe. 'If you want the herds to return, you have to understand magic.... Realism will only take you so far'" (King 208). Tecumseh represents the hope that the youths of the present will take on decolonizing projects in the future. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Dine/Seminole/Muskogee) outlines this, writing, "We must instill in the young the idea that the artists, the dreamers have a responsibility for creating visual sovereignty: images that remind, art that incorporates Aboriginal/Indigenous technology, shared visions of an Aboriginal/Indigenous past, present, and future" (15).

Tecumseh slowly begins to understand the scope of the buffalo restoration project that Swimmer has in mind. He finds the iron buffalo art pieces in a state of compressed space, awaiting the right time to fulfill their purpose: "Underneath is a long line of iron figures stacked

against each other like folding chairs. Even up close, I can't tell what they are supposed to be"

(King 139). Realization dawns on him:

It's a buffalo. Or at least, it's the outline of a buffalo. Flat iron wire bent into the shape of a buffalo. I look back at the stack. There must be at least two hundred pieces.

"Three hundred and sixty," says Munroe, reading my mind. "I had them made up before I left Toronto. It's my new restoration project."

"Neat."

"I'm going to save the world." (King 139)

For this art project, temporality is intertwined with geography, and the land itself is an integral part of the buffalo restoration project. The iron buffalo, as installation pieces, are meant to inhabit the land. Kristine Stiles, in her article "I/Eye/Oculus: Performance, Installation and Video," provides context for understanding the nature of installation art: "Installations may be permanent or temporary, situated in interior or exterior spaces, and are often interdependent with architectural contexts or natural environments. They are frequently site specific and responsive to, or determined by, a place" (187). Mark Rosenthal agrees with how site-specific art becomes attached to the land, defining it as "art that is made for a particular place, so much so that it cannot easily be moved because the work is not an object but is attached to the surroundings" (23). In keeping with Stiles and Rosenthal, Monroe's buffalo art pieces immediately enter into a relationship with the land upon which they are placed.

Installing the buffalo is a form of de-collecting, which Barbara Bruce says, "[R]epresents the desire to undo the colonial process" (198). In other words, Monroe's art is not meant for individual appreciation but for communal benefit. He and his apprentice Tecumseh are undoing

the colonial process by subverting a tool of colonialism — the railroad spike — and using it to anchor the buffalo back to the land. Farrell Racette says that storied objects can be reclaimed so that “meanings are complicated and new stories added” (49). Not far from Indigenous memory is the method of buffalo slaughter that saw hunters shooting buffalo from the safety of the trains.

Tecumseh and Swimmer also undo the colonial process by installing the art with a mind to Indigenous beliefs: “It’s a little tricky hitting the spike with the hammer and missing the buffalo and Monroe’s hand, but by the third buffalo, I get the hang of it. After we nail the fourth buffalo to the prairies, Monroe walks up a small rise and looks at the grouping. Then he runs down and we move one of the buffalo so it’s facing east” (King 141). The buffalo is placed so it faces the direction of new beginnings, both for the buffalo and for Tecumseh. He is embarking on a path of recovery of his people’s knowledge. Little Bear explains that “the buffalo never left us, we left the buffalo” (*National*). By this, he means that many Blackfoot people did not maintain their reciprocal relationship with the buffalo. They stopped some of the ceremonies, and they stopped acknowledging the buffalo’s important place in Blackfoot culture. If the relationship is to be repaired, Little Bear says that “it’s us who have to do the coming home.” I believe he means that Indigenous peoples, like Tecumseh, must begin to remember the significance of the buffalo and why it is important to work towards the goal of the buffalo returning to the land.

Swimmer sees the iron buffalo as a new beginning also. After he and Tecumseh set out the first sixty, with 300 to go, Swimmer tells the boy that “[e]ach day, the herd will grow larger and larger” and that “‘Before we’re done, the buffalo will return’” (King 144). He means for the iron buffalo to be decoys to attract or call the real ones back, functioning in a similar fashion as buffalo calling stones. He understands that as an artist, he has an obligation to contribute to this

goal and engage “in a struggle to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence, by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization” (Corntassel 94). His art functions as such a challenge, taking up the erasure of buffalo and the subsequent impact on Indigenous peoples, which actively works towards the eventual return of the buffalo herds.

The reterritorialization of Indigenous stories and history happening in the work of Smith and Stinson is replicated by Swimmer’s buffalo restoration project. Schweiger says Swimmer’s artwork is a “metaphorical undoing of the destruction of Native American culture” which promises “revitalizing a sense of community and tradition among the populations of Truth and Bright Water” (40). Artistic work like this can potentially restore identity and connection to culture. That said, Swimmer’s act of symbolically replacing the buffalo has been called limited in its scope by Bruce, who maintains that Swimmer’s art ultimately accomplishes very little: “King is confronting and gently parodying the idea that one can simply erase the impact of colonization or re-create what is lost, and commenting on the limitations of resistance through art. King is perhaps representing himself in Monroe, recognising that the resistance he expresses in his own art is limited” (201). While I agree there are limitations to what art can accomplish, we should not discount its power. For example, Anishnaabe writer and scholar Leanne Simpson gives a reminder of the necessity of artists’ and storytellers’ vision for regeneration of Indigenous consciousness: “While some stories or mobilizations begin with the gift of knowledge of help from the spiritual world, other stories begin with a vision — a vision of a life or a social reality that is different from the one the individual, clan, or community is currently living within” (146). Swimmer has a vision, one that plants a spark of remembrance within his home territory, and amongst his own people. These sparks of remembrance are what lead to the revitalization of the land and its inhabitants.

At the end of the novel, Tecumseh, alone after Lum commits suicide and Soldier goes missing, goes out to look for his dog, and is ruminating about the nature of remembrance. At that moment, he spots the iron buffalo, which now have a life of their own: “I can see the buffalo on the sides of the coulees and on the bluff overlooking the Shield. A few of them have wandered off and aren’t where they’re supposed to be, but most of them have stayed put. Monroe said they might move around a bit and that it isn’t a worry as long as they stay in sight” (King 277). The iron buffalo become activated, gaining the ability to claim their freedom. Their live counterparts are still largely behind fences, but it is the start of the activation of the buffalo’s presence on the land. King’s activating aesthetic has the iron buffalo claiming territory while they wait for the real ones who are to follow in their wake. While Tecumseh was initially surprised at the iron buffalo having the power to move, he gradually accepts it, which signifies his growing awareness of Indigenous sacred frameworks of knowledge. Indigenous peoples’ belief systems were eroded but a signal of recovery is the belief in the spiritual. This can be explained by Stevenson’s discussion of Cree belief: “In Cree reality, like Indigenous realities elsewhere in the world, belief in spiritual interventions and transformative powers is a given — it is real” (257). The buffalo in the novel, once in sight of the people, come to life, just as the peoples’ remembrance of sacred knowledge comes to life.

Furthermore, the Horns are a significant and sacred place for the Blackfoot in the novel, and it is not surprising the iron buffalo have gathered there. Schweiger explains that “Sacred geographies are... spaces that challenge concepts of historical progress and chronology, suggesting that past events continue to exist in a plain of temporal simultaneity that is accessible through specific sites” (41). The buffalo freely existing in the land is in the past, but their spirits have remained. Tinker elaborates on the spiritual survival of the buffalo: “Like humans, each

buffalo has its own life spirit — that is, a spirit that is given to it at the moment of its conception. That spirit is indestructible and, as with any species, including humans, survives even the physical death of the animal” (*Stones* 116).

