

AAWAATOWAPSIKSI “THOSE PEOPLE THAT HAVE SACRED CEREMONIES”
INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S BODIES: RECOVERING THE SACRED, RESTORING
OUR LANDS, DECOLONIZATON

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Jody Pepion find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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colonization without me by your sides. It is because of my Amskapi Pikuni
Nation that I have succeeded. I am coming home.

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Abstract

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This dissertation project is recorded in three ways: writing, video and voice. The writing is primarily to comply with the academy’s requirements; the video is to tell the story both orally and visually to all the people. The academy demands the elites’ language to be placed within the space of Indigenous storytelling—and that is a problem. The voice of the academy serves as a colonized gaze. One of the primary things this project accomplishes is to expose the violence committed by the nation-state. It holds governmental institutions, including the university, and individuals accountable for their violence against and violation of the Blackfeet People. This dissertation—the video in conjunction with the text—maps the effects of this continuing colonial violence—to show its ripples and echoes in the lives, homes, and homeland of my people.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to our family members whom are no longer with us. Our Mother Mary Louise Pepion, Our sister Sally Jane Pepion, her three children Deidre Mary Spotted Bear, Irvin Rooster Spotted Bear, Hope Lea Spotted Bear. Because you left before I could finish I started this project for you all and I will see that this dissertation continues to uphold the Amskapi Pikuni truth. I am also dedicating this to my Father Sleeps In The Thunder Webb Pepion who has been waiting for me to come home for fourteen years.

Chapter One

Indigenous Video Storytelling: Respect, Remembrance, Reverence, Resistance—Reviving Indigenous Truth

Storytelling:

This dissertation project is recorded in three ways—writing, video and voice. As a part of writing I use my journal entries throughout the dissertation in an effort to recover our stories and oral tradition, which recorded violence and struggles that I witnessed every day on the Amskapi Pikuni reservation. The writing is primarily to comply with the academy’s requirements and record Amskapi Pikuni experiences to decipher our truth; the video is to tell the story both orally and visually to all the people.

I intentionally chose to use Amskapi Pikuni instead of Blackfeet because that term brings us back to the origin of our peoples and places us on our territory. The term “Blackfeet” was imposed on us by the United States government. Using our original name Amskapi Pikuni in this dissertation serves to reclaim and rewrite our history from the Amskapi Pikuni perspective.

This dissertation project uses video-technologies and other media to add to the work of Indigenous storytellers who continue to be silenced through the written word. It will also be used by oral and visual learners and those who do not have equal access to institutes of higher education. The video created through this dissertation project may be shared through the internet and other

digital media in sites that are available for the poor people—such as the majority of Blackfeet, the Amskapi Pikuni. The production and the sites of access will be simple, yet effective. This will allow other Amskapi Pikuni to connect with one another—allowing the sharing of language, community concerns, knowledge, and to serve as a bridge between youth, adults, elders, and earth. Sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and other web portals are easily accessible to Blackfeet who have connection to the internet—in the public library, and other places. The finished product will also be made available through local libraries and community places and spaces.

This project, although using present-day technologies, is always responsible to the protocols of Indigenous storytelling and to the concerns of real issues of customary and traditional knowledge—and to the prohibition of violations of these. Balancing the need to protect Indigenous voice and to expand opportunities for indigenous voice, is core to this project. This kind of storytelling is written about by other Indigenous scholars/researchers, like Joann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem), who, in writing about Indigenous storytelling, from First Nations' perspectives, speaks of following the protocols and always being responsible to the community. She describes a consensual working approach that leads to mutual thinking. Archibald states that:

Out of the complexities, I gained an appreciation for four principles: (1) respecting each other and the cultural knowledge; (2) responsibly carrying out the roles of teacher and learner (a serious

approach to the work and being mindful of what readers/other learners can comprehend); (3) practicing reciprocity so that we each gave to the other, thereby continuing the cycle of knowledge from generation to generation; and (4) revering spiritual knowledge and one's spiritual being.¹

The academy demands the elites' language to be placed within the space of Indigenous storytelling—and that is the problem! The voice of the academy is like a spy and a colonized gaze.

Indigenous activists are real people, and it is through our storytelling that we are able to communicate the visual, the heart, the Indigenous culture that comes from our experiences for as long as we have walked on this earth. The academy does not recognize the presence of the whole being in this way of thinking. Only the western thought process is acknowledged as the knowledge base of all peoples. This western type of knowledge is only half of a person's being; Indigenous storytelling speaks to the person's whole being. Using video to tell this dissertation story will enhance the whole being and show literacies exist and are rooted in many spaces and places—not just in the academy. Candice Hopkins, of Tlingit descent, writes about the adoption and adaptation of technology to oral storytelling:

Storytellers in Indigenous communities are continually embracing new materials and technologies, including video and digital media.

¹ Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver-Toronto: UBC Press, 2008), 38.

I would suggest that this shift does not threaten storytelling traditions in these communities but is merely a continuation of what aboriginal people have been doing from time immemorial: making things our own.²

One of the primary things this project accomplishes is to expose the violence committed by the nation-state. It holds governmental institutions and individuals accountable for their violence against and violation of the Amskapi Pikuni People. This project will not primarily relate how this domination is historically enacted. That is beyond the scope of the project, and frankly, beyond the scope of my patience with the academics' need to force Indigenous scholars to 'prove' our history. That is a written and flat kind of knowledge—for a narrow and elite audience.

Rather, I will produce something that is alive and meaningful to me—that speaks to my peoples' concerns—not elite readers who really “don't get” Blackfeet. The aim is to show the effects of this continuing colonial violence—to show its ripples and echoes in the lives, homes, and homeland of my people. Therefore, I focus on the experience of the continual violence that has come through the racism of Indian agents and the reservation system, the violence of “explorers” like Lewis and Clark, and the violent ways that Amskapi Pikuni express *against each other* what has been done to them by colonial violence.

² Candice Hopkins, “Making Things Our Own: The Indigenous Aesthetic in Digital Storytelling” *Leonardo*, 39, no.7 (2006), 341-344.

This project, though, is not about ‘victims’; rather it is about resistance to assimilation policies and practices, both in the past and present. We need to get beyond the idea of victims; we’re not victims, we’re survivors. This is an empowering idea because it helps remove the shame that was brought to Amskapi Pikuni through colonial violence, through colonized minds and hearts. Simple film and a personal voice can help the Amskapi Pikuni to see and feel that they are not to be blamed—from a voice that is from their community—not an outsider. I believe that I can be that voice—I can help my community to feel internal relief of oppression and colonization—to start understanding that they should feel neither shame nor internal blame for our peoples’ struggles and the failures this oppressive life forced upon us.

The Amskapi Pikuni continues to be under systematic violence and we still are under genocidal practices, but at the same time we are survivors. As an Indigenous woman, managing is a natural instinct because I am of a matrilineal tribe—I, like other Indigenous women in my community, am expected and trained from early life to excel at doing many roles and tasks. Therefore I am continuing to practice tribal law (law that is older than U.S. law and unwritten but not unspoken) by taking on personal film—and understanding at times I do not know *exactly* what I am doing. Using modern day technology to continue to communicate our experiences is a practice of tribal law—our shared and communal law. My culture teaches me, though, that I do not have to know

everything—otherwise I don't need anyone else. “Knowing everything” is the White system—not mine.

Through our ceremonies we are continuing sacred cultural practices that bring a deeper understanding into ourselves; and we continue to place ourselves at the heart of the land. We still have many pieces of our culture and we have much to recover, bringing back ceremonies, singing old songs and creating new ones. Through the process of recording my own voice to speak about the complex pieces of my Indigenous culture, I will also enhance my always growing Indigenous view and make new ways to continue my Indigenous way of life.

Visual recordings that document Indigenous epistemologies affirm for students that their view of the world is valid. It is unusual for First Nations persons to see themselves accurately represented and encouraged to actively participate in their own education in a way that has meaning to them. In many instances, what has meaning to First Nations students is connected to their family, culture, *and* community. *This is not the norm in a dominant society that practices cognitive imperialism.*³

Listening to the Lessons of Mother Earth:

Amskapi Pikuni still resides on a 20,000 year old original territory. A sacred place that I call home is embedded in bodily memory. A lot of displaced Amskapi Pikuni understand the term “home” even if they have not ever been to

³Marie Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 192-208.

the reservation that our ancestors negotiated under a treaty. “My Peoples memory reaches into the beginning of all things.”⁴

The Amskapi Pikuni soil that I walk on is the same soil my ancestors walked upon and were murdered on. I will one day lay back into that same soil, the same soil that we were made from, that we originate from, that same land that will always be Amskapi Pikuni territory. It’s critical that we tell her story, our story, the Amskapi Pikuni stories, because we are here to carry the same heart as our ancestors intended for us to carry.

This video can educate the non-Indigenous about the importance of valuing relationships as opposed to consumption by challenging the dominant thought process into a more critical thought process which involves the listener/viewer/human. Film is a preferred way to reach people across distances and bring ideas close to the heart. Yet because so many reach understanding through the printed word, I have written words as well. These texts are not a substitute for the oral; no one should read the dissertation instead of listening to it. Yet for those of you who wish a companion text, to sit with you as you learn from the oral, this text is for you. Listen to both, the word and the word.

I will also discuss within the video our relationship with Mother Earth. We all come from Mother Earth—we cannot live without her; we need air, and we need water and sustenance. Personal film allows me to connect myself to the land-space and place mother gave to all of us in which to live. Learning to live

⁴ Chief Dan George, *My Heart Soars*, (Blaine: Hancock House Publishers, 2000), 5.

with her under her law and nobody else's, and the way we've come to understand her law, can create change in all of society. We are designed from her, we came from her, and we will return to her belly.

I will also show Mother Earth in relationship to Indigenous women's bodies. The importance of this relationship continues to be generally unspoken, as well as unwritten; however we have a long tradition of the visual of this relationship—over thousands of years. Painting of shelter/the place in which we lived, slept, prayed, ate... our clothing and its meaning, sacred utensils for making everyday objects, sacred body adornments, sacred ceremonies to show specific instructions, children's coming of age rituals, song, stories and humorous times, performed in sacredness—are just a few of the diverse visual and oral literacies of a highly advanced society. Exposing and demonstrating this relationship through my own personal experience will enhance the understanding of something missing in our society; the need to rebuild relationships with humanness and earth—is a matter of meeting the demands of a global crisis.

There is a secondary goal for this project. I speak first to my community, but also to this dominant society. With my words, spoken and written, I ask you to stop and ask yourself, “How did I come to be part of this world of consumption, militarism, patriarchy and racism?” and “What relationships do I value?” and “In the midst of all this violence, where do I stand?”

The primary audience of this work is the Indigenous peoples, first and foremost. If I do not make this video, then who will? There is hardly any other

Amskapi Pikuni in higher education or places where they can get and share access to our knowledge. Amskapi Pikuni together is the hope for our future. You know, my father called the ten dollars words (academic language) “a waste of his time.” He doesn’t trust it; we know not to trust this language anymore because every generation has been lied to continuously. This wisdom is common sense. In order to have a relationship, one must have the words, the communication, and the trust to maintain a relationship under truth and honor and love.

Chapter Two

Ai'stomatoominniki¹ Coming to Know Your Heart = Indigenous Epistemology

Introduction

*Okni Ni tah ni ku Ah Na to Kyi yo A'ki ni stu Aamsskaapiikani² of Niitsipoyi
Ninna Sao kia was Yaasisi itan O'ka'a't Omah spu'm Niksist Mary Louise
Gobert Pepion Naaahsisks Naaahsiks Julie Mad Plume and John Baptiste
Pepion Is so tan Naaahsisks Kipitaakii Koo Koo Snake A'ki and Omah Kinaa
George Polite Pepion Is so tan ni stu Naaahsisks Omah kina Miist a'k Ninnaa
Kipitaa akii Rushes War Across Is so tan ni stu Kipitaa akii Last Gun Woman
Is so tan Naaahsisks Omah Kinaa Si ma kiik sisap Is so tan Naaahsisks
Kipitaa Aki Init kit annii koo koo-w Is so tan Naaahsisks Omah Kinaa Mad
Plume.³*

¹ Betty Bastien, *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi* (Alberta:University of Calgary Press, 2004), 198.

² *Aamsskaapiikani* or *Amskapi Pikuni* are two ways to spell Southern Piegan, The double Aa word is used by the Northern Bands of Pikuni while the Am term is used on the southern side of the Canadian/US border.

³ [Translation: Hello my name is Pretty Bear Woman I am Southern Peigan of the Real People I am a member of the Antelope Society I am daughter of Sleeps in the Thunder Webb Pepion and Mother Mary Louise Gobert Pepion my grandparents are Julie Mad Plume and John Baptiste Pepion my grandparents old woman and old man Little Snake Woman and George Polite Pepion my grandparents old woman and old man Rushes War Across and Mountain Chief my grandparents old woman and old man Last Gun Woman and Stabs Down my grandparents old woman and old man Kills At Night and Mad Plume.]

Bea Medicine states, “The Christian ethic of patriarchy—a male god and a patrilineal kinship model with the imposition of patrilineal family names—virtually eclipsed the autonomy of Native women.”⁴

I start this chapter in my own language; using my own language and speaking is a form of education. Naming Indigenous peoples in western society is a primary form of colonization. Western audiences often can-not feel the language or understand and this is why I am speaking my own language, reclaiming my family and our name in my own words, because that’s who I am.

My children are still here. Heavy Runner’s blood is still flowing and so is Mountain Chief’s as well as Kicking Woman’s. These ancient Indigenous names have a more in-depth meaning. An Indigenous woman’s name was—and is—just as powerful as an Indigenous man’s name. Their names went side by side along with their value and their agency as equal human beings always remained intact. When Bea Medicine writes on the “eclipsed autonomy” of Native women, she speaks truth, because Indigenous women’s power and equality as human beings went underground under Christian patriarchy; the power of the Indigenous woman has turned into survival and recovery.⁵ The Catholic, Christian tradition of erasing the last name of the female into the male’s last name created an invisible, yet violent power over Indigenous women’s lives.

⁴ Bea Medicine, *Learning to Be an Anthropologist & Remaining “Native”*: *Selected Writings*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 155.

⁵ Bea Medicine

I am Aamsskaapiikani and we have always lived on the territory now called the Blackfeet reservation. We will always live on this territory. My name is Ah-nah-to-kyi-yo-'Aki, Pretty Bear Woman or Jody Pepion. I am a great, great granddaughter of Mountain Chief and Rushes War Across; their daughter Little Snake Woman is my great grandmother. My father is Sleeps in the Thunder Webb Pepion and my mother was the late Mary Louise Gobert Pepion.⁶ Both are from the Aamsskaapiikani (Southern Piegan or Blackfeet).

Mountain Chief led the Aamsskaapiikani to many victories while finding ways to keep survival and culture alive amongst the Blackfeet. “It was Major Eugene M. Baker and four cavalry companies who attacked a Piegan village of 37 lodges on the Marias River in Montana. Baker thought he was attacking the village of Mountain Chief. The charging cavalry slaughtered 173 Piegans, 53 of whom were women and children.”⁷ That was the HeavyRunners Society that Baker massacred; was this an intentional “mistake” and “error?” This story is a common theme in the narrative of U.S. institutions’ treatment of the Indigenous peoples. We may never really know the truth. However, I would like to believe that today’s Indigenous people can uncover the archives and records, which will

⁶ My mother is from the Green Wood Burner Society, though I do not know a great deal about them—yet we are a matrilineal nation and therefore we followed the woman’s lineage. I just introduced my Father’s side of the family because my mother’s side still needs much research.

⁷ William B. Kessel and Robert Wooster, *Encyclopedia of Native American Wars and Warfare*, “Facts on File, 2005”, 200.

help our peoples to track down further evidence of these atrocities.⁸ A question I have is: “Can the Indigenous people gain a place in the academy so that we can gain the tools to hold the settler-society accountable for the destruction of Indigenous women and children, family and community, as well as mother earth?” Perhaps we will never know.

My children’s blood comes from the HeavyRunner’s people; their grandparents are Clyde Heavy Runner and Susan Kicking Woman. The Blood is a society encompassing both Blackfeet and Blackfoot. We, the Pepion, come from the Antelope Society, on my mother’s side the Green Wood Burner’s society; these are older and more meaningful societies when compared to the Free Masons or the Skull and Bone societies. Baker’s massacre is a small example of Eurocentrism and racism in the Christian and Catholic ethic of patriarchal, militaristic, governmental roles and practices. In fact patriarchy is older than Christianity as well as the Roman Catholic Empire. How do I know this? This is written in the stories of my ancestors and in my own body, in our everyday lives under the increasing control and domination of the French fur trade society, the French Catholic Mission, the Black Robe priesthood, and the U.S. war society.

When Mary Louise Gobert Pepion attended the Boarding School (Death Encampments ran by the Black priests for the Amskapi Pikuni children) she said her little brother Mannie got shot behind the head. We were on our way to Browning MT early in the morning she was going to work as a cook at the

⁸ There is evidence in our oral stories, however we are still looking for more evidence.

HeadStart. I asked her what happened at her school when she was a little girl, what happened to her brother. As the youngest of nine siblings I often times heard stories of our mother's experiences at the Boarding School, the second one on our reservation as she called it. Her sisters had to go there as well.

Her face stared deep north toward the road. Her eyes stayed solid but her face said something deeper because I felt bad for bringing that up. She trusted me as a seven year old with information that I would forever hold deep in my heart. She said "My girl you must be strong; my little brother Mannie was trying to run away. I was about nine years old he was six or seven, we did not get to talk with each other. We were told not to look at the boys they were dirty." She said her little brother Mannie was shot behind the head, and it still seemed so unreal to her.

Andrea Smith's research on Global boarding schools and mission schools names the violences within these death encampments for she children she states:

For some children, as seen in the cases particularly in Canada, Australia, and the United States, boarding school experiences are particularly brutal. Thousands of children did not survive these schools, either through neglect, inadequate medical care, inadequate food, or even in some cases, murder and torture. Countless children were also sexually, physically, and emotionally abused. These abuses continue to have intergenerational impacts on indigenous families as these patterns of abuse are then passed down from boarding school survivors to their children. For instance, a 1989 study sponsored by the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories found that eight out of ten girls under eight years of age were victims of sexual abuse, and five out of ten boys were also sexually abused. Scholars generally trace these high rates to the legacies of residential school abuses.⁹

⁹ Andrea Smith, "*Indigenous Peoples and Boarding Schools: A comparative Study*" Prepared by Andrea Smith for the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Eight Session 2009).

The methods of oppression continue to strip Indigenous women of their humanness, but ironically and amazingly, Indigenous Women are the soul of Indigenous family and community, and they are survivors of human trafficking and slavery. They have endured forms of patriarchal violence, yet continue to keep the old ways. Amskapi Pikuni continue to protect their children and great, great grandchildren and will continue to fight for truth and justice as well as accountability.

For centuries before European contact in the Indigicas¹⁰ (America), patriarchal Christian Catholic practices in the indigenous places in “Europe” became a system of dominant rules over earth, women and men globally. For example, in his critique of current globalization and empire which bring poverty and destruction to earth-based peoples around the world, Vijay Prashad also raises the evidence that in England, as late as 1649, indigenous peoples (mis-named as “peasants”) were trying to stop the violence of patriarchal rule.

Prashad states

the Diggers,...peasants convened at St. George’s Hill Surrey, in April 1649 to protest the betrayal of the hopes of the English Civil War...in their first manifesto *The True Leveler’s Standard Advanced*,...explained “That we may work in righteousness, and lay the Foundation of making the Earth a Common Treasury for all,

¹⁰ Indigicas: This is my original innovation and contribution to the field of Blackfeet Studies, Indigenous Studies and American Studies. The first time I conceptualized this term was during a conversation with Lipan Apache scholar, Margo Tamez, in the Women’s Studies Department, during the Fall 2006, during an all nighter we pulled while grading papers, sharing stories, and exchanging gifts of ceremonial knowledge.

both Rich and Poor, That every one that is born in the land, may be fed by the Earth his Mother that brought him forth, according to the Reason that rules in the Creation.¹¹

The invisibility of earth-based people's struggles against patriarchal violence has been a wall which has kept people's struggles to stay connected to family, clan, earth/ and cultures suppressed under of patriarchal power. Indigenous women's power had almost been destroyed by the patriarchal system of the Euro-American society. But, Indigenous women's power still remains, although in pieces. It is just not recognized as such. Indigenous knowledge, practices, and cultural way of life, is a ten thousand-year-old system, according to Blackfeet historians.¹² This cultural system of storytelling is a way of the Amskapi Pikuni to educate our people because it's our core and is based upon values of respect and equality, built with knowledge of earth, women, children, men and within the sacred, ancient and on-going tradition and knowledge of ancestors as the foundation. The languages of the earth which honor mother were not a system built upon dominance, rather on equality and relationship with all of life. The contrast of decolonization and recolonizing is to be able to speak against colonialism. In order to do this I had to receive higher education. However it didn't take too long to realize higher education is a form of recolonization.

¹¹ Vijay Prashad, *Fat Cats and Running Dogs: The Enron Stage of Capitalism*, (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2003), 200.

¹² See The Center for Continuing Education, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, <http://trailtribes.org/>, (accessed May 3, 2009). See also Betty Bastien_____.

Recolonization

I came to Washington State University from the Blackfeet reservation in 1995; I could not believe that I was accepted at Washington State University. Before that, in 1994 I had worked as a speech pathology aide in Heart Butte School ten miles south of Birchcreek where we have always resided as the Crazy Dog society, on the South side of the customary territory. I was not qualified for the job, although I had my Associate degree in Early Childhood education, because I had no background in speech pathology. The fact that I had knowledge to work with children was priority enough, yet I felt as though I was not giving to the little ones as much as I could due to my lack of training.

The little ones I worked with were four and three years of age; their realness always taught me to be humble and not to worry. Nevertheless, I would worry. I taught them some of the knowledge I learned in Early Childhood education, yet that was not in the area of speech pathology. I had not received any training in that particular field and felt I was not serving the children as best as I could, or to the level that they deserved. I felt that I did not have enough knowledge to help them develop their communication skills. This would be one of the final determining factors, along with my continuing search to find answers to the struggle with colonization, because at this time I did not know colonization was the exact problem so this would determine my decision to travel higher in my education.

My higher education journey at Washington State University was about to begin, yet the instruction I would receive would end up changing my whole existence as a human being; I would become an adult through a series of trying ordeals. The Pullman community would end up being a nightmare for us as a family. My two children and I did not know that profound culture shock, and extreme poverty, as well as lack of education would almost send us home several times. I felt as though I was starting my education for the first time. I have often told people that “WSU is my first education.” I was raised on a ranch with seven sisters and three brothers, and I knew town life would also be a great challenge. I knew racism and prejudice existed, but I did not have the terminology for them—so I thought hate was natural. The Euro-Americans in Pullman, Washington always had a way of letting one know their racist, classist behavior was only seconds away.

If someone were to ask me the question: What’s the most valuable tool you will take home with you from your PhD training at Washington State University? I would have to say the most valuable tool I learned in the American Studies doctorate program is “to speak.” I learned to communicate on many levels; one of these levels that consistently got me through was to *listen*. I learned to listen better, I learned to use *my* voice, and I stopped mimicking what the rest of society has taught and started thinking and speaking for myself. I was able to put together all the experiences of violence’s on the Amskapi Pikuni reservation and

articulate those experiences and then relate them to the systems of colonialism. One thing that patriarchy taught the Indigenous peoples is to be silent.

Once I began my doctoral studies, the American Studies PhD program became more of an obstacle than a help. I was treated differently and held in a position of shame; I did everything I could to hide my learning disadvantages—my internally colonized way of life and thinking. At times, I saw I did not have the full support of the chairs. I felt there was a lack of understanding of Amskapi Pikuni peoples, struggle, death in the family and challenges for decolonization at the institutional level. It was as if the whole planet imagines the Indigenous of the Americas as ghosts from the past; this includes the students and faculty of WSU. At those times my son and daughter were going through racist discrimination at their school; and our family was encountering multiple deaths in the immediate family because of the poverty, lack of sufficient medical care and lack of access to basic subsidy. The methods and theories of the institution failed to explain these circumstances that Amskapi Pikuni face on a daily basis. I saw a disconnection between academic theories and Indigenous peoples' experiences.

I sometimes could not believe where I was and with whom I was associating. Both my colleagues and the friends I was getting to know, those who seemed to be stronger in their resistance to assimilation, became family. In time, my trust to live with my heart open, as my Indigenous ancestors governed themselves to do, taught me to fight to relearn and teach the truth of Indigenous

women's values and knowledge, as well as to continue to live and to teach that America is calling for change, that these ancient values will return and be put to good use—and not a minute to soon!

Ultimately, my PhD experience attempted to isolate me from my family and other Indigenous students. There is no space for single Amskapi Pikuni parents to realize Indigenous de-colonization work in American Studies except through radical disruption of the traditional, academic path to “success,” where solely one person is expected to do/create all of a project alone, and take sole credit. This model goes against every value, belief, and law of Amskapi Pikuni intellectual processes because Indigenous knowledge belongs to the community, it is not individual property.

Knowledge Is the Most Sought-After Trade

In 2008, I continued my work in Montana under a research assistantship, where I would see racism and colonization in its most insidious and destructive forms. The majority of work that I completed had prepared me to identify the oppression that the Amskapi Pikuni are under, as well as patriarchal power that is embedded and concealed in the community itself.

Amskapi Pikuni traveled to this place long before it was called Washington State University. When I first came to WSU as an undergraduate student I was reminded of the state border drawn between Amskapi Pikuni and Plateau Peoples. Our familiar territories where we traded with Plateau Peoples for over 10,000 years were separated and named Montana and Washington. This border

drawn between us ignores the treaty of 1855 that was negotiated between the Amskapi Pikuni and the United States, which guaranteed monies for our land and education. Because of that political border I had to pay out-of-state tuition. The Amskapi Pikuni have always traveled these same roads to Plateau territories to exchange knowledge and goods. Knowledge was the most sought-after trade.¹³ When the Amskapi Pikuni came to negotiate the treaty of 1855, here amongst the Plateau People, the faces of the Indigenous were familiar, of long time friends, families, negotiators of trade—and even enemies.

As an Indigenous person, under both Blackfeet sovereignty and under U.S. domination as a “ward”, I started my undergraduate education in Speech Pathology at WSU in 1995 to find the answers to the colonization of my people. I did well in Speech Pathology, but I felt in my heart, *this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life*. I needed answers to my colonized way of life. When I left the reservation the oppression I carried still burned inside. I did not have answers as to what that was and why it was so painful and life threatening.

The speech pathology program did not help me answer these questions. These critical thoughts still lingered within. I wanted to find answers. I thought it was in the language, so speech pathology would prove to be a great piece of work because some of the answers to colonization might be embedded in the words themselves, I am especially thankful for the knowledge I received from Speech Pathology professors, Dr. Ella Inglebret, my first advisor, who never stopped

¹³ Linda Heidenreich notes movement and trade of the California peoples similar movement and exchange 20-23. *This Land Was Mexican Once Histories of Resistance From Northern California*, (Austin: University of Texas 2007), 20-23.

believing in me and who continues to work hard to open doors for Indigenous students who are in the speech sciences.¹⁴

After making the decision to leave Speech and Hearing Sciences, I decided to go into General Studies because I still did not have answers to my oppression. I shared that concern with my Advisor Val Fisher, and then told her I was interested in going on to graduate school. She told me that “people like you never make it in grad school.” I still remember this exact quote repeatedly used to discourage Indigenous student’s desire for higher education. Instead she suggested that I complete my undergraduate courses and graduate.

Women Studies 200: Introduction to Women Studies was recommended as one of the last classes to complete my undergraduate degree. I thought to myself, *I am a woman what is there to learn about women I should know all there is being I am one.* My first day in WST 200 I met the instructor Marian Sciachitano, and the TA Albert Kim who would challenge me to see further, to listen harder and to critically “think from outside the box.” They were both of Asian cultures and they were my first instructors of color. Together they opened my eyes to new ways of thinking. They used and taught me terms such as oppression, internal oppression, patriarchy and white privilege. I had never heard of these terms before Women Studies 200 and those terms freed me from many years of internal colonization which made me feel not valued in this society. For the first time I would learn how to think critically. I would begin to open up a

¹⁴ Ella Inglebret, Washington State University Speech and Hearing Sciences.

side of my brain that had been asleep since our colonization began. I would begin to think for myself as human for the very first time. I talked to the Women's Studies Director Noel Sturgeon about Val Fisher's statement, and she asked her assistant to look at my credits. They found I was one semester away from two BA degrees from WSU. So I went for it and got a BA degree in General Studies and one in Women's Studies.

White Privilege

As an undergrad I read Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" which introduced the term "white privilege." McIntosh states:

I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.... I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege...I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets.¹⁵

This particular quote revealed a privilege which is unspoken, hidden, and protected. As an Indigenous woman growing up on the reservation, and having to attend a school 15 miles off of the reservation, I knew of this privilege very well. I saw it every day I attended school. I internalized it as a personal wound. Thinking of self as less, never did I associate these internal self destructing wounds as white privilege. I realized for the very first time, *it's not me!* I am not stupid; my skin color and race are not dirty. I am not lazy. My people are not

¹⁵ Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," <http://www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf>, (accessed May 3, 2009) 6.

vanishing. My womaness does not belong to man. I read this particular article several times. These particular quotes gave me freedom that I had not experienced in my whole existence. McIntosh mapped an unearned privilege that was strategically hidden in order to maintain white racist power. She further explained: "I want, then, to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power...Conferred privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate."¹⁶ She argues that unless spoken and brought to the open, and dismantled white privilege will continue to oppress and to maintain unequal systems of power.