The buffalo artwork of Smith, Stinson, and Swimmer all function as objects of activation towards the re-emergence of Indigenous connection to buffalo as part of an on-going Indigenous resurgence. This is further explained by Simpson:

If the over-reaching goal of resurgence is to produce more life and to re-create the conditions for living as Nishnaabeg peoples following our own inherent processes and expressions of life, then our interventions into colonialism must be consistent with these core values of continuous rebirth, motion, presence and emergence. Emergence becomes of vital importance here, because within Nishnaabeg thinking around mobilization, small things are important and can have major influences over the course of time. (144)

The artists’ work functions much the same as traditional symbols found on rock surfaces at Writing-On-Stone and other sites. “Traditional symbols reflected profound relationships with the environment, offering a context in which to ‘remember to remember’ the relationship” (Cajete *Native Science* 159). A decolonizing idea planted by art may lay dormant for awhile, but given the right conditions, it will eventually germinate, grow and contribute to Indigenous continuance. The buffalo must once again have a place on the land to help plains Indigenous peoples do the same. Lakota elder Fred Dubray tells Winona LaDuke of the potential inherent in the buffalo’s return: “When we talk about restoring buffalo itself, we’re not just talking about restoring animals to the land, we’re talking about restoring social structure, culture, and even our political structure” (qtd. in LaDuke 160). In other words, the effort to bring buffalo back to the land is the

ultimate restoration project. In her essay “First People,” Linda Hogan refers to Alex White Plume, Lakota, speaking of the effect on the people when they brought the buffalo back to their territory: “The people, too, returned to the traditions, stories, and language, which itself reflects ecological relationships not contained by English. When taking back tradition, Alex said that the people looked again for their human place in the world” (18-19).

The connection between humans and buffalo determines the health of each respective people, but it also determines the health of the land itself. Dubray speaks of this also: “[But restoring the buffalo] is not just for Indian people, it is for this country itself. The heart of this country needs to be re-established” (Dubray, qtd. in LaDuke 160). Vine Deloria Jr, in his foundational text *God Is Red*, asks integral questions about Indigenous continuance: “Who will find peace with the lands? The future of humankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibilities to all living things. Who will listen to the trees, the animals and birds, the voices of the places of the land?” (296). Those voices still exist in the visual legacies left for Indigenous people, and it is the artists who are listening. With their activating aesthetic, they will inspire the people to remember.

Conclusion: Singing the Buffalo Back

I have shown how creative texts that feature the buffalo as a trope form a map of the cycle of kinship between Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. The cycle begins with narratives of wellness where kinship systems are demonstrated and renewed through story. The oral stories discussed in Chapter One, written down and accessible, are memory maps that help Indigenous people remember kinship responsibilities that are necessary for Indigenous nationhood to continue. These systems of kinship result in knowledge for Indigenous peoples to maintain their own family relationships and were in place for centuries until the buffalo slaughter upset the balance on the land. Kinship ties are also expressed in the shared experience of genocide brought on by colonial policies. Both elegy and lament allow Indigenous peoples to express their profound grief resulting from the loss of their relative, the buffalo, as represented by Marilyn Dumont and Louise Erdrich in Chapter Two. Their writing reminds us that Indigenous peoples hold grief from the loss of the buffalo in their body memory, and Erdrich suggests the buffalo themselves grieve the end of their era. In Chapter Three, I showed how D'Arcy McNickle, Mourning Dove, and Linda Hogan engage with the buffalo as a way to express the effect/affect of confinement on both the buffalo and Indigenous peoples. The buffalo in the novels are but a few survivors out of millions, left to endure colonial regimes that maintain control over Indigenous peoples and buffalo through containment and forcible removal. However, the novels do show the buffalo's continued survival, which also demonstrates Indigenous continuance. This is necessary for the re-emergence of Indigenous nationhood and imagination. Chapter Four is where I discussed the implications of buffalo survival,

including the renewal of women's knowledge through the creation of knowledge maps. Louise Halfe, Beth Cuthand and Leslie Marmon Silko draw on surviving teachings to provide a place to express grief and guide future generations back to their shared homelands with the buffalo, to live in kinship once again. The potential of a healthy future underpins Chapter Five's discussion of artists' ability to enact generative moves towards buffalo and human well-being. The concept of the buffalo as teacher is our traditional knowledge. It is reinforced through analysis of how Indigenous writers and artists use the figure of the buffalo to remember and recreate our relationship to the buffalo and potentially transform our relationship to the space we live in. The work I have done is part of a process of increasing awareness of this important relationship, which is necessary groundwork for a decolonization of our minds and the land itself. As the Elders say, the buffalo's return will mark the return of our true selves as plains Indigenous peoples.

The morning of December 11, 2015 brought the news that a "large herd of unclaimed, roaming bison" had escaped their confinements and were "running around" ("Saskatchewan") the parklands near Tisdale, Saskatchewan. I immediately felt sad that today one hundred buffalo are determined to be a large herd, especially considering the descriptions of Coming-Day, Peter Erasmus and others who witnessed the herds of millions. Police and municipality officials quickly issued statements of warning to the public. I thought about the way buffalo are perceived as dangerous, despite being natural to the land. But I also saw these 100 buffalo as renegades, refusing to participate in the agenda of ranchers and others who would keep them confined and off their natural territory.

In their search for freedom, the buffalo have allies. As part of recovering the relationship shared with buffalo, Indigenous peoples are now collaborating on an international basis to bring

buffalo back to the land. Leroy Little Bear and Amethyst First Rider started visiting Indigenous nations to discuss the importance of the buffalo with the leadership and the possibility of forming a treaty that would demonstrate a commitment to buffalo. Through their leadership, the International Buffalo Treaty was signed on September 23, 2014. Original signatories include the Kainai Blackfoot Nation, the Siksika Blackfoot Nation, the Piikani Blackfoot Nation, and the Tsuu T'ina Nation in Alberta; and the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes of Fort Belknap Reservation, the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of Fort Peck Reservation, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in western Montana. Several other Indigenous nations have signed or are planning on signing. The purpose and objective of the Treaty is as follows:

To honor, recognize, and revitalize the time immemorial relationship we have with BUFFALO, it is the collective intention of WE, the undersigned NATIONS, to welcome BUFFALO to once again live among us as CREATOR intended by doing everything within our means so WE and BUFFALO will once again live together to nurture each other culturally and spiritually. It is our collective intention to recognize BUFFALO as a wild free-ranging animal and as an important part of the ecological system; to provide a safe space and environment across our historic homelands, on both sides of the United States – Canada border, so together WE can have our brother, the BUFFALO, lead us in nurturing our land, plants and other animals to once again realize THE BUFFALO WAYS for our future generations. (“The Buffalo”)

Once a signatory, each nation agrees to several obligations, including re-introducing buffalo to their nations, incorporating the buffalo into health, economics,

culture, education and research initiatives, and generally contributing to a sense of what Little Bear calls “buffalo consciousness.”

The Buffalo Treaty is the first treaty in two hundred years made amongst Indigenous nations without Euro-Western involvement. Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua is a well-known historian in the Treaty Four area; he explains how the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota and Metis people had a strategic alliance called the Iron Alliance. He says, “It was about the occupation of territory or land; so if there were conflict with other outside groups, those three tribes would have a strong allegiance with one another, according to the Old People” (n. pag). The Buffalo Treaty is intended to function in similar ways: “The signing was an acknowledgement that these tribes and First Nations have more ability collectively than individually to undertake habitat restoration and boost the iconic animal’s numbers, both because of the area involved and resources and political influence that each tribe brings to the table” (“Bringing”).

The Buffalo Treaty nations have decided to work together because of the shared significance and importance of the buffalo in our respective cultures. They are united in their efforts to bring the buffalo back, recognizing the absence of the buffalo is detrimental to our homelands. In *Red Skin White Masks* Glen Coulthard discusses how “relational practices and forms of knowledge” can guide “forms of resistance against other rationalizations of the world that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place” (61). The destruction of the buffalo was done to destroy Indigenous Nations’ hold on the land, and the loss of the buffalo has continued to reverberate within communities. As Little Bear explains, “we have lived too long without our brother, our sister, our relative” (National). It is the belief of Little Bear and other knowledge keepers that the recovery of the buffalo can

help repair and renew understandings of Indigenous sovereignty. The oral tradition is central in these efforts. Each Nation has traditional stories of the buffalo that are intended to create on-going connections and relationships. Jeannette Armstrong explains: “stories create the identity, values and ethics of the people” (n. pag).