As an Indigenous woman I have dealt with racism and hate crimes on a regular basis from the moment I walked into the first grade classroom off of the reservation. I never knew what the looks were about that I would receive from the whites in Montana. When I learned the term White Privilege, I knew instantly what those deadly looks from whites were all about. I had great relief because I could finally shift that negative power to where and to whom it belonged. Yet I still did not have the answer to *why*. That has been my research for over 13 years.

There were times when I was young that I thought outside the box and realized I was not supposed to be treated disrespectfully and violently. I would ponder thoughts like "Is this my life? Is life really supposed to be like this? Why do so many Indian people suffer?" These thoughts came after some young Indian

¹⁶ McIntosh, 6.

boys killed an elder woman. I would find later in life that those Indigenous boys were acting out hyper masculinity and violence as an expression of their Indigenous manhood and militarized masculinity.¹⁷

Blackfeet People as the Shunned and Scorned

After their free roaming days came to an end, the Plains Indians had to depend upon government rations agreed upon (but not always supplied) in the various treaties.¹⁸

I found Women Studies still did not have an Indigenous Women's voice and I wanted so much to continue my journey in finding that voice, so pursuing a Masters degree was the only way at that time to do it. I chose to go into American Studies because I thought I could design my courses to fit what I needed to complete my journey and answer my original questions: What happened to the Indigenous peoples? Why were we suffering so much?

The beginning of my PhD program began no less than a month after attending my Masters Ceremony, at Washington State University. My nephew Rooster drove my parents along with several of my other family members to attend my graduation ceremony. My parents were elders and my mother needed a wheel chair to get around as well, so the nine hour journey to get to Pullman was a lot to ask of my family.

¹⁷ Tough Guise [videorecording] : Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity / directed by Sut Jhally ; produced by Susan Ericsson, Sanjay Talreja; written by Jackson Katz, Jeremy Earp. Northampton, MA : Media Education Foundation, 2002.

¹⁸ Julia E. Tuell, as quoted in Dan Aadland, *Women and Warriors of the Plains: The Pioneer Photography of Julia E. Tuell*, (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 92.

My nephew Rooster was supposed to finish Valier High School a month before my ceremony at WSU. Three months prior to his graduation, his grandparents, who raised Rooster, were informed that Rooster would not be receiving a diploma. My parents were told he did not have enough credits to graduate and that he needed to pass his speech class. Rooster was very upset when he told me the sorrowful news because he wanted that diploma with his whole heart. To achieve a high school diploma was all he strived for. When Rooster sat me down to tell me he did not get to graduate, and how that broke his heart, for he didn't want to let his Grandparents down, he sobbed.

I felt helpless. But, I attempted to explain to him what colonization is and how we as an Indigenous society are taught to live under a patriarchal and racist system that taught the Whites how to keep control by distributing hidden racism in spoken language, body language and in institutions such as education. I explained to him his so-called "failure" was an example of their ugly racism attempting once again to portray the Indigenous as savage, stupid, ignorant and vanishing. He really looked relieved when I explained how intelligent he really is and that the only one he had to prove it to was himself. A month later Rooster got killed in a horrific drunk driving accident. He was the passenger, and is one of hundreds of young Amskapi Pikuni going back to mother's womb too soon. He was 18 years old; his life of oppression was painful yet his Indigenous spirit outshined it all.

I will never forgive Valier High School for participating in the oppression of the Blackfeet children who were sent to them to get this “1855” promised education which left Blackfeet as scorned, with the scraps—in exchange for the theft of Blackfeet land and resources. The school forgot on whose land they reside and whose territory they are in. They still live in the illusion of Manifest Destiny and the illusion that the Blackfeet are the savages Lewis and Clark portrayed.¹⁹ Blackfeet people up to present day, including my nephew Rooster, and the thousands of young peoples before him—and to come—are not disposable.

After Rooster’s death, I would lose other family members for most of the duration of my PhD studies. The next death would be one year later in the month of November. A car fell on my sister as she worked on fixing it. She died in our 89 year old father’s arms. A month later we would lose our Mother—my Father’s best friend of 56 years. She died in a car accident. The last of my family members to die in the years 2005 to 2007 would be my niece, Deidre, Rooster’s older sister. It was she who was murdered by the Indian Health Service by a so-called “error.” She left behind two children as well.²⁰

¹⁹ Lindsay Glauner, *The need for Accountability and Reparation: the United States Government’s Role in the Promotion, Implementation, and Execution of the Crime of Genocide Against Native Americans*, 51 Depaul L. Rev. 911. 1830-1976 (2002).

²⁰ D. Marie Ralstin-Lewis, “The Continuing Struggle Against Genocide: Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Rights. Colonization/Decolonization”. Vol. 20, No. 1: 71-95 (2005).

Part of my work was for three family members and is for them now. They died not knowing that their oppression was not their fault and that it was purposefully and strategically placed. They did not know that our land is still being stolen and sought after by corporations, governments, and other private groups. They did not know that their pain was purposeful. If they could only have lived and known how much their power and strength are needed. They are needed to continue to fight for change in our own lands and to continue to demand an apology for the millions murdered. Their voices are needed to demand the stolen lands be restored.²¹

As I still mourn for my family members, I made a promise to never give up teaching about oppression. I must teach where it came from, why it exists, and how to find solutions to internal oppressions to create a healed Indigenous community. One of my relatives said, “I do not believe the Amskapi Pikuni was created to only be here on our lands for just a short while, otherwise why would Creator give us such great relationships with all of life?”²²

²¹Winona LaDuke. *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 27.

²² Carroll Murray, Amskapi Pikuni member.

Letter to My Father: J. Pepion Letter to Webster Pepion, Nov. 2006.

Dear Dad,

Hello there father! how are you doing? I want you to know that we are doing OK thus far. My new job is OK. I am still learning the details about it and I am also working on a new book. About the blkpt. woman. Nope it turns out OK.

I am missing you so much, I know your heart is broken Papa. I wish that I could take the pain away, yet without that pain we wouldn't know compassion love commitment at the same time mom was still young although her body was giving her a bad time. Dad - I don't know how you made it through each day with out her by your side your soulmate's best friend, wife, companion.

As your youngest daughter I know I am privileged to have two beautiful parents such a privilege has been an honor and continues to be an honor to be your daughter.

Sometimes I can not believe you and mom were ~~my~~ and are my parents, parent.

As I piece your lives from your birth together by the different stories told from all the relations and family my whole life, I am always amazed by you and mom. I don't even begin to know your experiences.

from being separated from
your families and communities
so young, how hard you both worked
so young. I was told by some of
the family members that you are
very brave, the kind of brave that is
shown by the ~~the~~ Blackfoot warriors before
contact of the whites. Today young men
are growing up with out their fathers
who know that kind of bravery, they don't
know what it means to be a true Indigenous
man. Mom she taught me how to be
a strong Indigenous woman by showing
me how to work hard, never complain, do laugh
when it hurts the most and cry when it hurts
the most. She taught me trust and how to
earn it, she taught me love and commitment
with honor, humbleness, all of these gifts
are true Indigenous ways of over 10,000 yrs.

Dad, I have good news I received
word yesterday that I will finish my
course work in December 2006. That means
I can come home in June or August 2007
to continue my research and grant writing
for our people.

I started writing this letter when I

Confronting the University as A Culture of Death

During the beginning of my PhD studies, the deaths of my family members affected my life in ways that I could never imagine. As an educator in practice, the teaching assistant position I held in the Women’s Studies Department was deteriorating, and there was little to nothing I could do about the way in which the department, the university and the procedures of the education institution perceived my grief, suffering, and loss—as “failure to perform.” The way the Institution exploits and uses the graduate students in general should not be legal.²³

The deaths as well as my grief over them were neither acknowledged nor honored. These were not the beginning, though they are significant markers of recognizing structural violence and the enduring legacy of racism and sexism within the university, educational and government-funded institutions. Entering a Pac-10 institution, such as WSU, was an intensification of dealing with white privilege and culture shock. I already had an Early Childhood AA degree from United Tribes Technical College. I wished many times that the tribal college had had a culture shock course to prepare me for attending a university—as a tribal person. I would have been prepared for the next generation of white privilege.

I had come to WSU because I was suffering and needed answers as to why the Indigenous suffered internally so much, why Indigenous were so mean to each other, and why we have so much love and hate toward each other. Family

²³ WSU Graduate students are paid to work as “teaching assistants.”

member against family member, tribe against tribe, I had to know why this was and why the whites seemed to be so happy. After looking for these answers for nineteen years, I would experience institutional racism, tokenism, sexism, poverty, violence, racial profiling and oppression, as well as internal oppression, from within the University's institutional walls. These barriers would affect my work as a TA in Women's Studies, as well as my research and writing. When one is told you will have to find ways to deal with all of the above and still do well at work—how does one respond?

I was responsible for teaching WST 200, which is an introduction to Women's Studies core courses. I felt that I challenged my students and taught them the beginning journey of Women's Studies. In the student evaluations I received, my efforts would show this to be true. As a single mother fighting for her children's rights to education and rights to even be present, this has been and continues to be an uphill battle—one that institutions of higher learning have not begun to understand nor even attempt to truly address. So when one is told to find a way to deal with tragedy and still perform well at work—without the allowance for humane and civil rights for workers, the rights of marginalized groups, the rights of students, and the rights of the grieving, then I would have to say, *show me someone who has!* I missed days of work and showed up late. I shortened assignments, yet through it all, the students learned something that they could not have learned from any other Women's Studies teachers. My Indigenous background and research for truth has always been and continues to

be the core of my courses. A majority of my students throughout the years always asked one common question, *Why wasn't I taught any of this information before?*

A majority of the professors of Washington State University Women's Studies Department have no on-the-ground or lived experience with Indigenous women's issues; nor do they know how to deal with them when they rise to the surface. Rather, they continue to box Indigenous women's issues into the hat of feminist theory. This does not serve Indigenous women justice or even acknowledge their relationship to land and body.²⁴ Therefore, I feel the Women's

²⁴ Chicana Professors in the department have had similar experiences. In response one of them wrote the following poem.

Long Line of Kaki Women

I
I Am Not a feminist
Cady B. Stanton
Betty Friedan
The National Women's Studies Association

You broke it
You fix it

I come from a long line of Kaki Women
Walking with our chins up

1968 and walking with the Gramma
and 'pick that chin up young lady'
small quick strong fingers running up my spine
gently pull my shoulders back
my chin up

I come from a long line of Kaki Women
Cleaning your houses
Your floors
Your blinds
and 'make sure to save a few minutes to wipe down the blinds before you leave'
A FEW MINUTES TO WIPE DOWN THE BLINDS BEFORE I LEAVE

Studies, and as an extension, the American Studies field, needs to continue to work on Indigenous women's issues as a part of their critical theory, and they must establish a space and place within their framework where feminist theory, gender theory, race theory, and genocide are understood from the critical perspectives of Indigenous families, leaders, and core cultural binders—our women.

My internal oppression apparent in my stating that WSU is my “first real education” creates and opens doors into what a “first education” truly means to a colonized Indigenous woman. This means I am “behind academically” by at least ten years, as I have been told repeatedly by so-called “allies,” because of my tribal history with U.S. militarization and warfare against my people and lands.

Has the bitch never cleaned her blinds, her house, any house in her life?

Cleaned your house
Cleaned your blinds
Bathed your tired white body and
Nursed your tired little conscience
Danced for you

And I
I Am Not a feminist
Cady B. Stanton
Betty Friedan
The National Women's Studies Association
The voice of the silenced white woman

You broke it
You fix it

I
I come from a long line of Kaki Women
Walking with my chin up

See Oneangrygirlfag, *LeanSeed* 3 (2003): 19.

Whatever education that I did not receive in high school, I definitely received from the *journey* of higher education through the Euro-American social institutions such as Washington State University and United Tribes Technical College. I can give some of the credit to WSU, but I do hold United Tribes as the heart and start of my higher education.

I loved United Tribes. They understood the meaning of seven generations to their single parents. The staff and educators were all about the students and their success, though at times their internal colonization effects stood in the way. United Tribes Dr. David Gipp is a part of the reason I continued my intellectual journey. As well as my people and family being the center of my journey, I have never let that down. I achieved an AA degree in Early Childhood Development. I majored in this because I was seeking answers to internal oppression and I did not want my children to suffer from it, so, I thought if I learned how to be a better parent, then that would provide a greater beginning for my children. I did not know then that I would be looking for answers for colonization.

As a fighter for women's rights and Indigenous rights, I did not know that these two fields would open a can of worms that would bring me into a journey of hope and literally into a journey of truth. For the first time in my life I heard of Indigenous truths, the bits and pieces. But I had not known to what extent the truth had been hidden. *Why hidden?* I asked, as my research would end up all over the place—often fractured and disassembled—as was my life. Answers to questions did not come easily. The questions kept getting bigger, and links to the

questions were adding more and more years onto the feeling of hopelessness. I would question how white privilege continues to be unquestioned and even imbedded to the point of invisibility.

Women's Studies offered a whole realm of answers to learning the direct connections between colonization, patriarchy, and militarization. Finding answers to why the Indigenous are mean to each other, and why the tribes are fighting amongst each other is still an ongoing journey to Indigenous knowledge and history that is hidden. At times it seems slow, yet genocide is continuing under hidden agendas.

I am an Indigenous Woman who has every right to speak and call these lands the Indigicas, because my ancestors knew every direction and peoples' territories to be Indigenous. Just because I am saying the words gives me the rights. Now, how many who read these words on a page will acknowledge these lands as the Indigicas? This remains to be seen—to what degree will the colonized academic mind work to disrupt the deep colonization of the institution, and the continuing injustice towards the Amskapi Pikuni Aki' Indigenous women? Although on paper my first real education starts at United Tribes Technical College, my families' direct ancestral way of knowing is the heart of decolonization for the Amskapi Pikuni.

Chapter Three

NII PO POY YIT¹

"My Education does not belong to me it belongs to the Amskapi Pikuni² the people."
(Jody Pepion)

"Listen to the old ones, the wise ones; keep their wisdom within your heart, and understand that wisdom in your mind."
(Pretty Shield, Crow)

"My peoples memory reaches into the beginning of all things." (Chief Dan George)

"Education is teaching children the ways to survive as a people" (Betty Bastien)

Education is knowledge; knowledge is power, freedom, strength, beauty and equality. All cultures use education. We value education as a way to gain knowledge, as well as a way to pass on herstory and/or history to tell the future about the past so as to improve our condition with time and to build upon this knowledge generation after generation. Grewel and Kaplan point out that although knowledge may be used to oppress and to manipulate—as a tool of power—that knowledge can be understood as a way to empower ourselves. How? By seeing that knowledge is *made* by peoples who have deep culture, deep connection and deep knowing. They state

In women's studies it is important to talk about representation for several reasons. The first reason is that knowledge is power. The knowledge that is available to us is at the heart of our culture; that is, everything we can

¹ NII PO POY YIT (STAND UP)

² AMSKAPI PIKUNI (SOUTHERN PIEGAN) (Blackfeet)

know and think. *If that knowledge is biased or incomplete or dated, our ability to act in the world and think meaningfully will be compromised severely.* [Emphasis added.] All knowledge could be seen to be biased—some particular viewpoint or worldview informs the content, the form it takes, and how it is produced and circulated. Furthermore, it is impossible to know everything about a particular topic. Rather than seeking to master knowledge, we ask, *what is the history of knowledge or information that we obtain from our culture?* [Emphasis added.] Is it sufficient for our current goals and needs? What is the agenda behind its production? Where do images and ideas come from?³

Grewel and Kaplan give an insight to patterns of Western thought behind knowledge as well as a Women's Studies discourse on knowledge. In the college classroom, this can be what the student will read and this can be a model for the student's learning about power. This is helpful to start to ask critical questions.

The critical questions we begin to ask ourselves encourage us to question the authority of a knowledge-based Western education. In an Indigenous education today, we must question the hidden structures within the institutional system. When one is keeping the system in order and maintaining order, one can call oneself a gatekeeper, especially if one is working hard to keep the hidden racist structures in place.

While attending WSU, I learned to develop critical questions more from an Indigenous woman's perspective. I studied gender theory through the scope or lens of feminism, and I found, under this scope, that the Indigenous woman's voice and position, within the feminist framework, did not exist. Although feminist thought attempts to mimic Indigenous woman's democracy—a system of knowledge based in clan, family and band relationships of power—it still does not quite see the oppression and systematic violence, and the silence about this, that exists in the institutions of the

³ Inderpal Grewel and Caren Kaplan, *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), 266.

Americas. Paula Gunn Allen wrote about how the first visionaries of feminism used Indigenous women's identities as a symbol for "women's power" without consulting Indigenous communities. The "Indian squaw" romanticized as "native woman" was appropriated early in the U.S. feminist movement. For example, they called the image of Sacagawea "theirs" in spite of laws against plagiarism. Paula Gunn Allen stated,

Early in the women's suffrage movement, Eva Emery Dye, an Oregon suffragette, went looking for a heroine to embody her vision of feminism...She wanted a historical figure whose life would symbolize the strengthened power of women. She found Sacagawea...Native American roots of white feminism reach back beyond Sacagawea. The earliest white women on this continent were well acquainted with tribal women...The feminist idea of power as it ideally accrues to women stems from tribal sources.⁴

In Western Education isn't this called plagiarism?

We must be critically aware of this takeover of Indigenous voice, experience, history, and knowledge. Education can be used and applied to gain power over other humans. In the U.S., education has been used as part of a larger program of genocide against Indigenous peoples—as a tool to break apart families and societies, and as a weapon to destroy Indigenous identity, history, and culture. Education, when used in this manner, is unjust, uncivilized, and even savage because it is used to maintain control of one group by another through unequal power structures. As long as education is in the hands of Euro-American elites, trained under patriarchal hyper-masculinity, the people of the United States will continue to be divided, and is this not

⁴ Kirk Gwyn and Rey-Okazawa Margo, *Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives*, 5th Ed., (New York: McGraw Hill, 2007), 22-24.

stupid? The ones who suffer under this Euro-American education often look for relief from it.

American educational systems are failing at a rapid pace. One teacher to a classroom of 30 or more students creates a class room and no students. Some drop out of school because their racist, classist, sexist and heterosexist educational experiences become internalized and they think they have failed; they are conditioned to see education as their failure instead of how the Euro-American educational system has failed them and is purposefully designed to do so.

Education, when viewed and described from an Indigenous view point, is a way of life. It is a guide through a journey from birth to death. The air, water, animals, plants and the outer and inner spaces combine; all these life givers educate when the right type of listening is applied. Indigenous peoples (before the first invasion of 1492) experienced education with their whole being, not just the brain. This can be very well seen from the perspective of Pretty Shield, an important Crow medicine woman who lived near the end of the 19th century among her people. She stated,

After eight decades of life I am still excited to hear about my grandmother...Even now I feel her steady loving eyes on me, telling me We cannot determine how long our stay on this earth will be, for it is not for us to say. Do enjoy the many gifts that are ours. Look for them and find them. Get about and move! Nothing is going to come to you, go and find it. Be a good listener, for mentors do not live forever. One day you will move into their place, you will become a mentor like them.⁵

⁵ Pretty Shield, as quoted in Frank B. Linderman, *Pretty-Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 16.

In this example, I close my eyes and I can see vividly the teachings through example, voice, sensations, lessons, and time. I want to continue to learn, to hear, and go further into knowledge in Indigenous time and space.

Western Education is not at all like Indigenous Education. Instead it is an institution of colonization and assimilation. Indigenous peoples get hurt, wounded, and suffer in Western Education. We cry, because our bodies have been violated, abused, and hated in Western classrooms. Taking the knowledge of other cultures and calling it 'education' does not make it real or education; it makes it stolen knowledge. Stolen knowledge used for the purpose of gaining control over the population, their labor, and their resources is not education at all; it is an important aspect of genocide.⁶

I lived a sheltered life on the Amskapi Pikuni territory, protected from "white privilege" and violence as much as possible. My parents did not know we were suffering from internal oppression and colonization effects that they had endured as children and young adults. The United States sent my father to the boarding school far away from his home—from Blackfeet country in Montana to Lapwai, Idaho, in Niimipuu, Nez Perce country. The priests came and got my mother from her home and took her to boarding school, on the Blackfeet reservation, about 20 miles from her home.

I am the youngest of seven daughters and one brother. I attended Valier Elementary, 15 miles off the reservation, to the south, for first grade, and Ms. Radcliff was my teacher. She was a white woman; every teacher at Valier Elementary was white. My very first dose of racism and violent treatment was my first day of the first grade.

⁶ Ibid., 19.

I was so excited to go to school. My sisters went to Valier and I stayed home up until the first grade so my excitement was about going somewhere new.

When we were assigned seats, I was seated and placed by Becky Hall. She was and continues to be one of my close Indigenous sisters; we shared a desk because the teacher did not expect so many first graders from the Blackfeet reservation.

Ms. Radcliff began our lesson by teaching the alphabet using visuals. She called upon me to identify a vase; it was a black and white picture. I had never seen a vase before! Ms. Radcliff became frustrated because I could not identify the vase; she began to yell at me “WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PICTURE JODY?” her voice rising to a screech, as she could not get a word out of me.

On our cattle ranch there was no room for fancy vases and cut flowers; we always enjoyed flowers in their natural settings. So that day a toothless six year old got her very first taste of Western Education and she decided she wanted no part of it. The very next day I threw a fit and the stress from that made my nose bleed, as the bus arrived to carry me to a place I was sure did not want me. The chubby little Indigenous girl won her battle by throwing a fit and got to stay home. I got to feel safe for one more day. I own a vase today and within it I have plastic flowers.

My Western education then continued to administer a racist, sexist violent education that only wanted me to fail. To use “Failure” as a form of abuse in Western Education enhances control and dominance internally and externally over others. The current-day process of tracking a student of color, or an Indigenous student, and setting them up to fail academically, socially and intellectually, is an underground project which

is ongoing to this very day (Pullman High School uses this method, which my children experienced first hand.) Our Indigenous way of life gets quickly put to the test. I always wanted to be a boy because they seemed to have more privilege; they did not have to work as hard and they got respect from both men and women. I did not know at the time why this was so. I thought if I hung around boys more I would gain that kind of respect. The Valier Educational Institution had a different idea about Indigenous boys from the reservation and those who were part white and Indian who were also from the reservation. They favored the mixed bloods by giving them privileges and using language that divided the two.

As I stayed in school in Valier, I was put in a reading class, which, despite the good intentions of the instructor of this class, was marked the ‘stupid class.’ This course was also a Title-I program. I remember this young Indigenous boy in our reading class who did not understand what the White male teacher Mr. Nelson wanted of him. I could not understand the teachers’ mentality as to why he was so mean and hateful toward this young man. All the while, I saw him being very kind to an older Indigenous boy whose grandfather was white. This particular mixed blood boy would not associate with the other Indigenous boys unless they were like him—half blood.

Not all the Indigenous were put into these programs—just the ones who were refusing to assimilate and give up their Indigenous identities. Yet the division amongst the Indigenous children was fostered unconditionally with language and body. The state-funded programs that were developed, supposedly for poor children, further took away from the education of impoverished Indigenous peoples, as opposed to being

accountable to Indigenous nations. The Indigenous count to receive state funding under the Title I program (Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 ESEA) became Valier's only system to enhance Indigenous education, yet it did not help in that department at all. Taking the Indigenous children out of the main class labeled them as stupid and the other students would openly verbalize their judgments of the other children. Instead it internally closed doors for the future of Indigenous peoples in Higher Education. Closing the doors to one's higher education means being behind at least 5 to 10 years.

There were times that we were called out of class to miss important lessons. The other classmates would make remarks to us, and the shaming of having to go to these alternative courses still haunts me in my higher education journey. I thought if I would show the Whites and the gatekeepers that I could learn what they were teaching, then I would not have to go through belittlement on a daily basis. Back then, little did I know that part of that belittlement was racism and connected to White privilege.

Western Education—a Tool of Consumption:

Indigenous tribal nations are unique because they all had a different set of tools for Indigenous Education; math, science, language, and technology were some of the subjects. Socialization was extremely important and the value of "relationship" was always at the forefront. Western education has been and continues to be in development in tribal settings, yet it is very narrow and exclusive. The ones making the decisions on behalf of the Indigenous children do not seem to have any knowledge of,

nor do they know how to appreciate, how to value how complex the Indigenous children's experiences are and how they learn.

Western Education is used as a socially constructed tool for consumption for me, myself and I, whereas an Indigenous Education is used to support a way of life in relationship to family, community, and earth. Western education holds authority over the people and their children; if you do not send them you'll go to jail, or if you do not follow the criteria of homeschooled curriculum your child does not earn an education that one will need to get a cost-of-living job. Western education does not have all the diverse cultural communities' nor the families' best interests at heart.

Western Education is viewed in society as a voice of authority. This is directly related to the fact that the dominant education system was invented by Euro-American male rule. Euro-education has gatekeepers. Its teachers are not legitimate until they are certified. They cannot be certified until they have mastered the white colonial canon. It was not long ago that Western Education predominantly benefited those who already had power and resources.

Historically Euro-American women were not allowed to have an institutional education; it was considered unlady-like. "For most Euro-American women, college was not a possibility at all until the 1830s; public colleges and universities did not begin to admit women until after the Civil War."⁷ Upper class white women were permitted into higher institutions with an exception that they took home economics courses. The

⁷ Linda Heidenreich, Lecture notes, Spring 2003, Women's Studies 200.

thought behind letting white women in college was to make sure they became better mothers and wives, therefore producing stronger white male children.

The politics of Euro-American women's bodies and of building a nation were used to create a supreme race and to continue Imperialism. Malthusianism and theories based under Darwinism created a new insight as to why Euro-American women needed a higher education. Anna Davin states

Middle class convention of the time took for granted that the proper context of childhood was the family, and the person most responsible the mother...So if the survival of infants and the health of children was in question, it must be the fault of the mothers, and if the nation needed healthy future citizens (and soldiers and workers) then mothers must improve...This emphasis was reinforced by the influential ideas of eugenicists: good motherhood was an essential component in their ideology of racial health and purity.⁸

The government (influenced by religion and industrial society) wanted to produce stronger soldiers to continue the genocidal and militaristic practices that were being practiced on Indigenous peoples and their lands. Indigenous women would later suffer under the Western science called Eugenics which was responsible for the death of thousands of Indigenous women in 1944.⁹

Anna Davin, in her critique of Western science, gives a great insight into the politics behind the thought and theory of how states become partners with Western science as a form of power. The reproductive as well as mental control of women as "mothers" becomes an imperialist agenda. Within the U.S., for example, the state's definitions of Motherhood and Patriotism in relationship to nationalism, the state and

⁸ Davin, 63.

⁹ Ibid., 20.

mothering supported the imperialist design of global expansion, war and women's reproductive and mothering roles in raising manly soldiers. Davin states,

Since parent were bringing up the next generation of citizens, the state had an interest in how they did it....Child rearing was becoming a national duty, not just a moral one; if it was done badly the state could intervene, if parental intentions were good but there were difficulties the state should give help, and if it was done well parents should be rewarded at least by approval for their patriotic contribution.¹⁰

With that little bit of information, we can gather that Euro-education has taken and given power; this power—both taken and given—is not in the best interest of the communities especially the communities who are historically situated to the Euro-American nationalist agendas and the state as “savages” and “Indians.” Communities of color and women of color are also at risk. African Americans were barred from college until the nineteenth century. "African American women of the nineteenth century faced numerous fronts on which they had to fight for access to higher education; they faced the sexism of a dominant society that barred all women from liberal arts education and they faced a racist educational system that restricted them to learning about the domestic arts."¹¹ Thus, educators and professors (white and of color) in Indigenous communities learned, from those who developed the curriculum based in racism, that patriarchal notions and governmental policies all formed under a larger structure of patriarchy, racism, and sexism, were “normal” and “acceptable.” Those with certification earned their credentials in Western institutions.

¹⁰ Ibid., 20.

¹¹ Ibid., 20.

In 2009, Western education still benefits those in power and maintains the system as it is. In Amskapi Pikuni country, we have our school board, which is usually all white and male. The superintendent is usually white as well. The principal is a white woman, minority man or white man, the pattern repeated, again. Then we have the teachers of whom the majority are white women. Then the white men hold the teaching jobs and positions in math, science, and in coaching. These people are our educators of the United States of the Indigicas (“America”) and have no connection with the students unless the student is white. So the question, for the Indigenous, again, is who is benefitting from Western Education and who is not?

Indigenous Education belonged to the whole community, and it was not to be consumed nor was it used to garner unearned privileges or power. Our education was and still is a way of life, a way of being, and a way of understanding our mother and universe. Our education still is a way of being in relationship with all the living upon Her into the outer hemispheres, and is the sole responsibility of all the community. Every person had a role in Indigenous education because it was a part of the natural everyday life. There was no one specific role that held hierarchy over the other roles of daily life. Survival of the Indigenous peoples of the Indigicas depended upon the education of the youth into adulthood. A fine example of this Indigenous Education comes from a teaching from the women’s society

Unlike most Western organizations, which have origins within Turtle Island it is the women who bring together the conditions and necessary energy for a ceremony to commence. During the Sundance itself, one of the most important lodges would be that of the holy women who had called the dance that year. Nothing would happen until the Women’s

Society had finished their meetings. Only then would it be the turn of the men.¹²

The holy women were the center of the community as shown from their status and roles within the community.

When the peoples lived in a good relationship with Mother Earth, they needed to know all they could about her and learn how to live with her. They knew their entire existence was due to the gifts of food, water and air. They learned how to communicate and live with Mother Earth; they needed to communicate with her to understand her language as opposed to controlling her and consuming her.

This lesson also instilled that greed—to take more than what is needed—is not respecting the relationship, but participating in disruption of the relationship. To disrupt the respect was similar to dishonoring self, community and especially the life givers—from whom we have daughters and sons, as well as clothing and nourishment, so that life could continue.