The Buffalo Treaty and the stories held within the Treaty Nations are concrete examples of the way in which stories of the buffalo activate the spirit of Indigenous peoples, just as I have shown through my engagement with Indigenous literature and art. The future extension of the overall project will shift towards engaging with the living orality found in the Buffalo Treaty Nations. My approach will adhere to what Stolo scholar Jo-ann Archibald calls “storywork.” By this, she means that researchers approach stories and the storytellers with the same “cultural values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence” which are “embedded” in the stories themselves (85). I approach this project mindful of my position of belonging and the responsibility that comes with that. As a result, Kovach’s point that “the ability to craft our own research stories, in our own voice, has the best chance of engaging others” (60) is especially relevant here. Much of the oral tradition that has been disseminated in the past has been by non-Indigenous scholars and often without the input of the storytellers themselves. My intent is to work with communities to disseminate these stories in order to repair Indigenous peoples’ relationship to buffalo. Razack explains that “storytelling is central to strategies for social change” (*Looking* 36), and as social change is one of the primary goals of the Treaty, I will align my goals in the same direction. The stories of the buffalo reflect the parameters of the Treaty, including health, education, culture, and economics, and I will respond to the priorities set out by the communities themselves. I understand the importance of paying close attention

to what Julie Cruikshank calls “local metaphor and local narrative conventions” (*Glaciers* 66).

My research will also explore other ways of telling buffalo stories besides writing, such as new media platforms: “New media have created more opportunities for exploring, creating, and sharing our critical (hi)stories and experiences across various social and geographic borders” (Carmona and Luschen 5). I will look at ways that digital technologies can be used to recognize and renew Indigenous connection to buffalo being on the land. In doing so, I wish to respond to the needs of the Treaty Nations and the request of the Treaty authors to use digital technology to meet the goals of raising buffalo consciousness amongst Indigenous peoples but also amongst non-Indigenous peoples who live on the plains. Thus, the creation of a Buffalo Treaty story archive will further the Treaty Nations’ goals. Little Bear lays out the central goal of the Treaty itself: “We are all going to work together to restore the buffalo, to be amongst us so that our young people will see buffalo on a daily basis. Then these teachings that the buffalo have given us, those teachings will be in place for future generations” (National).

I am also developing a feature documentary on Indigenous efforts to bring the buffalo back. As my supporters and collaborators in this work, Little Bear and First Rider invited me to film the transfer of eighty-seven buffalo from Elk Island National Park, all descendents of the Pablo Allard herd, to the site where their ancestors were originally taken: Blackfoot territory in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. The Blackfeet, as part of the Iinnii (Buffalo) Initiative, intend to establish a trans-national herd of buffalo that will eventually grow to cross over to Blackfoot territory in Canada. On the morning of April 4, 2016, I woke up at five o’clock in the morning and made my way to

the holding pens at Elk Island, where the young buffalo had been quarantined to ensure they are disease free. My crew and I filmed the arduous process of herding the wild yearlings through a complicated system of chutes and gates in order to load them onto a semi truck that would take them back to their original homelands (see fig. 18).



Fig. 18: Locke Harvey. “Pablo Allard bison in Elk Island loading for Blackfeet.” 2016.

JPEG file.

Once the animals were loaded up, the race to the border started, as the veterinarian left for the day at 4:30pm and without his approval, the truck would have to overnight on the Canadian side of the border. We hurried ahead, often reaching speeds of 150 kilometers, in order to get footage of the truck and the accompanying vehicles. U.S. border security allowed us to film the buffalo crossing of the medicine line, as well as the inspection process. Finally, just before sunset, the animals arrived at Two Medicine River near Browning, Montana, which is

their temporary holding area. Ten Blackfeet people on horseback waited to guide the animals into the valley. Hundreds more were gathered below to welcome the buffalo back (see fig. 19).



Fig. 19: Hubbard, Tasha. “Waiting for the Buffalo.” 2016. JPEG file.

As the buffalo were moved to be unloaded, members of a Blackfoot society sang the Iniskim song, just as it was sung by the Iniskim stone in Hungry Wolf’s story. Earl Old Person, an esteemed Blackfoot elder, explains: “The Buffalo Stone Song gave survival to our people when they were without the buffalo. We sing it now so they will know this is where they come from” (Chaney).

The buffalo remained in quarantine for the rest of the spring. There was an attempt to move them on May 13th, and my crew and I travelled down to capture the final release, only to

be confronted with a vicious spring storm that delayed the transfer. We went back to Canada with the promise that the organizers would call us when the final transfer would happen. We received that call that June 17th was the day that the Blackfeet would move them to Badger Two Medicine, a sacred area in the foothills of the Rockies. I brought my son to be a witness to the moment of return for the Pablo-Allard descendants. After a dusty and exciting round-up, fifty of the calves were loaded onto three horse trailers. The organizers let us set up the camera in the entrance of the pasture. I remembered being told that buffalo will run to the highest point upon release, and so I set up accordingly, even though the seasoned Blackfoot cowboys suggested a different spot. The gates of the trailers opened, the calves ran out and slowly looked around, and then they ran straight to us, veering slightly to run past us towards the high hills. I heard their hooves reverberate on the ground and felt the corresponding reverberation in my chest, and my tears fell unchecked.



Fig. 20: Hupka, George. Montana Blackfeet buffalo release. 2016. JPEG file.

While the “renegade” buffalo herd near Tisdale was eventually rounded up and returned to confinement, other efforts to return the buffalo back to the land are underway. These efforts represent the decolonization of land now marked with fences, altered by agriculture and oil wells, and nearly unable to support the multitude of species that lived here for thousands of years. Buffalo’s return, even in small herds like the Blackfeet herd or the planned Banff National Park herd that will be re-introduced in cooperation with the Blackfoot and Nakota in 2017, marks a beginning. Indigenous people will continue to bring buffalo back to the land so the people can once again live close to their relatives and balance will return.

Works Cited

Absolon, Kathleen. *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Press, 2011. Print.

Absolon, Kathy and Cam Willett. "Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research." *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous and Anti-oppressive Approaches*. Ed. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega. Toronto: Canada Scholars' Press, 2005. 97-126. Print.

Acoose, Janice. "Honoring Ni'Wahkomakanak." Womack, Justice, and Teuton. 216-33. Print.

Adamson, Joni. *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2001. Print.

Ahenakew, Barry. "Ahtahkakoop Learns the Story of Buffalo Child." *Ahtahkakoop: The Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, His People, and Their Struggle for Survival 1816-1896*. Deanna Christensen. Shell Lake, SK: Ahtahkakoop, 2000. 35-46. Print.

Aitali, Erin. "Browning of America." Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento. *Crocker Art Museum*. Web. 2 Sep. 2015. N. pag.

Allen, Chadwick. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. Print.

Amiotte, Arthur. "The Call to Remember." *The Inner Journey: Views from Native Traditions*. Ed. Linda Hogan. Morning Light Press, 2009. 258-64. Print. Parabola Anthology Series.

Anderson, Eric Gary. "States of Being in The Dark: Removal And Survival in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*." *Great Plains Quarterly* 20.1 (2000): 55-67. Web. 7 Mar. 2015.

Anderson, Virginia de John. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.

Andrews, Jennifer. *In the Belly of a Laughing God: Humour and Irony in Native Women's Poetry*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2011. Print.

Archibald, Jo-ann. *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008. Print.

Armstrong, Jeannette. *Indigenous Literary Studies Association*. Six Nations, ON. 2 Oct. 2015. Keynote Address.

Baker, Gerard. "The Buffalo as Part of the Mandan-Hidatsa Way of Life." *Memory and Vision: Arts, Cultures, and Lives of Plains Indian People*. Ed. Emma Hansen. Cody: Buffalo Bill Historical Centre and U of Washington P, 2007. 146-47. Print.

Barriese, Azalea and Susan Gingell. "Listening to Bones that Sing: Orality, Spirituality, and Female Kinship in Louise Halfe's *Blue Marrow*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. 23.3 (2011). 69-93. Print.

Bastien, Betty. *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi*. Calgary: U of Calgary P, 2004. Print.

Battiste, Marie, Lynne Bell, Len Findlay and James Youngblood Henderson. "Thinking Place: Animating the Indigenous Humanities in Education." *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 34 (2005): 7-19. Print.

Bauerle, Phenocia. Introduction. *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows*. Frank J. Linderman. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2002. xii-xv. Print.