Education in Indigenous country was practiced by learning how to use the senses; this involved the whole being in relationship to mother earth and outer, as well as inner, hemispheres. In order to teach students, they had to have experiences such as spiritual connections with the ancestors by way of vision and what the Indigenous call travelling or out of body experiences. They were taught in the womb to listen. As a child was raised to listen first before speaking as a part of their learning process, this instruction helped them to remember what they would one day be teaching as well through a

¹² David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey into the Native American Universe*, (Massachusetts: Weiser Books, 2005), 33-34.

dominantly oral transmission of information reinforced through actions. They learned to question and to develop their own voice, from the relationship with Mother Earth, Creator and all of life. “What was their medicine?” for instance, would be a prompt, a motivator and a framework. They had to figure that out with the tools given to them by the clans, society, and community.

If a person were to ask the question “How does one use their whole being to learn and to listen?” How would one attempt to answer that question? Yet in order to understand that particular question one would already have to know about the relationship between the Creator, the life giver, and oneself. An example of this type of education comes from the lesson of listening. The lesson of listening starts in the womb, a sacred connection of earth.

A Four Directional Education:

A Mandan woman, Dr. Linda, describes these lessons in four parts or in four stages of life. “The first lesson always started in the East.”¹³ The first stage in the East represents newness, birth, a beginning of life. Sun touches earth as a new day approaches. Every day begins with morning—the first touch of sun and earth. It is this view that the “beginning” is sacred. To honor the newness, and to show appreciation for allowing the individual the gift of life for another day, the Indigenous would sing a song to Creator and mother earth, acknowledging the relationship. So a morning song of greeting the light that comes before the sun and mother was a part of everyday life.

¹³ Interview “Dr. Linda” (Mandan). This is a pseudonym to protect this human subject, interview on file with author, 2004.

Western science flatly describes and defines this energy exchange and infusion of “life” that arrives in the sunrise as “vitamin D.”

The second stage is the journey from east to south. This is the learning taking place from time of birth to childhood, the south representing children. Listening is a very critical lesson to be taught and learned during this time of east to south as well. While a tiny babe was within the womb the whole community, clan, and society acknowledged life's gift, yet at the same time the community knew of their responsibility to the language of mother's natural world. They knew to teach the babe within the womb. That first womb lesson was listening. They knew the infant heard them, for on the birthing day the infant came into the world listening, not crying out. During this stage, one of the most beautiful teachings was the equality taught to the children—both female and male had importance, both had a voice and learned to value each other. Their teaching tools were not gendered like western society begins gendering at birth with color pink and blue, or with language teaching the boys not to cry and giving the girls permission to cry because of their weakness of being a girl. The Indigenous adults and elders of that child's community, clan and society were all involved with that teaching as well as Mother Earth and all of the four-legged peoples, the winged peoples, the finned peoples, and the sacred elements of the Mother Earth.

The third stage is the journey from south to west. South represents the children entering puberty and adulthood; it is the child's sacred direction going into adolescence and early adulthood, and deeper responsibility and connection to the extended family and to parents and grandparents. It is within this teaching that the adolescent children

take on and learn a more defined role within their community. The young boys and girls who are in puberty have ceremonies to acknowledge and celebrate their changing time. Like other stages, the entire community participates in this important initiation and transition in the individual's life. By contrast, in Western society, the young women are often made to be ashamed of their period or moon and the boys are shamed by their changing voices, pressured into masculinity and are pressured to have sex at a young age through the teaching of objectification of female bodies (girls, teens, and adults). The fourth stage is a journey from the west to the north. West represents the adult's journey to the north—elder status. While on this journey the adults have a role as teachers of the young and getting them ready to follow each stage, teaching them the ceremonies and Indigenous way of life. The women go through the change of life in this stage. Amongst the Nitsitapit, this is considered a very sacred time for a woman; it is known that she is very powerful during this time and a ceremony to celebrate her power is a must. A woman is known to be in the cycle of moon, sun, and earth and her direct connection to give birth as mother earth is a shared sacred ceremony.

Recovering an Indigenous Education Means Foregrounding Indigenous Language, Thought, and Life:

Of all the teachings we receive this one is the most important: Nothing belongs to you of what there is, or what you take you must share.¹⁴

Today the language of earth is almost completely lost. Few elder Indigenous know it still. This language is rarely spoken of in English, as English language, religion,

¹⁴ Chief Dan George, *My Heart Soars*, Surrey, (B.C.: Hancock House Publishers, 2000), 25.

and laws overrun all else. English—the continual use of it, makes the Indigenous misunderstood; Indigenous knowledge, through the dominant use of English, has been misused. Listening defined from old world Indigenous view means not only the ability to hear with your hearing mechanism (“ear”, “cochlea”) but also with your whole being—your heart and whole being. Indigenous language is life. Indigenous language is life-focused—alive. Indigenous language coincides with natural Mother Earth, sun and moon language. That is why the whole being, listening, thought, and perspectives cannot be heard in English.

Indigenous Education is extremely valuable to all of humanity; recovering Indigenous language, beliefs, ceremonies, and practices of everyday life are critical to decolonizing institution-based learning systems—and to stopping reversion back to them. The learning process is holistically empowering, healing, disciplined and inclusive. It is inclusive instead of exclusive; it does not practice gender inequality but balance. A society without balance is a society in decline and is a society in which air and water, love, inclusion and truth are devalued.

What Chief Dan George is saying is that nothing belongs to you. He is speaking of the relationship *with* as opposed to the consumer relationship to the world as a relationship *over*—power *over* life. Western education teaches the citizen to be a consumer of Mother as well as each other, which then turns us into the Americans we are today. The consumer grows accustomed to think of “me, myself and I” as one who exists and lives for only one—not the future of all, with little to no knowledge of history.

Indigenous education was the building of the relationship.

“Is it really important for a boy to learn the name of a wild animal, what it eats, where it lives, and how it rears its young while at the same time the boy never gets to live near the animal? Would it not be better to let nature be, and let the boy live with unspoiled affection for all creatures instead of teaching him to boast of knowledge?”¹⁵

The time spent in unspoiled learning and living what the animal does and says builds that life-long relationship with the animals again. Learning their language creates intelligence beyond today’s societal teachings of what matters, what is valued as knowledge in Western education.

Indigenous Education has been and continues to be denied by the Western racist Imperial laws. These laws create and perpetuate the genocidal practices against the Indigenous. The curriculum created under the American government continues to deny the truth and deny Indigenous voice and law. Under Western Education the Indigenous children are denied their culture, their language, and their way of tracking information. The knowledge they receive from Western Education at times erases their ancestral memory—each generation assimilating faster into their consumer ideals and way of life.

My mother’s and father’s experiences at the Mission Schools and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School continue to go unspoken and dis-acknowledged by the state and tribal leaders in official roles of “leadership.” From the Indigenous woman’s perspective, loss and societal manipulation of one’s culture destroy our communities’ will to resist assimilation. Gendering—feminizing and masculinizing—were tools of the White civilizers which have been shaping, molding, and creating mythological replica beings of Indigenous peoples in whiteness, or as assimilated persons whose attitudes,

¹⁵ Chief Dan George, *My Spirit Soars*, (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House Publishers, Ltd., 2000), 28.

beliefs, and behaviors could pass “like white.” In the present day, the states’ and capitalist process of whitening peoples (Indigenous, immigrants, migrants, workers, soldiers, students...) and specifically whitening Amskapi Pikuni peoples is and continues to erect barriers which keeps Amskapi Pikuni people far from their true internal Indigenous self.

Part of creating whiteness is separation—“me, myself and I,” the loner. St. Peter’s Mission School’s participation in creating whiteness and gender as self identity was to discipline the children in the modes of civilization. For example, my mother told me that the nuns told them “do not look at the boys and do not talk to them—they are dirty.”¹⁶ Gender, race, Amskapi Pikuni ethnicity, combined with separation, constructed Amskapi Pikuni boys as a “dirty” and undesirable, unacceptable class of people and taught the Indigenous “girl” children “lessons” about punishment, approval, and being either “good” *or* “bad.” This forcing of a binary within gender (boy/girl), and socialization of punishment (good/bad) and the consequences for crossing that dividing line taught the Amskapi Pikuni to mind each other’s gender and to obey with daily observation. The Indigenous children conformed to the rules of the, priests and nuns, superintendants—because the negative consequences for not obeying was severe punishment, and as in the case of my mother’s little brother, murder. My mother transmitted the testimony of her witnessing her little brother’s cold-blooded murder, at the mission at the hands of the mission “agent.”

¹⁶ The late Mary Louise Gobert Pepion.

I remember my mother telling me about her brother's murder. She witnessed the agent shooting her brother at close range with a pistol, and the bullet entered his skull, she saw this occur from a window, inside the mission. Her brother, in a field below, a little boy, and a man aiming the gun at this head. Later, they kept my mom away from her own mother for a long time. They told my grandmother, that his death was "natural," and then, later, they said it was "an accident." My mother told me that they put her in an Indian Health Service hospital, in the winter time. When she came out of there it was summer. They didn't tell her folks they were taking her in there to remove her tonsils. She remembered being taken in to surgery, and then awakening in a room, covered up. Her throat was sore, very sore. She was alone in a room, without anyone to help her. This occurred without her parents' consent or consultation in the matter.

Controlling the children's minds and bodies occupied the system. Dominating the children's bodies and minds and the Indigenous children's resistances often led to conflict. The priests and nuns continued to practice separation with the old systematic military tactic of rape, a form of breeding, controlling, and silencing.

Mapping Indigenous story and history goes more in a circular motion, not linear, and we must always try to find "the beginning." This is logical. Older generations of our people made sense of the world by starting at the beginning and making order connections of both the spirit world and Mother Earth. In order to understand the full complexities of Western education one has to map the ideas and beliefs from which they came. This can be the most challenging part of mapping Indigenous Education, because every part of the Western system takes one further and further back to more and more

disturbing and complex systems. These often show harsh stories of destructive forces having devastating impacts upon humans and earth. One becomes exhausted tracing “origins” of destruction.

When the first non Indigenous arrived, they were only interested in a route to the East—spices, precious stones and metals—and going through the Indigenous lands. They did not have any idea as to how peoples could be so much more advanced as an earth society, a society which acknowledges their relationship with so many spheres.

Amazingly, although there is intense and seemingly unending violence in the homelands of the Amskapi Pikuni peoples—drug addiction, alcoholism, and domestic violence—there are also profound changes and innovation in the ways that the Amskapi Pikuni peoples are shaping their present relations and their future. The focus of my research and writing is to make some of the changes that I see are necessary for the survival and the success of my peoples. I enter this struggle through finding a way to communicate those things I have learned from my mother and father, the earth herself, and my other relations, both human-people and the animal-people, plant-people, and more. How do I enter this dialogue? Who will listen? How do I listen to them? My video project is my bridge to connecting with the coming generations. This work is for the peoples who do not have access to higher education. Within the walls of universities are records that pertain to critical information of genocidal tactics and the survival histories of Indigenous people and their strategies to recover the past—not merely to be framed (and devalued) as “culture,” rather, as an advocacy against erasure and as part of the larger activism among Indigenous peoples in legal struggles for truth and

reparation. In university and state-funded settings, Indigenous knowledges are often misinterpreted. Our histories are boxed up and “housed” in these Institutions, and the true histories of the Indigenous elder women are silenced under official history projects. Amskapi Pikuni histories which have been undergrounded and repressed need to be brought home. I see my video as a vital bridge of information that needs to be brought home for all peoples to understand who we really are in this society. We must investigate with critical tools how and why our lands and bodies are still under attack.

Using race, gender, class, and feminist lenses, my work connects Amskapi Pikuni scholars and traditionalists with successful Indigenous education programs like the Piegan Institute, an immersion school, which teaches all in the Amskapi Pikuni language and through Amskapi Pikuni culture. This school has a 100% graduation rate, with students successfully making the transition from high school to college. These graduates are going to be an Indigenous leadership group, with both tremendous gifts and potential. These students, who range in age from 18-25 years, are being socialized to be both comfortable and competent in the world of Amskapi Pikuni traditions and using technology to share their Amskapi Pikuni ways of knowing and being with the world. My video undertaking and my dissertation project is my bridge to connect with this emerging generation—I want to tap into their hearts. They are both my inspiration and my reason for enduring the struggle.

Chapter Four

Indigenous Women's Bodies in relationship to Land and Militarism¹

When you see land your tongue salivates your penis hardens and your mind becomes cloudy almost to the point of rape. But then your inner senses kick in and snap you back. Now the next step how are you going to get that land you see trees yes monetary value, you see the river yes more monetary value you see soil, plants animals you're rich! You see humans that do not see what you do. They see trees and think my brothers and sisters they see water and think our sacred element they see soil and know the seeds in earth will give back to them, they see animals and call them the four legged humans the winged humans and the finned humans they see only relationship with all of life. Yet the humans you see are disposable.²

Answering Back Process—J. Pepion, Journal, 2005 [Uncensored & Unedited, i.e. un-managed by a white gaze]

Opening a door is not enough, the door is opened, now step inside. But before you enter you must process what it means to be colonized. When one is under the water longer than they intended, it is then that the panic to find air sets

¹ I would like to acknowledge and thank the following persons for reading previous drafts of this chapter and for their valuable comments, suggestions and insights. Thank you all for your deep understanding of this Indigenous woman's journey and for helping me to be able to bring my Indigenous words to a visual truth in an academic world, an institution that does not want to accept the Indigenous view point from the community or Indigenous women's perspective. Thank you for giving me and my work so much of your time and energy, our journey to finding justice for our Indigenous history will be a life long journey together. (*Natural Clan Mother Law: There is no power in one*). I thank your children for sharing their "precious time" and their entertainment space; They will always be in my heart and work for the next seven generations. Thank you for understanding how I arrived to this level and for helping me into the next stage of justice; our voices will be heard loud and clear. I will always hold you in high-hearted regards. Thank you sister Margo Tamez, brother David Warner, sister Kim-Trieu Nguyen Doan, and thank you to my graduate committee, Dr. Linda Heidenreich, Judy Meuth, Dr. John Streamas, and Dr. Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo.

² J. Pepion, "The True Mind of the Discoverer," *Journal*, 2006

in. The body tensions begin, the superhuman comes alive. Adrenaline pumps, the thinking is intense and rapid—the desperation to save your life comes to full fruition, the strength increases, the fear is not helping because it creates another block from air—this is colonization: a continual way suffocate life, slowly air becomes the most precious and valuable element in existence. One's body fighting to keep life in it becomes secondary to *air*. One realizes that without air life does not happen.

When one is colonized and under the patriarchal system life is being choked out of the body, air is the only precious element that can give one's life back. To breathe one must understand the tools of an ancient system called patriarchy. The remedies offered for pain and anger are psychology, pills-medication! We are going through a really hard period; there is so much at stake. The roaring wave coming over my head happens to the earth, taking everything. Do I swim for my life, or do I sink without a fight?

When arriving here I was afraid of the dominant white presence here. Yet, my 10,000 year old ancestral indigenous heart would not let me leave. To fight for the education that was designed for patriarchal enhancement would take me on a journey that would change my colonized, assimilated thinking into what the institution of higher education calls “critical thinking.” Joining Women's Studies in 1997 would open a door that was actually intended to be bolted shut, and destroyed, so no human could enter. Somehow, some would call it hard work that got me through because of the intense intellectual bursts of knowledge, the past theories, the past writers/educators who made the journey of patriarchal higher education available for *all* humans, not just the elite who can afford a four-year university education that allowed for myself and the ancestors to open the door. We found answers to the taking, murdering, sabotage, lying, and violence by rape, and psychological rape through western science, through many institutions, through gendering, through masculinizing and feminizing through deceitful language, structural hierarchy. The list is large and intense as the truth of the past catches up to the future, as more critical herstories/histories are spoken and written the more truth will reveal itself.

It is time for full accountability—we, the 10,000 year old Indigenous global hearts say it is time for accountability to be had! Accountability begins with the earth first and foremost, every human needs to step up and be accountable for air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. When mother revealed her resources to the humans, never did she intend for greed to exist. Humans created a system which they called “survival”, “life.” Each direction globally created systems of

survival techniques. Europeans, Romans, Greeks all developed a system this is labeled the patriarchal system. This system is the global system followed today. There are few Indigenous systems left today. As accountability reveals itself, we, the humans, globally need to uncover how the Indigenous systems could revive our water sources, air quality, food, shelter—a division of resources in a fair and just manner. The dream is to have a global system where no dictator has the final say and all the resources under lock and key. Before you fully assimilate you know who you are, never can you fully drown a 10,000 year old heart because some call it conscience, inner voice. You decide, but denial of it only hurts self and earth.

The poor are poor because the ancient patriarchal system needed slaves to keep the resources flowing. So by creating hierarchy this too assisted those intentions and they benefit in the same manner. The presidents and vice president are in existence because of the development of a system that would one day become so powerful that it would succeed all of humans and run them all into graves denying life to exist. The storm is heading in this manner. Do we run for cover, do we run for self, do we run to attempt to avoid the truth—why are you going to run? I am tired of running, of being silenced, invisible and demoralized. How many layers of colonization tactics are you going to pile on my back? Just so you could have *more*? This still never gets defined. I will no longer allow you to add on layers.

The layers of colonization on an Indigenous person's body remain invisible, unspoken, and carefully constructed in order to be maintained. Each layer placed upon an indigenous woman's body can be identified under an ancient system called patriarchy. The layers are constructed to control, for the benefit of the hierarchical, empire-developed power to maintain said power. Layers can cross and re-cross every generation.

Introduction

Militarization amongst the Amskapi has existed since the arrival of the Europeans, when the beginning traces of hyper masculinity would show their

ugly faces in Indian country. The so-called “Indian wars” from the 1500’s onward demonstrate the intentional goal of the total genocide of the Indigenous peoples on their own lands. Military culture has been and continues to be a violent force used to maintain colonialist power in its place. In Indian country, military power is invisible but very much alive.³

I am one of the exploited, but not a “victim.” I recognize that I am colonized by patriarchy, militarism, sexism, racism, classism and religion.⁴ I am a survivor of well-documented genocide processes that are considered military defeats and successes of the United States’ creation story. There is no room in my own home territory, nor in the United States, for single mothers nor Indigenous women. I am a warrior who chooses to pick up where Rushes War Across and Mountain Chief left off. If colonization and oppression continue, the need for warriors of all walks of life has to continue as well. The need for my research is critical to American Studies and all of society as well as globally.

In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between the Amskapi Pikuni and Militarism. I will do so by building upon the oral history, contemporary theories and methods of Amskapi Pikuni community members in order to unpack the gendered and the race exploitation of members of the Amskapi Pikuni. Additionally, I will be drawing from the contemporary methodologies of

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: University of Otago Press, 2002), 20-37.

Indigenous and critical scholars, such as Andrea Smith and Beverly Hungry Wolf; from Native American women's activism; from web-based education on issues of Indigenous women and U.S. institutions; as well as U.S. government agency web sites. Primarily, this is a work in progress, and will include literacies and the perspectives of Indigenous peoples as often as possible because our true history has never been recorded yet it is still valid. By shedding a light on our oral stories I hope to recover our true history.

Linking Amskapi Pikuni Experiences to Militarized Violence

Indigenous women carry the people on their back. When I say the people I'm talking about all humans. The Indigenous women global do this task with all heart and all being. Yet, there is very little known about survival of culture, family community and relationship with all living a combination of micro organic cells. Indigenous women continue to keep their relationship with the cells of our planet, by honoring the circle and all within the hemispheric atmosphere.⁵

In October of 2005 the death of my niece was a shock as well as an invisible unmentionable amongst the Indigenous communities in the Amskapi Pikuni Nation, in "Native America," as well as in the mainstream United States. Her death represents the invisible violences that so many Indigenous women endure from institutions throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada.⁶ Institutions built upon and profiting on the inequalities between the United

⁵ J. Pepion, Journal, 2006.

⁶ For the purpose of this essay, "North America" will include Canada, Mexico and the United States, as well as the islands and land masses of the Caribbean, Greenland and Iceland.

States and the Amskapi Pikuni Nation⁷ are key sites of power, control, corruption, and colonialism which each played a role in the death of my niece. This tragic death of my close family member can be explained by a concept of Militarism. I define and use Militarism as the right hand of colonialism and a process of murdering our people. It is a continuation of exploiting Amskapi Pikuni land, and attacking the physical and mental health of our people. This is done in the name of militarist ideologies such as peace security, honor, patriotism, brotherhood, and supremacy.⁸

Health care in the United States is scarce when it comes to the Indigenous peoples and the poor. The health care provided to the Indigenous people is still being used as a laboratory of colonial thought and action that oppresses Indigenous groups.⁹ This is a place and space where students, across the medical and public health disciplines *and* across U.S. and international social classes,

⁷ The Blackfeet Nation, according to the official website, is “is made up of 1.5 million acres located in the northwestern part of Montana, which includes most of Glacier County....On the north it borders the Canadian Province of Alberta. On the west it shares a border with Glacier National Park. The Badger-Two Medicine portion of the Lewis & Clark National Forest borders to the southwest. Other natural southern & eastern boundaries include Birch Creek & Cut Bank Creek. Elevations vary from a low 3,400 feet in the southwest to a high of over 9,000 feet at Chief Mountain on the northwest boundary. The Blackfeet Tribe has approximately 15,560 enrolled members of which 8,560 are off-reservation and 7,000 are on-reservation. Some of the tribal members are original allotted and un-allotted land owners & others lease or rent.” <http://www.blackfeetnation.com/>, (accessed May 2, 2009).

⁸ Thank you Ayano Ginoza for our conversation and your expertise on Militarism and for helping me to see it from my perspective. (November 15, 2009).

⁹ Andrea Smith, see generally, “Natural Laboratories: Medical Experimentation in Native Communities,” in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 109-117.

gain an education, a diploma, and a license in the health fields. Indian Health Service, which is an “operating division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,” was originally established in 1954, and separated from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which originated in the Bureau of Interior—Department of War.¹⁰ The function of the health care management system for Indigenous people, it must always be remembered, originates from the hatred, racism and sexism of the United States towards prisoners of war. Therefore, the “practitioners” in the IHS have come to *practice upon peoples perceived as enemies, inferior, and conquered*. As a result of the U.S. subjugation of Indigenous peoples and nations through conquest an on-going institutional colonialism continues to violate Indigenous peoples’ rights.

Blackfeet Question Causes of Deidre’s Death

My niece Diedre’s death was termed an accident; her lungs collapsed. But whose mistake was this? I see this event as a continuation of militarism used against our own people. Questions that a rose for the other Amskapi Pikuni family members and for me were: How can one be diagnosed without being tested? The Indian Health Service staff assumed that my niece’s death was the

¹⁰ See also “Indian Health Service/About his,” www.ihs.gov/, (accessed May 2, 2009); See “Indian Health Service,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Health_Service, (accessed May 2, 2009); See “Bureau of Indian Affairs,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Indian_Affairs, (accessed May 2, 2009); See “United States Department of the Interior,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Interior, (accessed May 2, 2009); See also “United States Department of War,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_War, (accessed May 2, 2009).

result of a drug overdose. Yet her lungs were beginning to fill with fluid. The family's discussion and my own analysis determined that pneumonia was her illness. How do "professional practitioners" using technologies and health education in 2005 get pneumonia and drug overdose confused? Why was she not x-rayed, which is a common practice for pneumonia patients? According to the family's and my own deductions, a mistake occurred when she was given charcoal, which is a substance that makes a person vomit profusely; her lungs were already filled with fluids from pneumonia. The charcoal stimulated vomiting, which then put extreme pressure upon her lungs. This then caused her lungs to collapse and she died. Below is the obituary, posted online through the Ancestry.com web site.

OBITUARY: The Glacier Reporter Thursday, October 12, 2006
11:19 AM MDT

Deidre Mary Spotted Bear, 24, was born March 30, 1982 in Browning and passed away Friday at the Kalispell Regional Hospital of pneumonia.

Funeral Mass was Tuesday at 2 p.m. at St. Anne's Catholic Church. Burial followed in Robare Cemetery. Pondera Funeral Home handled the arrangements.

Deidre enjoyed music, spending time with friends and her grandpa, fishing, swimming, cooking, boxing and riding horses. She worked for the Blackfeet Tribe as a janitor. Deidre was there to help anyone that needed help with anything and we will miss her.

Survivors include her father, Carl Spotted Bear of Heart Butte; a daughter, Bluqwell Spotted Bear and son, Nicolas Crow; a sister, Carleen Spotted Bear of Birch Creek; grandfathers, Webb Pepion of Birch Creek and Forrest Little Dog of Browning; aunts, Betty Pepion of Yuma, Ariz., Debora Spotted Eagle of Browning, Francis

Onstad of Birch Creek, Julie Cain of Bismark, N.D., Susan Pepion of Birch Creek, and Jody Pepion of Pullman, Wash.; uncles, JR Pepion and Dustin Pepion both of Birch Creek and Ronald James Pepion of Browning.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Sally Jane Pepion, grandmother, Mary Louise Pepion, brother, Irvin “Rooster” Spotted Bear, and sister, Hope Spotted Bear.”¹¹

My niece was 22 years of age and left behind two beautiful children. These children will never have the benefits of knowing their mother. She can only be remembered through the voices, narratives, storytelling, memory, and family-oriented traditions of the surviving family members—the experts.

As an Amskapi Pikuni woman, member, and tradition recoverer, and recoverer of the shattered Blackfeet language, my race class and Indigenaity puts me in an often risky position within the academy. This shows how academia devalues Indigenous ways of knowing. Whenever I speak about Amskapi Pikuni struggles my words are sometimes not taken seriously and considered less intellectual. To tell truth, as we say in Indigenous community, and to tell truth as truth comes to us, as Indigenous thinkers, we are automatically positioned by academic “experts” as the inferior, due to differences in perception of what is “good” writing, and what is “intelligent” thinking.

Methods of Silencing the Indigenous Voice

¹¹ “Deidre Mary Spotted Bear,” <http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tsmith&id=I286246>, (accessed May 2, 2009).

Indigenous speakers and voices are strongly resisted in the U.S. academy. This is evident at Washington State University in the ongoing suppression of real Indigenous experiences, told through Indigenous voices. To keep our voices and our experiences controlled and managed, academic 'experts' use the methods of belittlement, snobbery, negation, and paternalism. Barbara Monroe states in her text (submitted to me through email correspondence,) that Indigenous peoples' "arts of argument and persuasion" are "sites dominated by Euro-American rhetorical traditions." Blackfeet peoples' voices, visions, intellectual histories and modes of translating linguistic and cultural understandings and Blackfeet literacies of the land into the English composition style are often mis-read and judged by academic readers as remedial. In fact, Monroe argues that Indigenous communication is "distinctive." In her analysis of over 1500 indigenous subjects, she determined that "historical and cultural roots [and analysis of] archival sources traced the evolution of this distinctive rhetoric, [as shown in archives'] minutes from the treaty period, letters and other documents from the boarding school and self-governance eras, and articles from reservation newspapers among other examples in contemporary times." Monroe states:

I found that the [indigenous] rhetorical tradition values personal experience as supporting evidence and values performance-like techniques, such as hypothetical dialogue and humor, often in the form of sarcasm and irony... Indian argument is oriented holistically, rather than organized analytically. Holistic arguments aim to build consensus by considering multiple viewpoints, sometimes simultaneously, rather than taking a hard stance and building one's unerring position, point by point, to "win" the argument... This indigenous tradition also places high value on

speaking plainly, rather than poetically, and on deliberating at length and recursively rather than laconically and directly. These culturally-marked features of ... Indian rhetoric run counter to those of Euro-American academic argument, which values secondary expert sources, analytic logic, explicitness, and definitive theses—and, conversely, distrusts “subjective” support based on personal experience, “emotional” techniques, and shifting positions.¹²

Monroe foregrounds the disconnect between the highly conditioned/trained academic “expert” reader and the Indigenous community. The Indigenous researcher then, speaks both the Amskapi Pikuni Nation and the fringes of the academy. Monroe’s interviews, the “evidence,” provide a substantial platform on which to stand with assurance as an Indigenous speaker. Monroe provides evidence that an Indigenous researcher bringing forth truths from an Indigenous community is going to be read by Euro-American trained academics from a narrow and colonialist lens.

Confronting Institutional “Error” from the Blackfeet People Perspective

The mistake that Indian Health Service made with my niece is one of several thousand. Barbra Chasin makes an excellent connection between militarism and health care. Chasin argues that “militarism contributes to the

¹² Barbara Monroe, “Plateau Indian Ways with Words: Summary of Book in Progress,” email correspondence and attachment, forwarded via Clinical Associate Professor Judy Meuth, Washington State University, May 2, 2009.

erosion of democracy, making it harder to create a more egalitarian, less violent country.”¹³ She further states: “Structural violence is a consequence of the spending priorities for maintaining the world’s largest military establishment, effectively robbing the public of health, education, or other spending needs that facilitate the conditions leading to physical harm.”¹⁴

These so-called mistakes are another form of militarism and institutional violence against Indigenous bodies. Indigenous women’s bodies are looked upon by the terms used to justify the murdering and enslaving of Indigenous women’s bodies

The governmental duty to provide health services to Indian tribes derives from many sources. These sources include negotiated treaties to ceded Native American lands, settlements, agreements, and legislation. Significantly, there are specific treaties signed by the federal government and Indian tribes, exchanging Native American land and resources for federal promises of health care and other services. The generally accepted premise of government responsibility to Native Americans is based upon the destruction of Native American civilization and the poverty and disease which followed in its wake. While this obligation is widely accepted, it has not been upheld by courts as a basis for a Native American legal entitlement to benefits. Thus, responsibility for Native American health care as recognized by Congress has been subject to judicial and administrative disavowal at the expense of Native American people.¹⁵

¹³ Barbara H. Chasin, *Inequality & Violence in the United States: Casualties of Capitalism*, (New York: Humanity Books 2004), 302.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13, 301.