Beeds, Natasha. "Rethinking Edward Ahenakew's Intellectual Legacy: Expressions of nêhiyawî-mâmitonêyihcikan (Cree Consciousness or Thinking)." *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*. Ed. Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016. 119-43. Print.

- Bell, Lynne. "Buffalo Boy Testifies: Decolonizing Visual Testimony in a Colonial-Settler Society." *Humanities Research* 25.3 (2009): Web. 12 Nov. 2014.
- Benton-Banai, Edward. "Waynaboozhoo and the Search for his Father." *The Mishomis Book*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. 35-51. Print.
- Bigart, Robert J. *Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2010. Print.
- Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. London: Tate, 2005. Print.
- Blaeser, Kimberly. "The Re-Membered Earth: Place and Displacement in Native American Poetries." *The Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement*. Ed. Alan Velie and A. Robert Lee. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2013. 244-72. Print.
- Bloomfield, Leonard. *Plains Cree Texts*. New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1934. Print.
- . *Sacred Stories of the Sweetgrass Cree*. Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House, 1993. Print.
- Blunt, Alison and Gillian Rose. "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies." *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*. Ed. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose. New York: Guilford Press, 1994. 1-25. Print.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003. Print.
- Brave Heart, Maria Yellow Horse and Lemyra M. DeBruyn. "The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief." *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8.2 (1998): 60-82. Print.
- Breen, Shayne. "Extermination, Extinction, Genocide, British Colonialism and Tasmanian Aborigines." *Forgotten Genocides: Oblivion, Denial, and Memory*. Ed. Rene Lemarchand. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2011. 71-90. Print.

- Brigham, Ann. "Productions of Geographic Scale and Capitalist-Colonialist Enterprise in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 50.2 (2004): 303-31. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Brightman, Robert. *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2002. Print.
- "Bringing Back the Bison: Tribes and First Nations Sign Historic Treaty." *Indian Country Today Media Network*. September 25, 2014. Web. 12 Dec. 2015.
- Brooks, Lisa. "Digging at the Roots: Locating an Ethical, Native Criticism." Womack, Justice, and Teuton 234-64.
- Brower, Jennifer. *Lost Tracks: National Buffalo Park, 1909-1939*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2008. Print.
- Brown, Alanna Kathleen. "Looking Through the Glass Darkly: The Editorialized Mourning Dove." *New Voices in Native American Criticism*. Ed. Arnold Krupat. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 274-90. Print.
- Bruce, Barbara S. "Figures of Collection and (Post)Colonial Processes in Major John Richardson's *Wacousta* and Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*." *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature*. Ed. Laura Moss. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2003. 190-206. Print.
- Bryan, Liz. *The Buffalo People: Prehistoric Archaeology on the Canadian Plains*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1991. Print.
- Bryson, J. Scott. "Finding the Way Back: Place and Space in the Ecological Poetry of Joy Harjo." *MELUS* 27.3. (2002): 169-96. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.

“The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal, and Repatriation.” 2014. Collection of Tasha Hubbard.

Bullchild, Percy. *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. Print.

Butler, William Francis. *The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America*. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1968. Print.

Cajete, Gregory. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe: Clear Light, 2000. Print.

---. “Philosophy of Native Science.” *American Indian Thought*. Ed. Anne Waters. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 45-57. Print.

Calloway, Colin G. *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996. Print.

Cannata, Susan M. “Generic Power Plays in Mourning Dove’s Cogewea.” *American Indian Quarterly* 21.4 (1997): 703-13. Print.

Carmona, Julia Flores and Kristen V. Luschen. “Introduction: Weaving Together Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice.” *Crafting Critical Stories: Toward Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice* New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 1-10. Print.

Carter, Sarah. *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999. Print.

Cash Cash, Phillip. “‘Tiim-enin’: Indigenous Conceptions of Columbia Plateau Rock-Art.” *Talking with the Past: The Ethnography of Rock Art*. Portland: Oregon Archaeological Society, 2006. 143-53. Print.

- Casteel, Alix. "Dark Wealth in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.3 (1994): 49-68. Print.
- Cattleman, George, Interview: IH-176. *Indian Film History Project*. First Nations University of Canada Library. Interviewer: Abraham Burnstick. Interview location: Hobbema, Alberta. no date.
- Chambers, Cynthia M. and Narcisse J. Blood. "Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites." *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 39-40 (2009): 253-79. Print.
- Chaney, Rob. "Bison from Canada Arrive at Blackfeet Reservation." *Missoulian*. 5 Apr. 2016: n. pag. Web. 10 Apr. 2016.
- Chilasa, Bagele. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012. Print.
- Chino, M., D.R. Haff, C.D. Francis. "Patterns of Commodity Food Use among American Indians." *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 7.2, (2009): 279-89. Web. 17 Oct. 2015.
- Clark, Badger. "The Passing of the Trail." Western and Cowboy Poetry and more at the Bar-D Ranch. Web.
- Clark, D. Anthony Tyeeeme and Malea Powell. "Resisting Exile in the 'Land of the Free': Indigenous Groundwork at Colonial Intersections." *American Indian Quarterly* 32.1 (2008): 1-15. Web. 22 Mar. 2011.
- Clarke, Joni Adamson. "Toward an Ecology of Justice: Transformative Ecological Theory and Practice." *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and the Environment*. Ed. Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic. Moscow: U of Idaho P, 1998. 9-17. Print.

- Coder, George David. "The National Movement to Preserve the American Buffalo in the United States and Canada Between 1880 and 1920." Diss. Ohio State University, 1975.
- Coltelli, Laura. "Almanac of the Dead: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko." *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*. Ed. Ellen L. Arnold. Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 2000. 119-34. Print.
- Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Chip. "When History Is Myth: Genocide And The Transmogrification Of American Indians." *American Indian Culture & Research Journal* 29.2 (2005): 113-18. Web. 21 Nov. 2015.
- Cook, Barbara J. "From the Center of Tradition: An Interview with Linda Hogan." *From the Center of Tradition: Critical Perspectives on Linda Hogan*. Ed. Barbara J. Cook. Boulder: U of Colorado P, 2003. 11-16. Print.
- . "Hogan's Historical Narratives: Bringing to Visibility the Interrelationship of Humanity and the Natural World." Cook. 35-52. Print.
- Cook, John R. *The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains*. Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1938. Print.
- Cook, Meira. "Bone Memory: Transcribing Voice in Louise Bernice Halfe's Blue Marrow." *Canadian Literature* 166 (2000): 85-110. Web. 31 Jan. 2013.
- Cornell, Stephen. *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1988. Print.
- Corntassel, Jeff. "Cultural Restoration in International Law: Pathways to Indigenous Self-Determination." *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* 1.1 (2012): 94-125. Web. 13 Nov. 2014.
- Corr, Charles A. and Donna M. Corr. *Death and Dying, Life and Living*. Belmont, CA:

- Wadsworth, 2013. Print.
- Cotera, Maria Eugenia. "'All My Relatives Are Noble:' Recovering the Feminine in Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlily*." *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (2004): 52-72. Print.
- Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2015. Print.
- Cruikshank, Julie. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005. Print.
- . "The Social Life of Texts: Editing on the Page and in Performance." Murray and Rice 97-119.
- Cuthand, Beth. "Four Songs for the Fifth Generation." *Voices in the Waterfall*. Penticton: Theytus Books, 1992. 62-68. Print.
- Cuthand, Stan. "Mistaseni." *Cree Legends, Volume Two*. Ed. Beth Ahenakew, Sam Hardotte, Norma Jensen and Donna Pinay. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, 1973. 61-74. Print.
- Dary, David A. *The Buffalo Book*. Athens: Swallow Press, 1989. Print.
- Daschuk, James. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. Regina: U of Regina P, 2013. Print.
- Davidson, Keith. "Saving Mistaseni." *Saskatchewan Indian* (Fall 2002): 11-13. Print.
- "Dawes Act." *Our Documents: 100 Documents from Our National Archives*. www.ourdocuments.gov Web. Mar 10 2016.
- Deloria, Ella. *Waterlily*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden: Fulcrum, 2003. Print.