¹⁵, Holly T. Kuschell-Haworth, “*Jumping Through Hoops: Traditional Healers and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.*” *De Paul Journal of Health Care Law* 4 (1999): 844-845

For years, institutional violence against our bodies and our lands has created a devastating result which may be leading to total human extinction in the Amskapi Pikuni customary territories, which are divided by the U.S. and Canadian border.¹⁶ These are the traditional lands of Amskapi Pikuni and the societies/clans in Canada, now divided by the international border, through the militarized disruption of Indigenous trade, mobility, and sovereignty, put into place in the law of Euro-Americans, in the Jay Treaty of 1794-95.¹⁷ This treaty between settler-nations, defies the sovereignty and aboriginal title of Indigenous nations of the region and imposes the use of treaties, rules of commerce and

¹⁶ Blackfeet ancestral territory extends along the east side of the Rocky Mountains from the Yellowstone River in southern Montana, north to the North Saskatchewan river in Canada. See “The Piegan Institute,” <http://www.pieganinstitute.org/language.html>, (accessed May 2, 2009).

¹⁷ See “John Jay’s Treaty, 1794-95,” Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Bureau of Public Affairs, Bureau of Public Affairs: Office of the Historian, Timeline of U.S. Diplomatic History, 1784-1800, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/nr/14318.htm>, (accessed May 2, 2009). For reference about impacts of Jay Treaty on aboriginal title, commerce, sovereignty, and free movement through customary lands, see “Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. V., Laws (Compiled from December 22, 1927 to June 29, 1938), Compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler. Washington : Government Printing Office, 1941, “PART V IMPORTANT COURT DECISIONS ON INDIAN TRIBAL RIGHTS AND PROPERTY,” *TREATIES—INDIAN RIGHTS UNITED STATES v. MRS. P. L. GARROW (NO. 4018)*. “JAY TREATY AS APPLIED TO INDIAN RIGHTS. Article III of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation concluded between the United States and Great Britain on November 19, 1794, commonly known as the Jay Treaty, so far as it applied to the rights of Indians to pass and repass “with their own proper goods and effects” into the respective territories of the two parties, without the payment of “any impost or duty” of whatever nature was abrogated by the war of 1812. Citing *Karnuth, Director of Immigration, et al. v. United States ex rel. Albro*, 279 U. S. 231, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol5/html_files/v5p0772.html, (accessed May 2, 2009).

trade amongst both Euro-American settler nations and Indigenous peoples.¹⁸ This treaty and land mass divider institutionalizes the “territorial sovereign boundaries” between Euro-American nations and Indigenous nations, through war methods. Institutions of the colonizer society are the context for the claim of “error” when the discussion of Indigenous peoples and lands is raised. All United States institutions were born out of militaristic, colonizing ideology and practices and continue to carry through in that vein today.

Separated Indigenous Lands & Peoples, Then and Today

To put the death of a young Amskapi Pikuni woman into context, it is important to know of her broken histories, broken lands, broken peoples and broken societies. She died in the context of structured violence which literally slices her sovereign lands in half. The customary lands of the Amskapi Pikuni and the Niitsitapi are militarized through settler institutions of occupation.

The maintaining of a system of violence with the use of militarism supports an invisible shield to keep one from understanding, questioning and listening to the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Every layer of Blackfoot peoples’ lives—social, religious, familial, physical, economic, and political—is

¹⁸ See also, www.cbc.ca/aboriginal/2009/03/; www.crowreservation.com/html/map_reservation.html; www.gtccmt.org/.../mark/BlackfeetLanguage.html; www.nps.gov/berkeley/steward/stewardc.htm; http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/berkeley/steward/fig2t.jpg; <http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/>, (accessed May 2, 2009).

structured through militarism directly tied to our classification as ‘domestic dependent wards’ of the colonizing, settler nation and patriarchy.¹⁹

These are the social systems of the colonizers and the soldiers and those who also followed in their tracks. According to Blackfeet history, the Indigenous peoples also had a social, economic and political system and this system was created as similar to that of Indigenous nations on other continents. The systems that were in place before European contact provided for a balance of all voices and several types of relationships to different types of power. I call this system Indigenous Democracy.

Indigenous Democracy

This Indigenous Democracy, Medicine Wheel, Four Direction, is a place where communal practices of organization, and relationships of sharing, reciprocity, generosity, and courage combine on a daily basis, and are taught by elders throughout family structures—it is the backbone of our cultures continues to be the reason we were not completely massacred. The European systems of family, reciprocity, exchange, social roles, and organization, did not understand

¹⁹ See *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. William McIntosh* (excerpts), *Johnson v. Mc'Intosh*, 21 U.S. 543, 5 L.Ed. 681, 8 Wheat. 543 (1823), <https://eee.uci.edu/clients/tcthorne/Hist15/johnson.html>, (accessed May 2, 2009). See also Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*, (Golden: Fulcrum, 2008), 89. The Marshall court found that “Indians only had a “title of occupancy,” and that “Christian people” had asserted, on the basis of “discover,” “a right to take possession” of the indigenous lands of the continent, “notwithstanding the occupancy of the natives, who were heathens.”

or value the relationship basis of Indigenous Democracy, which at many times attempted to include the Europeans into the law systems of this land.

When one is socialized under what I call the “waste” societies transferred to this land by the Europeans, the listening skills are distorted by false beliefs about the function of land in relation to land-based peoples and about the people themselves whose cultures are closely aligned with nature. The minds of those already colonized are filled with centuries of brainwashing into beliefs that no one dares to challenge. These false beliefs create a blockage of some sort so that the listening skills are now guided by institutionalized memory. An example of this type of domination is in the bodily memory of Euro-American white women; they have suffered the longest under oppression by this violent system, and they were murdered by the thousands before coming onto this continent. Now women suffer globally under disguised American Patriarchy called democracy.²⁰

The Indigenous have lived on this beautiful continent called “the Americas” for as long as the first woman and man are spoken about in Indigenous history. We know this because of our continuing unconditional relationship with this earth called mother. We all over the world know her as the primary provider, resource provider, and sacred element provider for all who live upon her, know her; and we know that all who live upon her; have a *responsibility to her*.

²⁰ Richard A. Horsley “*Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials*” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol 9, no. 4 (1979): 689-715.

Our ways of life, as many say, are in danger because of how careless we in the American society have become, and we are worsening with every new generation. Andrea Smith argues that the American mainstream society is deeply involved in the process of disconnection and separation from this truth. She goes as far as to say that through the destructive “rape of the land” through treaties, laws, rules, and institutions, Indigenous peoples are also marked as removable. She states,

Native peoples have become marked as inherently violable through a process of sexual colonization. By extension, their lands and territories have become marked as violable as well. The connection between the colonization of Native people’s bodies—particularly Native women’s bodies—and Native lands is not simply metaphorical.²¹

In the context of the Amskapi Pikuni, the current taking of our streams, creeks and rivers by the United States and U.S. corporations, the corruption of our tribal government in that process, the destruction of Amskapi Pikuni family social organization, and illnesses experienced by our children—are all interrelated. Smith states, “Marginalized communities suffer the primary brunt of environmental destruction so that other communities can remain in denial about the effects of environmental degradation.” Most of American mainstream society assumes that Indigenous peoples have sovereign authority and “privileges” because we are “federally recognized” and “tribes.” However, most mainstream Americans do not read history, law, or policy. Most are unequipped

²¹ Smith, 60.

to comprehend the plenary power of the United States over Indigenous nations. Smith further argues, “ Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples do not have full authority to decide [on issues of oil, mineral, water extractions and environmental destruction of Native lands and bodies] because, under U.S. law, as decided in *Lonewolf v. Hitchcock* (1903), it is the U.S. Congress that has full ‘plenary power’ to decide the fate of indigenous peoples and lands.”²²

Speaking Truth to Land, Militarism and Indigenous Women

Indigenous Women have had state and government relationships that often put the Amskapi Pikuni women in a place and space of militarized violence such as wards of Catholic hospitals. Some thoughts from the Holy Woman Mrs.

Rides-at-the-Door:

Yellow-Buffalo-Stone Woman who was the first one to initiate me for the Okan, or medicine lodge ceremony. That was about forty years ago, when I was still having children. I made my first vow for my daughter, who was in the hospital and just about died. I was there with her, and the nurses said that she was dead. They started to cover her, but my old mother and I wouldn’t let them. Instead, we began to doctor her in our Indian way, and we revived her. The nurses were Catholic nuns, and they just stood and watched. If one of them had revived my daughter’s life in that way, I think they would have written about it in the newspapers. ²³

Indigenous women's bodies are directly related to Mother Earth, Sun and Moon. We have a direct physical, spiritual, biological and emotional blood relationship with her. Therefore, once again, it is up to the Indigenous women to

²² Andrea Smith, *Ibid.*, 60.

²³ Beverly Hungry Wolf, *The Ways of My Grandmothers*, (New York: Quill, 1982), 34.

stand together against this patriarchal storm we are under. All who would like to stand up for her, and in relation to her, for the Indigenous peoples, need to get behind the Indigenous women and not question their language, songs, prayers, historical knowledge base, customary land base, and activism. In other words, they need not get in the way.

For over ten thousand years prior to the Euro-American take-over in Amskapi Pikuni lands, the Indigenous women's power kept the Indigenous on the cultural and spiritual map. We have been under the militarized hyper-masculine way of life, though for not very long. It is through our elders that the truth of Indigenous women's power is becoming verbalized once again. Indigenous women's approaches seek to bring what is invisible into the light. We are oral and visual people. We use the tools that are useful to accomplish certain tasks.

Challenges to Indigenous women are rooted in being taught "one history" in an educational institution that is imposed, managed and regulated by the very power which works so hard to destroy the Indigenous woman's power, and thus Indigenous families, communities, and as a direct extension, Indigenous self-determination. This patriarchal racist white power continues to be elusive as well as unrecognized and, though it had been challenged through many resistances of Indigenous peoples since its inception, in numerous places, patriarchal power is mostly invisible to the mainstream, and largely remains in power because patriarchal racist systems remain unchallenged by Americans. Militarism is part

of the reason that patriarchal racist power remains unchallenged in the Amskapi Pikuni community, as the institutions and ideas that are taught by Catholic, Christian, Euro-American, capitalist societies have altered the way Indigenous peoples' and societies function.

The reason for the need for Indigenous women's power to become available to all is that it is a matter of life and death. The Indigenous woman's power became a threat to patriarchal power when the invasions of our lands began in 1492. There are no "written" "historical" "documents" that state how the Indigenous women have power. The Indigenous women's power, as Beverly Hungry Wolf (Blackfoot) notes, is a deeply seated knowledge base in Indigenous cultures that, unlike the Euro-America culture, insists on a distinctive literacy of family-intergenerational record-keeping. She says that

Today's world is so crowded that we often turn to books in order to experience what life was like in other times and other cultures. But, there are no such books about my Indian grandmothers of the Blackfoot Nation, including my division, the Bloods. There are books that tell about horse stealing, buffalo hunting, and war raiding. But the reader would have to assume that Indian women lived lives of drudgery, and that their minds were empty of stories and anecdotes.²⁴

Hungry Wolf raises the issue that the patriarchal and militarized gaze focuses the majority of the time on writing about the masculine and patriarchal occupations of warfare, stealing, raids—all undignified and violent pursuits of Euro-Americans. She helps us to remember that these are *stories* written mostly

²⁴ Ibid., 14-16

by Euro-American, male authors, who not only objectified Indigenous males as “thieves” and “killers,” but also completely silenced and removed Indigenous women from the official history, except as sperm receptacles.

I do not think the Euro-Americans were ignorant of Indigenous woman's power. They did not like this power. They saw the equality of Indigenous women and how they shared with their communities and families and the Europeans saw Indigenous women had political power. Europeans never witnessed women as equals on any level. They let their fear guide them. They decided this power needed to be wiped out so their unnaturally created power could take its course. European males were afraid of the Amazon Women on their own European continent. Cultural Anthropologist David E. Jones States:

Herodotus, his fellow scholars, and the Greek population were quite sure of the existence of a society of women warriors pressing on their northern borders, women who fought both from horseback and on foot, the double-headed battle-ax their signature weapon...The Amazons reputedly possessed a society in which a young girl's right breast was removed to facilitate strength on the right side of the body and more efficiency in drawing a bow. It was said that they mated randomly and reared only the healthy female children. Boys were crippled to use as slaves or killed at birth...In their gleaming armor mounted on sleek war horses and led by women chieftains, they descended on Athens in the fifth century B.C...The memory of that event proved so powerful that fourteen hundred years later a second, - century Greek named Pausanius compiled a tour guide of Athens for his friends in which he indicated the sites of Amazonian graves lining the road from Athens to Piraeus...Recent burials finds in the Don River area, identified as Sarmation by Russian archaeologists, offer a striking affirmation of the accounts of Herodotus...Burials

dating to the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., the time when the Amazons were said to have attacked Athens.²⁵

The Amazon women only lasted 100 years before they were murdered and taken as slaves. Indigenous women are mysterious to us to this day. They are stern as well. I know, because I am one, and have lived with these women my whole life. Indigenous women uncovering and recovering what it means to be a “true” Indigenous woman continues to be one of the most challenging pieces I have ever done as a professional student. We often must look into the past to find the answers to what it means to be an Indigenous woman.

Yet, Indigenous teachings often show us that Indigenous thought views time as not fractured, that time is ongoing and fluid. Thus, Indigenous women are defining both womanhood and Indigeneity in the modern times. Always, the elders I have spoken with and from whom I have learned continue to be the soul of recovering Indigenous social systems, roles, and traditions, which are critical for the survival of a future—for all life.

I have been searching for answers since I was born; I always looked through the eyes of my ancestors and knew I was directly related to mother earth and all of her children. I knew that the Creator was greater than any colonizing God and Creator would assist us with the knowledge of life. It was us who could not listen; we were being disrupted and disturbed and led away from our natural listening process. Learning to listen with my whole being has been a challenge

²⁵ David E. Jones, *Women Warriors: A History* (Virginia: Dulles, Brassey's, 2000), 6-8.

and continues to be a challenge to this very day. The Indigenous knowledge of how to listen as a human being is still being put back together. The elders speak the words, listening by the younger generations continues to be distorted. Yet, I do not know if we understand the mechanics of listening with the whole being and I do not know if we understand the whole relationship of what listening brings.

Ceremony and song were the old way in which whole being listening was taught and practiced. Song and language are a huge part of our ceremonies. They are a way of everyday life and a way of our Indigenous systems. Jacqueline Fear-Segal studied numerous Indigenous communities and their forced imprisonment in boarding school structures. She describes how Indigenous family systems outside artificial schools, made sure that learning and sharing between generations was a part of everyday life. She states that

The training of Indian children reflected individual cultures and histories. Each tribe had developed clearly defined ways to ensure the survival of its own beliefs into the next generation... Despite many cultural differences, some fundamental assumptions shared by tribes were reflected in their child-rearing practices. For example, in no native community was education a discrete endeavor conducted in a separate institution. It was always woven into everyday patterns of living and took place informally in daily interactions between children and their elders. As in all traditional societies, children learned from example and informal lessons as well as by participation in more formal ceremonies and rites. This

training was essential to their own survival as well as the continuation of the identity and worldview of their tribe.²⁶

In order for the Euro-American system to be challenged, Indigenous peoples must look at different systems that worked with all voices as the leaders. In de-colonization as I learned what it meant to be a colonized Indigenous woman, who existed on her twenty thousand-year-old territory. My body is continuing to become sacred once again as the wounds are healing and giving me clarity of truth.