- . "Out of Chaos." *For this Land: Writings on Religion in America*. Ed. James Treat. New York: Routledge, 1999. 243-49.
- . "Relativity, Relatedness, and Reality." *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader*. Ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1999. 32-39. Print.
- Dempsey, Hugh. *Big Bear: The End of Freedom*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. Print.
- DePasquale, Paul, Renate Eigenbrod and Emma LaRocque, eds. *Across Cultures Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2010. Print.
- Dodge, Richard Irving. *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Personal Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West*. Hartford: A.D. Worthington and Company, 1890. Print.
- Donnelly, Daria. "Old and New Notebooks: *Almanac of the Dead* as Revolutionary Entertainment." *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1999. 245-59. Print.
- Dreese, Donelle N. *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. Print.
- Dumont, Marilyn. "Les Animaux." *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 31.1 (2006): 31. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.
- Dunn, Carolyn and Carol Comfort. "Introduction." *Through the Eye of the Deer: An Anthology of Native American Women Writers*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1998. ix-xviii. Print.
- Duran, Eduardo. *Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians and Other Native Peoples*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 2006. Print.
- Dusenberry, Verne. *The Montana Cree: A Study in Religious Persistence*. Stockholm: Almqvist

- & Wiksell, 1962. Print.
- Dymond, Justine. "Bodies of Law and Outlaw Bodies: Deforming the Mystery Genre in *Mean Spirit*." *Genre* 42.3/4 (2009): 79-98. Web. 12 Jan. 2015.
- . "Modernism(s) Inside Out: History, Space, and Modern American Indian Subjectivity in Cogewea: The Half Blood." *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*. Ed. Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005. 297-312. Print.
- Eigenbrod, Renate. *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/Migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2005. Print.
- Eigenbrod, Renate, and Jennifer Andrews. "Introduction: From Conference to Special Issue: Selected Articles on 'The Love of Words.'" *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en Littérature Canadienne* 31.1 (2006): 3-9. Web. 9 Feb. 2013.
- Eigenbrod, Renate and Jo-Ann Episknew, eds. *Creating Community: A Roundtable on Canadian Aboriginal Literature*. Penticton: Theytus Books, 2002. Print.
- Eigenbrod, Renate and Jo-Ann Episknew. Introduction. Eigenbrod and Episknew, 7-18.
- Episknew, Jo-Ann. *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2009. Print.
- Erasmus, Peter. *Buffalo Days and Nights*. Calgary: Glenbow Institute, 1999. Print.
- Erdrich, Louise. *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002. Print.
- . *Tracks*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Print.
- Fahey, John. *The Flathead Indians*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1974. Print.

Farrell Racette, Sherry. "Encoded Knowledge: Memory and Objects in Contemporary Native American Art." *Manifestations: New Native Art Criticism*. Santa Fe: Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, 2011. 40-55. Print.

Fedirchuk, Gloria J. "Sacred Stones of the Parklands." *Alberta Archaeological Review* 24 (1992): 16-20. Print.

Foster, Tol. "Relations and Regionality in Native American Literary Studies." Womack, Justice, and Teuton. 265-302.

Flores, Dan. *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2001. Print.

Francis, Julie E. and Lawrence L. Loendorf. *Ancient Visions: Petroglyphs and Pictographs from the Wind River and Bighorn Country, Wyoming and Montana*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2002. Print.

Franke, Mary Ann. *To Save the Wild Bison: Life on the Edge in Yellowstone*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2005. Print.

Funk, Jack. *Outside, The Women Cried: The Story of the Surrender by Chief Thunderchild's Band of Their Reserve Near Delmas, Saskatchewan, 1908*. New York: iUniverse, 2007. Print.

Furniss, Graham. *Orality: The Power of the Spoken Word*. New York: Palgrave, 2004. Print.

Geist, Valerius. *Buffalo Nation: History and Legend of the North American Bison*. Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 1996. Print.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. Print.

Goldman, Marlene. *Dispossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction*. Montreal & Kingston:

McGill-Queen's UP, 2012. Print.

---. "Thomas King and the Art of Unhiding the Hidden." *Thomas King: Works and Impact*. Ed.

Eva Gruber. Rochester: Camden House, 2012. 281-88. Print.

Goodstriker, Wilton. Introduction: Otsistsi Pakssaisstoyiih Pi (the year when the winter was open and cold). Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Hildebrandt, First Rider, and Carter, 3-27.

Goulet, Keith N. and Linda M. Goulet. *Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous Pedagogies*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014. Print.

Grim, John. "Knowing and Being Known by Animals: Indigenous Perspectives on Personhood."

A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics. Ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. 373-90. Print.

Grinnell, George B. *The Last of the Buffalo*. New York: Arno Press, 1970. Print.

Haley, J. Evetts. *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1949. Print.

Halfe, Louise. *Blue Marrow*. Regina: Coteau Books, 2004. Print.

Hansen, Emma I. *Memory and Vision: Arts, Cultures, and Lives of Plains Indian People*. Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Centre and U of Washington P, 2007. Print.

Harrod, Howard L. *Renewing the World: Plains Indian Religion and Morality*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1987. Print.

---. *The Animals Came Dancing: Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2000. Print.

Heinrichs, Steve, ed. *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*. Waterloo: Herald Press, 2013. Print.

Henderson, Sakej. "Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Ed. Marie Battiste. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009. 57-76. Print.

Hill, Rick. *Creativity Is Our Tradition: Three Decades of Contemporary Indian Art at the Institute of American Indian Arts*. Santa Fe: Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development, 1992. Print.

Hogan, Linda. "First People." *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*. Ed. Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, and Brenda Paterson. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1998. 6-19. Print.

---. *Mean Spirit*. New York: Ivy Books, 1990. Print.

hooks, bell. *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. New York: The New Press, 1995. Print.

---. "Introduction: On Reflection and Lamentation." *Appalachian Elegy*. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2012. 1-8. Print.

---. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990. Print.

Hopkins, Candice. "How to Get Indians Into an Art Gallery." *Making a Noise: Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community*. Ed. Lee-Ann Martin. Banff, AB: The Banff Centre, 2003. 192-205. Print.

Hornaday, William Temple. *The Extinction of the American Bison*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. Print.

Hoy, Helen. *How Should I Read These?: Native Women Writers in Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001. Print.

Huettl, Margaret. "Re/creating the Past: Anishinaabe History in the Novels of Louise Erdrich."

Critical Insights: Louise Erdrich. Ed. P. Jane Hafen. Las Vegas: U of Nevada P, 2013. 29-46. Print.

Huffstetler, Edward. "Spirit Armies and Ghost Dancers: The Dialogic Nature of American Indian Resistance." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 14.4 (2002): 1-17. Web. 6 Aug. 2015.

Huggan, Graham. "Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection." *Ariel* 20.4 (1989): 115-31. Web 10 Aug. 2015.

Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Huhndorf, Shari M. *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009. Print.

Hungry Wolf, Beverly. "The Woman Who Brought Back the Buffalo." *The Ways Of My Grandmothers*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1980. 163-66. Print.

Hunt, Alex. "The Radical Geography of Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." *Western American Literature* 39.3 (2004): 256-78. Web. 6 Aug. 2015.

Hutton, Paul Andrew. "Philip H. Sheridan." *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*. Ed. Paul Andrew Hutton and Durwood Ball. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2009. 174-200. Print.

Igloliorte, Heather. "'No History of Colonialism': Decolonizing Practices in Indigenous Arts." *Decolonize Me*. Ottawa: Ottawa Art Gallery and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2012. 18-27. Print.

Isenberg, Andrew C.. *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

- “Jaune Quick-to-See Smith.” *National Museum of Women in the Arts*. National Museum of Women in the Arts. Web. 8 Dec. 2015.
- Jacobs, Madelaine Christine. *Assimilation Through Incarceration: The Geographic Imposition Of Canadian Law Over Indigenous Peoples*. Diss. Queen’s University, 2012. Web. 18 Apr. 2014.
- Johnson, Kelli Lyon. “Writing Deeper Maps: Mapmaking, Local Knowledges, and Literary Nationalism in Native Women’s Writing.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 19.4 (2007): 103-22. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.
- Jones, Adam. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- jones, patrice. “Free as a Bird: Natural Anarchism in Action.” *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*. Ed. Randall Amster et al. New York: Routledge, 2009. 236-46. Print.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. ““Go Away, Water!’: Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative.” Womack, Justice, and Teuton. 147-168. Print.
- . “The Necessity of Nationhood.” *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature*. Ed. Chelva Kanaganayakam. Toronto: TSAR, 2005. 143-60. Print.
- . *Our Fire Survives The Storm*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.
- “A Relevant Resonance: Considering the Study of Indigenous National Literatures.” DePasquale, Eigenbrod, and LaRocque 61-76. Print.
- Kastner, Carolyn. *Jaune Quick-To-See Smith: An American Modernist*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2013. Print.
- Kelsey, Penny. *Tribal Theory In Native American Literature: Dakota and Haudenosaunee Writing and Indigenous Worldviews*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. Print.

- Kent, Alicia A. “‘You Can’t Run Away Nowadays’: Redefining Modernity in D’Arcy McNickle’s *The Surrounded*.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20.2 (2008): 22-46. Project MUSE. Web. 1 Aug. 2014.
- Kerber, Jenny. *Writing in Dust: Reading the Prairie Environmentally*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2010. Print.
- Keyser, James D. *Art of the Warriors: Rock Art of the American Plains*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2004. Print.
- Keyser, James D. and Michael A. Klassen. *Plains Indian Rock Art*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 2001. Print.
- King, Thomas. *Truth and Bright Water*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 1999. Print.
- Klassen, Michael. A. “Converging Perceptions: Áísínai’pi (Writing-On-Stone) in Popular, Anthropological, and Traditional Thought.” *Picturing the American Past*. Ed. L. Loendorf, C. Chippindale and D. S. Whitley. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2005. 15-50. Print.
- . “Spirit Images, Medicine Rocks: The Rock Art of Alberta.” *Archaeology in Alberta: A View from the New Millennium*. Lethbridge: Archaeological Society of Alberta, 2003. 154-86. Print.
- Knight, Harvey. Preface. *Earth Elder Stories: The Pinayzitt Path*. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988. vii-x. Print.
- Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. Print.
- Krasteva, Yonka Kroumova. “The Politics of the Border in Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 11.4 (1999): 46-60. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

- Krech, Shepherd III. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999. Print.
- Krupat, Arnold. *"That the People Might Live": Loss and Renewal in Native American Elegy*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012. Print.
- Ladner, Kiera. "When Buffalo Speaks: Creating an Alternative Understanding of Traditional Blackfoot Governance." Diss. Carleton U, Ottawa. December 15, 2000. Print.
- LaDuke, Winona. *All Our Relations: Struggle for Land and Life*. Cambridge: South End Press, 1999. Print.
- Lapointe, James. *Legends of the Lakota*. San Francisco: The Indian Historic Press, 1976. Print.
- LaRocque, Emma. "Reflections on Cultural Continuity through Aboriginal Women's Writings." *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture*. Ed. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeline Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2009. 149-74. Print.
- . *When the Other Is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2010. Print.
- Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2008 (1944). Print.
- . "Genocide." *American Scholar* 15.2 (1946): 227-30. Web. 10 Dec. 2015.
- Levene, Mark. *The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. Print.
- Lightning, Richard. "Saddle Lake Interviews." *Indian History Film Project*. Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina. Web. 5 Apr. 2014.
- Linderman, Frank B. *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2002. Print.

- Lindqvist, Sven. *'Exterminate All the Brutes.'* New York: The New Press, 1992. Print.
- Little Bear, Leroy. "Aboriginal Relationships to the Land and Resources." *Sacred Lands: Aboriginal World Views, Claims, and Conflicts*. Ed. Jill Oakes, Rick Riewe, Kathi Kinew and Elaine Maloney. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998. 15-20. Print.
- . National Bison Day. Bozeman, MT. November 1, 2014. Keynote Address.
- Looking Horse, Arvol, Carey Vicenti, and Douglas Long. "Religious Freedom and Native Sovereignty — Protecting Native Religions through Tribal, Federal, and State Law." *Wicazo Sa Review* 19.2 (2004): 185-97. Web. 23 May 2014.
- Lowey, Mark. "Manitou's Meteorite." Cobourg and District Images. *Ourontario*. Web. 6 April 2014.
- Lukens, Margaret. "Mourning Dove and Mixed Blood: Cultural and Historical Pressures on Aesthetic Choice and Authorial Identity." *American Indian Quarterly* 21.3 (1997): 409-22. Web. 27 Aug. 2012.
- Lyell, Charles. *Principles of Geology*. 1830. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Print.
- Magoc, Chris J. *Environmental Issues in American History: A Reference Guide with Primary Documents*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006. Print.
- Malouf, Carling. "Economy and Land Use by The Indians of Western Montana, U.S.A." *Interior Salish and Eastern Washington Indians II*. New York: Garland, 1974. 117-78. Print.
- Mandelbaum, David G. *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2001. Print.
- Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994. Print.

- McDonald, Shirley. "Imagining the Canadian Agrarian Landscape: Prairie Settler Life Writing as Colonial Discourse." *Association of Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada*. UBC Okanagan, BC. 8 Aug. 2012. Conference Presentation.
- McDougall, John. *George Millward McDougall: The Pioneer, Patriot and Missionary*. Toronto: William Briggs, 1888. Print.
- McHugh, Tom. *The Time of the Buffalo*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972. Print.
- McKittrick, Katherine and Linda Peake. "What Difference Does Difference Make to Geography." *Questioning Geography: Fundamental Debates*. Ed. Noel Castree, Alisdair Rogers and Douglas Sherman. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 39-56. Print.
- McLeod, Neal. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Saskatoon: Purich, 2007. Print.
- . "Cree Poetic Discourse." DePasquale, Eigenbrod, and LaRocque. 109-21. Print.
- . *Gabriel's Beach*. Regina: Hagios Press, 2008. Print.
- . "Nêhiyawewin and Modernity." *Plain Speaking: Essays on Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairie*. Ed. Patrick Douard and Bruce Dawson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2002. 35-53. Print.
- McNickle, D'Arcy. *The Surrounded*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1990. Print.
- McWhorter, Lucullus Virgil. To the Reader. *Cogewea: The Half Blood*. Mourning Dove. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981. 9-12. Print.
- Meagher, Mary. *The Bison of Yellowstone National Park*. National Park Service, Scientific Monographs 1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973. Print.
- Melnyk, George. *The Literary History of Alberta: Volume One: From Writing-on-Stone to World War Two*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1998. Print.

- Millar, Olivia and Chelsea Farrar. "Art/Write — Jaune Quick-to-See Smith." *University of Arizona Museum of Art*. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.
- Miller, Jay. Introduction. *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990. Print.
- . Introduction to the Bison Book Edition. *Coyote Stories*. Mourning Dove. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990. v-xvii. Print.
- Miles, Nelson Appleton, and Marion Perry Maus. *Personal Recollections and Observations of General Nelson A. Miles: Embracing a Brief View of the Civil War; Or, from New England to the Golden Gate, and the Story of His Indian Campaigns, with Comments on the Exploration, Development and Progress of Our Great Western Empire; Copiously Illustrated with Graphic Pictures by Frederic Remington and Other Eminent Artists*. Chicago; New York: The Werner Company, 1897. *Indigenous Peoples: North America*. Web. 3 Jan. 2016.
- Mookaakin Cultural and Heritage Society and Parks Canada. *Aisinai'pi — Writing on Stone National Historic Site of Canada Submission Report*. Manuscript on file with Parks Canada, Calgary, AB. 2003. Print.
- Moore, David L. "Return of the Buffalo: Cultural Representation as Cultural Property." *Native American Representations*. Ed. Gretchen M. Battaille. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2001. 52-79. Print.
- Mourning Dove. *Cogewea: The Half Blood*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981. Print.
- Moylan-Brouff, Glenda. *Writing Counter-Histories of the Americas: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*. Diss. University of Wollongong, 2004. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

- Murphy, Joni L. "Beyond Sweetgrass: The Life and Art of Jaune Quick-To-See Smith." Diss. University of Kansas, 2008. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.
- Musqua, Danny. Interview with Tasha Hubbard. Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Saskatoon, SK. 12 Dec. 2012.
- Narduzzi, Dilia. "Modern Female Aboriginal Subjectivity (in) the Land: Mourning Dove's Cogewea." *Mosaic* 41.1 (2008) Web. 9 Feb. 2013.
- Neufeld, Peter Lorenz. "Bison Conservation: The Canadian Story." *Manitoba History* 24 (1992): n. pag. Web. 1 Aug. 2014.
- Nocella II, Anthony J., John Sorenson, Kim Socha, and Atsuko Matsuoka, eds. *Defining Critical Animal Studies: An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. Print.
- Oakes, Timothy S. and Patricia L. Price. "Approaching Culture." *The Cultural Geography Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2008. 9-14. Print.
- Ohnesorge, Karen. "Uneasy Terrain: Image, Text, Landscape, and Contemporary Indigenous Artists in the United States." *American Indian Quarterly* 32.1 (2008): 43-69. Print.
- Old Lady Horse (Spear Woman). "The Last Buffalo Herd." *American Indian Mythology*. Ed. Alice Lee Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. New York: New American Library, 1968. 170. Print.
- Owens, Louis. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994. Print.
- Parker, Dorothy. *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1992. Print.

Parker, Robert Dale. *The Invention of Native American Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003.

Print.

Pasovic, Maja and Marilyn Dumont. "Interview with Marilyn Dumont." *Luvah: Journal of the Creative Imagination*. 1-2.1 (2012): n. pag. Web. 15 February 2013.

Piatote, Beth H. *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2013. Print.

Pohorecky, Zenon. "Report on the South Saskatchewan Reservoir Archaeological Survey, June – September, 1960." [National Museum of Canada], 8 Sep. 1960. Print.

Powell, Christopher. "What do Genocides Kill? A Relational Conception of Genocide." *Journal of Genocide Research* 9.4 (2007): 527-47. Web. 15 Aug. 2012.

Powers, Janet M. "Mapping the Prophetic Landscape in *Almanac of the Dead*." *Leslie Marmon Silko*. 261-72. Print.

Punke, Michael. *Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, the Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2007. Print.

Purdy, John Lloyd. *Word Ways: The Novels of D'Arcy McNickle*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1990. Print.

Quick-To-See Smith, Jaune. "JQTSS Images." Message to Tasha Hubbard. 20 Sept. 2015. E-mail.

---. "We, the Human Beings." *We, the Human Beings: 27 Contemporary Native American Artists*. Wooster: The College of Wooster Art Museum, 1992. 9-13. Print.

---. "Whose Culture Is This Anyway?" *Worlds in Collision: Dialogues on Multicultural Art Issues*. Ed. Reagan Louis and Carlos Villa. San Francisco: International Scholars, 1994. 143-48. Print.

- Rader, Dean. *Engaged Resistance*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2011. Print.
- Razack, Sherene. *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. Print.
- . *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002. Print.
- Riddington, Robin. "Happy Trails to You: Contexted Discourse and Indian Removals in Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*." *Canadian Literature* 167 (2000): 89-107. Web 8 Nov. 2013.
- Rinella, Steve. *American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008. Print.
- Robertson, Carmen. "Clearing Paths." *Clearing a Path: New Ways of Seeing Traditional Indigenous Art*. Ed. Carmen Robertson and Sherry Farrell Racette. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2009. 9-20. Print.
- Rockwell, David. *The Lower Flathead River Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana: A Cultural, Historical, and Scientific Resource*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, 2008. Print.
- Rodriguez, Richard. *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.
- Rosenthal, Mark. *Understanding Installation Art*. New York: Prestel Verlag, 2003. Print.
- Ruppel, Kristin T. *Unearthing Indian Land: Living With the Legacy of Allotment*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2008. Print.
- Ruppert, James. *D'Arcy McNickle*. Boise: Boise State University, 1988. Print.

Sarris, Greg. *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*.

Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. Print.

Canadian Press. "Saskatchewan Bison Herd Is Causing Headaches for Officials." *Huffington Post Canada*. 15 Dec. 2015. Web.

Schaafsma, Polly. *Images and Power: Rock Art and Ethics*. New York: Springer, 2013. Print.

Schwieger, Florian. "A Map to the Truth: Sacred Geographies and Spaces of Resistance in King's *Truth and Bright Water*." *South Atlantic Review* 76.2 (2011): 29-44. Web. 8 Nov. 2013.

Schweninger, Lee. *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2008. Print.

Short, Damien. "Cultural Genocide and Indigenous Peoples: A Sociological Approach." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 14.6 (2010): 833-48. Web. 5 Aug. 2012.

Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Terms*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. Print.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.

---. "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit." *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*. 60-72. Print.

Simpson, Leanne. *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011. Print.

Sinclair, Niigonwedom James, and Renate Eigenbrod. "What We Do, What We Are: Responsible, Ethical, And Indigenous-Centered Literary Criticisms Of Indigenous Literatures: Introduction To The Special Issue On Native Literatures." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 29.1 (2009): 1-14. Web. 22 June 2016.

- Sitara, Georgia. *Humanitarianism in the Age of Capital and Empire: Canada, 1870-1890*. Diss. University of Victoria, 2010. Web. 2 Apr. 2014.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999. Print.
- Smith, Lindsey Claire. "The Earth Remains: Place and Prophecy in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." *Indians, Environment, and Identity on the Borders of American Literature: From Faulkner and Morrison to Walker and Silko*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. 145-77. Print.
- Smits, David D. "The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo: 1865-1883." *Western Historical Quarterly* 25.3 (1994): 312-38. Web. 28 Jul. 2012
- Socha, Kim and Les Mitchell. "Critical Animal Studies as an Interdisciplinary Field: A Holistic Approach to Confronting Oppression." Nocella et al. 110-34.
- Spencer, Herbert. *Social Statics: Or, the Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of Them Developed*. London, 1851. *The Making Of The Modern World*. Web. 6 June 2016.
- St. Denis, Guy. *Tecumseh's Bones*. Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2014. Print.
- Stephenson, Mrs. Frederick C. *One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions*. Vol. 1. Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1925. Print.
- Stephey, Molly. "The Osage Murders: Oil Wealth, Betrayal and the FBI's First Big Case." National Museum of the American Indian. *Smithsonian*. Web. 9 Dec. 2015.
- Stevenson, Winona. "Decolonizing Tribal Histories." Diss. U of California, Berkeley, 2000. Print.

Stiles, Kristine. "I/Eye/Oculus: Performance, Installation and Video." *Themes in Contemporary Art*. Ed. Gill Perry and Paul Wood. London: Yale UP, 2004. 183-232. Print.

Sundstrom, Linea. *Storied Stone: Indian Rock Art in the Black Hills Country*. Norman: Oklahoma UP, 2004. Print.

Sundstrom, Ronald. *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice*. New York: SUNY Press, 2008. Print.

Sztybel, David. "Animals as Persons." *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*. Ed. Carla Jodey Castricano. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2008. 241-58. Print.

Tatz, Colin. *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide*. London: Verso, 2003. Print.

Taylor, John Leonard. "Treaty Research Report – Treaty Six (1876)." Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985. *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*. Web. 25 June. 2016.

Taylor, M. Scott. "Buffalo Hunt: International Trade And The Virtual Extinction Of The North American Bison." NBER Working Paper Series 12969. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Web. 25 June, 2016.

Teuton, Christopher B. "Theorizing American Indian Literature: Applying Oral Concepts to Written Traditions." Womack, Justice, and Teuton. 193-215.

Tinker, George E. "An American Indian Theological Response to Ecojustice." *Defending Mother Earth: Native American Perspectives on Environmental Justice*. Ed. Jace Weaver. New York: Orbis Books, 1996. 153-76. Print.

---. "The Stones Shall Cry Out: Consciousness, Rocks, and Indians." *Wicazo Sa Review* 19.2 (2004): 105-25. Print.

- . "Why I Do Not Believe In a Creator." *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*. Ed. Steve Heinrichs. Waterloo: Herald Press, 2013. 167-179.
- Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider and Sarah Carter. *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996. Print.
- Tsinhnahjinnie, Hulleah J. "Visual Sovereignty: A Continuous Aboriginal/Indigenous Landscape." *Diversity and Dialogue: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2007*. Ed. James H. Nottage. Indianapolis: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 2008. 15-24. Print.
- Utey, Robert M. and Wilcomb E. Washburn. *Indian Wars*. New York: American Heritage, 2002. Print.
- Valaskakis, Gail. *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2005. Print.
- Vecsey, Christopher. *Imagine Ourselves Richly: Mythic Narratives of North American Indians*. New York: Crossroad Press, 1998. Print.
- Verbicky-Todd, Eleanor. *Communal Buffalo Hunting Among the Plains Indians*. Edmonton: Archaeological Survey of Alberta, Occasional Paper No. 24, 1984. Print.
- Vizenor, Gerald. "The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance." *American Indian Quarterly* 17.1 (1993): 7-30. Print.
- Wakeham, Pauline. *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.
- Waldau, Paul. *Animal Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013.

- . "Pushing Environmental Justice to a Natural Limit." *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*. Ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. 629-44. Print.
- Walker, Ernest G. and Louise B. Halfe. "Stored in the Honeycomb Heart of Memory: the Role of Oral Tradition and Archaeology in Cultural Survival." *Structurist*. 37-8 (1997/98): 4-11.
Web. 4 Apr. 2014
- Walters, Anna Lee. "The Buffalo Road." *Here First: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*. Ed. Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann. New York: The Modern Library. 370-80. Print.
- Wapass, Gladys. "Gathering of Oral History: Elders Information on Lands and Resources." Interview in Cree by Ted Whitecalf. Translated and transcribed by Leona Tootoosis. North Battleford, SK. 26 Feb. 2005. Collection of Tasha Hubbard.
- Warrior, Robert. *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.
- Waziyatawin. "A Serpent in the Garden: An Unholy Worldview on Sacred Land." Heinrichs. 210-231.
- Weaver, Jace. "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism." Weaver, Womack and Warrior. 1-90.
- . *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.
- Weaver, Jace, Craig Womack and Robert Warrior eds. *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006. Print.

- Weitzenfeld, Adam and Melanie Joy. "An Overview of Anthropocentrism, Humanism, and Speciesism in Critical Animal Theory." Nocella et al. 3-27.
- Whealdon, Bon. *I Will Be Meat for My Salish: The Montana Writers Project and the Buffalo of the Flathead Indian Reservation*. Ed. Robert Bigart. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Press and Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2001. Print.
- Whitley, David S. "Finding Rain in the Desert: Landscape, Gender and Far Western North American Rock-Art." *The Archaeology of Rock Art*. Ed. Christopher Chippendale and Paul S.C. Tacon. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 11-29. Print.
- Wildcat, Daniel. "Just Creation: Enhancing Life in a World of Relatives." Heinrichs 295-309.
- Wilson, Angela Cavender. "Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge." *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*. Ed. Devon Abbot Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 69-87. Print.
- Wissler, Clark and D.C. Duvall. *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995. Print.
- Wolfe, Alexander. *Earth Elder Stories: The Pinayzitt Path*. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988. Print.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409. Web. 28 Jul. 2012.
- Womack, Craig. "The Integrity of American Indian Claims: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity." Weaver, Womack and Warrior. 91-178. Print.
- . "A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997." Womack, Justice, and Teuton. 3-104. Print.

- Womack, Craig, Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher B. Teuton, eds. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. U of Oklahoma P, 2008. Print.
- Woolford, Andrew. "Discipline, Territory, and the Colonial Mesh: Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada." *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*. Ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2014. 29-48. Print.
- Wright, Roland. *What is America? A Short History of the New World Order*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2008. Print.
- "Writing-On-Stone." Mokakioyis Project. *Galileo Educational Network*. . Web. 9 Dec. 2015.
- Zontek, Ken. *Buffalo Nation: American Indian Efforts to Restore the Bison*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2007. Print.

Appendix A: The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Repatriation

THE BUFFALO: A TREATY OF COOPERATION, RENEWAL AND REPATRIATION

RELATIONSHIP TO BUFFALO

Since time immemorial, hundreds of generations of the first peoples of the FIRST NATIONS of North America have come and gone since before and after the melting of the glaciers that covered North America. For all those generations BUFFALO has been our relative. BUFFALO is part of us and WE are part of BUFFALO culturally, materially, and spiritually. Our on-going relationship is so close and so embodied in us that BUFFALO is the essence of our holistic eco-cultural life-ways.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE TREATY

To honor, recognize, and revitalize the time immemorial relationship we have with BUFFALO, it is the collective intention of WE, the undersigned NATIONS, to welcome BUFFALO to once again live among us as CREATOR intended by doing everything within our means so WE and BUFFALO will once again live together to nurture each other culturally and spiritually. It is our collective intention to recognize BUFFALO as a wild free-ranging animal and as an important part of the ecological system; to provide a safe space and environment across our historic homelands, on both sides of the United States – Canada border, so together WE can have our brother, the BUFFALO, lead us in nurturing our land, plants and other animals to once again realize THE BUFFALO WAYS for our future generations.

PARTIES TO THE TREATY

WE, the undersigned, include but not limited to BLACKFEET NATION, BLOOD TRIBE, SIKSIKA NATION, PIIKANI NATION, THE ASSINIBOINE AND GROS VENTRE TRIBES OF FORT BELNAP INDIAN RESERVATION, THE ASSINIBOINE AND SIOUX TRIBES OF FORT PECK INDIAN RESERVATION, THE SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES OF THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI INDIAN RESERVATION, and TSUU T'INA NATION.

ARTICLE I - CONSERVATION

Recognizing Buffalo as a practitioner of conservation, We, collectively, agree to:

perpetuate conservation by respecting the interrelationships between us and 'all our relations' including animals, plants, and mother earth;

perpetuate and continue our spiritual ceremonies, sacred societies, and sacred objects and bundles as a means to bring about ecological balance; and

perpetuate and practice our sacred languages as a means to embody the thoughts and beliefs of ecological balance.

ARTICLE II - CULTURE

Realizing Buffalo Ways as a foundation of our ways of life, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate all aspects of our respective cultures related to BUFFALO including customs, practices, harvesting, beliefs, songs, and ceremonies.

ARTICLE III - ECONOMICS

Recognizing Buffalo as the centerpiece of our traditional and modern economies, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate economic development revolving around BUFFALO in an environmentally responsible manner including food, crafts, eco-tourism, and other beneficial by-products arising out of BUFFALO's gifts to us.

ARTICLE IV - HEALTH

Taking into consideration all the social and health benefits of a Buffalo ecology, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate the health benefits of BUFFALO.

ARTICLE V - EDUCATION

Recognizing and continuing to embody all the teachings we have received from Buffalo, We, collectively, agree to develop programs revolving around BUFFALO as a means of transferring intergenerational knowledge to the younger and future generations and sharing knowledge amongst our respective NATIONS.

ARTICLE VI - RESEARCH

Realizing that learning is a life-long process, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate knowledge-gathering and knowledge-sharing according to our customs and inherent authorities revolving around BUFFALO that do not violate our traditional ethical standards as a means to expand our knowledge base regarding the environment, wildlife, plant life, water, and the role BUFFALO played in the history, spiritual, economic, and social life of our NATIONS.

ARTICLE VII - ADHESIONS

North American Tribes and First Nations, and NATIONS, STATES, AND PROVINCES may become signatories to this treaty providing they agree to the terms of this treaty.

ARTICLE VIII – PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

WE, collectively, invited Non-Governmental organizations, Corporations and others of the business and commercial community, to form partnerships with the signatories to bring about the manifestation of the intent of this treaty.

Organizations and Individuals may become signatories to this treaty as partners and supporters providing they perpetuate the spirit and intent of this treaty.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

This treaty may be amended from time-to-time by a simple majority of the signatories.

SIGNED IN WITNESS HEREOF ON..... AT

..... BY THE RESPECTIVE LEADERS OF:

SIGNATORIES:

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

WITNESSES