From an Indigenous woman perspective, my heroes have always been Indians and they still are today. I have several heroes; some of them are the Indigenous women of yesterday and some are the Indigenous women and allies of today. I will list some very powerful women and speak to their power to communicate why they are sacred and related to Mother from the biological to the spiritual realms of our existence. Rushes War Across, Beverly Hungry Wolf, Margo Tamez, Ayano Ginoza, Double Shield Woman, Little Snake Woman, First Holy Woman, Pretty Shield Woman, Maggie BlackKettle, Molly Kicking Woman, Josephine Gobert, Mary Louise Gobert, Irene LastStar, Susan HeavyRunner, Delores Iron Shirt, Marisha Hall, Dolly Stone, Sally Pepion, Deidre Mary Spotted Bear, Linda Heidenreich, and Judy Meuth are key figures.

²⁶ Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 49.

These Indigenous women and allies come from every direction; they are of every shape and size; they keep the societies, the clans, the bands, the communities, as well as families to the center of all life. They continue to keep the fire of mother burning through the practice of sacred traditions central to the Indigenous family and society. They know they come from the mother of us all and they know they will go back to her. They learned how to have relationship with her; they learned they would not have life had it not been for her. Even though Indigenous women's relationships with the plants, animals and humans continues to be distorted, undergrounded, and viewed inaccurately by others from a western viewpoint, these women still persisted and continue to work to educate, practice, share and to maintain important Indigenous perspectives and worldviews.

When looked upon from a western viewpoint all that is of mother earth and the Indigenous women becomes consumable, marketable and inhuman. Indigenous women have become products in the capitalist worldview, just as the lands of Indigenous peoples continue to be gutted for minerals, oil, water, and knowledge. Indigenous women's labor is still unrecognized or valued yet the corporate America profits off of their labor and continues to push them toward poverty. Ownership continues to be placed upon her—both Indigenous lands and

bodies—and all her resources are up for sale. Indigenous lands and bodies are split into sections, divided and assumed to be conquered.²⁷

From the western point of view, still espoused in “World Civilization” courses at land grant universities such as WSU, Indigenous women’s bodies are viewed from a western science viewpoint—a militarized, patriarchal viewpoint. The fact that our power—intellectual, spiritual, physical, biological, and psychic—is viewed and made to be looked upon as magic and mythical. Western science is made to be looked upon as truth and fact, negating the fact that the historiography of science hides European female, earth-based societies. These were driven violently into submission to masculine and patriarchal power, through the militarization of Europe—prior to the coming of Europeans to this land. Linda Gordon, a feminist historian argues:

The association of objectivity and truth with the form of knowledge that we call “science” in the West was created by its differentiation from “magic...That magic and science have the same root: the impulse to control and explain the environment. Since magic was linked to women’s practices of healing, the rise of sciences discredited both magic and women’s historical role as healers and experts on natural phenomena.²⁸

“Magic” and “science” are inter-related from the western male perspective, as they are intertwined with the patriarchal fear of the female body, mind, intellect, and psychic power. In other words, both science and “magic” are viewed as from

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Linda Gordon, “Magic,” *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right*, (New York: Penguin, 1976), 29-33.

a root origin, they are equal. This is why male controlled science was used as the patriarchal tool to discredit “magic” because women practiced it. The European cultures, such as the Greek and Romans, gained control over other cultures and women with the use of science, philosophy and militarism. Greek women used natural methods to heal and free their people. Greek scholars and officials such as Plato did not like women’s power, so they created methods to control them. They used slavery, indenturedness, and class systems which reinforced masculine and upper class places of power and authority. These were tools to separate both lands and bodies into places of control and warfare over “rights.” The word “magic” grew as something mythical, mysterious and dangerous, to be understood as “unlawful.” The colonizer elite classes and ruling families transferred these ideas and laws to the Indigenous woman and the Indigenous land. A great example of this is the Catholic Inquisition, when any woman who invented, experimented, innovated, supported herself, spoke out, or healed, etc. Was defined as a heretic, or witch in consort with the devil and so was burned.²⁹

Western Science is used in our Indigenous societies illegally. It is controlled and used in our laws which manipulate our tribal government, our elders, our families, our lands and our future generations. Here’s an example of how western science continues to uphold inequalities: due to how science is used by the dominant white male perspectives:

²⁹ Ibid., 20.

However, ounce difference between the sexes took on a meaning influenced by the “new” science, with male bodies believed to be completely different from and superior to female bodies, the position of women in society in general, and in science and medicine in particular, became increasingly marginal of subject to male control.³⁰

Western science then, was built upon the colonization of Indigenous sciences and knowledge of assimilated groups in the Americas as well as from Indigenous cultures in lands across the waters. The use of western science grew as laws were made in the United States to legalize forced taking. In this process, Indigenous women’s power was subordinated. The word ‘squaw’ is an example of this idea made real in the Indigenous lands. There are hundreds if not thousands of place names across the United States which use the word ‘squaw’ to continue to belittle and erase, and paternalize Indigenous women. Indigenous women are always underneath the patriarchal, racist, sexist and militarized male gaze. Indigenous women’s activism in ceremony, language, story, writing—and research—are always under layers of colonization. The fact is, without functional translators, Indigenous women’s voices are still excluded from participation in public discourses and this enables the larger power system to function without penalty. Unfortunately, by not looking closely at the functions of patriarchy, science, and militarism in lives of marginalized Indigenous women, American society (blinded to masculinity and racism) does not have the tools to see how imperialism is used to instruct and to discipline white and assimilated women to increase the population of elite groups to colonize the world.

³⁰ Inderpal Grewal Caren Kaplan : *An introduction to Women’s Studies Gender in a Transnational World* 2nd Ed., (New York: McGraw Hill, 2006), 2.

Intergenerational Violence and Resistance:

As I close the door to my daughter's room, I am saddened at the thought of one door closing, and hopeful and prayerful that another one opens. Hope, possibility, and safety are the basics of what most parents want for their children. We want our children to experience love, strength, happiness, gain knowledge and open mindedness. I am sending my daughter into a world from which I have spent the last twenty-three years trying to protect her. In some people's opinions, when she was six years old, she suffered child abuse at the hands of her mother and she suffered a mother's alcoholism and poverty. She now understands how those two barriers were a part of why our relationship was torn apart, and we are learning how to mend this relationship to this very day. My life is an example of inter-generational violence directly related to institutional systems of violence which socialized the Amskapi Pikuni. The poverty of Indigenous women and women of color as a direct result of institutionalized colonialism is a larger part of "the feminization of poverty." According to Renny Golden,

At some time in their childhood, one out of two children will live with a single parent, the vast majority of who are women. In the year 2000, almost 40 percent of the children living in families headed by single women were poor, while only 8.2 percent of children in married families were poor.³¹

Perhaps with the work and trust of the Indigenous women allies, the next generation will begin to live with their children with a healed heart. For the Plains Indigenous, intergenerational violence has thoroughly impacted our communities

³¹ Renny Golden, *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Families They Leave Behind*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 80.

for over two hundred years of colonization. I know within my soul that children are not burdens. Through colonialist institutions, such as Christianity, law, science, and legalized patriarchal oppression of life-givers, care-givers, healers, and nurturers, as devalued, belittled, and minimized knowledge sources. The American society violently enforced punishment and discipline as “order” within the family—one of the central institutions where the nation teaches how to be a “good citizen.”

Anna Davin argues that motherhood itself has been a special project of colonial nations to instruct, discipline and define the smallness of women as knowledgeable persons, and also the central role of women in bearing children and citizens. She states that

Middle-class convention of the time took for granted that the proper context of childhood was the family, and the person most responsible was the mother. So if the survival of infants and the health of children are in question, it must be the fault of the mothers, and if the nation needed healthy future citizens (and soldiers and workers) then mother must improve. This emphasis was reinforced by the influential ideas of eugenicists: good motherhood was an essential component in their ideology of racial health and purity. ...Child-rearing was becoming a national duty, not just a moral one: if it was done badly the state could intervene.³²

The institutionalizing of child laborers, orphans, child slaves, child captives, and child prisoners concurrently in the U.S. history of empire, from the late 1800s to the early part of the 20th century, also taught certain ideas and values about the low status of poor people, workers, children, Indigenous

³² Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” in *An Introduction to Women’s Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*, Eds, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, 2nd Edition, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), 63.

peoples, immigrants, mentally ill, and women in general. The majority of Euro-American, African, immigrant and Indigenous women which comprised the labor force of early U.S. commerce systems experienced harsh conditions.

Women in general, from the earliest years of the U.S. colonies, were beasts of burden inside the Christian capitalist systems of thought. I know from the Amskapi Pikuni perspective, that there is no word for “orphan” in our language. Through this recognition, my viewpoint has come to full fruition; it took 10 years for myself, to go through this process of seeing how Indigenous women took on the ideas of children as “burdens” and family as “work.” Lisa Udel argues:

Native women argue that they have devised alternate reform strategies to those advanced by Western feminism. Native women’s motherwork, in its range and variety, is one from of the activism, and approach that emphasizes Native tradition of “responsibilities” as distinguished from Western feminism’s notions of “rights”.³³

The term “relationship,” when used, by the Amskapi Pikuni, had one meaning. This meant 'the coming together of' or marriage as the term or explanation of a relationship. The mixing of elements creates a relationship; science always takes components of the elements to see if they are compatible and what happens when they are not. It is because of these kinds of studies that the scientific processes prove and back up that the elements have relationships. The Indigenous societies of the Americas all had a system which the tribe followed. The code of relationships was rather simple—to the Indigenous community—as well as extremely complex in all of the components that went

³³ Lisa Udel, “*Revision and Resistance: The Politics of Native Women’s Motherwork?*” *Frontiers* 22:43-62. (2001):43.

with the power behind the relationship. The relationship always needed a specific language, open-mindedness, discipline, and strength as well as endurance in order to perform the powerful ceremonies that would continue the relationship between Mother Earth and all of her children.

“Equality” was more than a word to get by on—it was law and truth, and the balance of the peoples was within the womb of the women. The Indigenous peoples understood this importance of equality and why there needed to be balance. An Indigenous woman’s role amongst her community was vital and extremely crucial to the community’s very survival. Her equality amongst her people needed to be earned. As a child, gender roles were not applied but the importance of her existence began at birth. Both sexes were given the same toys to develop awareness of the many technologies that would be used in their future. An equal place meant having a role amongst your communities, which meant being a part of raising the children and role modeling so that children continue to follow the order of mother earth and all of her children. A Blood elder, Paula Weasel Head, states

I’m going to tell you a little bit about the holy initiations that I have gone through in my lifetime of over seventy years to show you what a woman can take part in with our tribal culture. Because my father loved me very much he took me along with him to all kinds of ceremonies that he went to. His name was Iron, and he was famous for going through more holy initiations than anyone else here, among the Bloods. He owned a number of different medicine pipe bundles and he joined the Horns Society many times. He live to be nearly a hundred years old and he died not too

many years ago...When I was just a little girl my father purchased a painted lodge design for me. The design was put on a new tipi for the transfer ceremony. It wasn't a big tipi; it was just a little tipi big enough for kids to play in. My mother made it for me so that I could use it with my friends. They hired an old man to conduct the ceremony so that I would be properly initiated for it. My mother sat in the tipi with me, as my partner. I was not the only little girl that was given such a tipi. There were a few others.³⁴

Indigenous women have historically had lead roles within their communities and through matrilineal and clan mother tribal law systems; these roles historically bound families and clans to one another through reciprocities, shared responsibilities and obligations. They held Indigenous Democracy together across vast land, spaces, and through time. The United States government took their notion of democracy from the League of Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondago, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora) which is well documented through both Euro-American and Indigenous histories. However, Euro-Americans took only a narrow understanding of Indigenous Democracy. Euro-American democracy does not include women, children, elders, or earth within "the people."

Indigenous Democracy played a vital role within Amskapi Pikuni communities, and women, children and elders held political, spiritual, mental, and physical status amongst their people. They learned by everyday roles, of providing for the essential. The Indigenous Community Relationship medicine wheel, begins in the East which represents newness, birth and beginning. The

³⁴ Hungry Wolf, 74-75.

sun sign of this spiritual time is known by all, because there is not a tribe that did not acknowledge the coming of the sun as sacred; every day is new.

Ceremonially, they would begin to acknowledge the newness with a morning ceremonial song. Song is known amongst the Indigenous as the center the communicator of their ceremonies. Song creates and nurtures relationships with all of mother earth and all those living amongst her.

Relationship to land:

Historically, Indigenous women's bodies were sacred in Indian country. There are songs, stories, ceremonies, and languages that provide evidence of this from the ancient to the modern. This sacred relationship and status were severely and violently altered through colonial warfare, mass rape, removals from traditional lands, borders, and legal subjugation as "wards" to the Euro-American "dominion"—which is an untruth and a violation. The sacredness of Indigenous women's bodies as directly connected to land, sun and moon, was attempted to be broken. Women's relationship with land is still fluid and present today, yet, the reality is that Indigenous women's bodies and lands are targeted for violence—by the state, by institutions of the state, and by a masculine and militarized society. For example Margo Tamez argues:

The voices of O'odam, Ópata-Mayo, Ndé human rights defenders and Indigenous women, in the U.S.-Mexico boundary region, have been historically muted through the forces of colonization, forced labor systems, such as the *encomienda*, *pepartamiento*, and *obraje* systems; racial classification systems, such as *casta*; and forced

assimilative processes of mestizaje which afforded the capitalist labor exploitation of Indigenous peoples across Mexico and the U.S. Southwest.³⁵

Indigenous women's activism has a constant thread: relationship with land is an acknowledgment that all life on earth is related and sacred. That is still common knowledge amongst many Indigenous peoples today. A description of a sacred Sundance ceremony uses language to portray the sacredness of Blackfoot women and their representation in these great sacred ceremonies. Adolf Hungry Wolf states:

Many different medicine articles are associated with the Okan. The most important of these is the Natoas, or Sun Dance Bundle, containing the sacred headdress worn by the Sacred Woman on the day of raising the Center Pole. The ceremony for this Natoas headdress is a complex ritual held only after the wearer has fasted and suffered for four days.³⁶

An indigenous woman's body is equal to all of earth, moon and sun because she carries the original seeds as mother earth does and she was taught how to bring the people to the center of mother earth with ceremonies, song and the sacred seeds of life. The Indigenous woman's body is the equal to mother earth and all her sacred elements. The blood in human veins and the blood of all of the animals is scientifically proven to be related to water through our cells and entire body; we are 90% water at birth and as we get older the water percentage lessons. Dr. Masaru Emoto states:

³⁵ Margo Tamez; *Indigenous Women, Anti-Colonial Resistance, and Autonomy Movements: the U.S.-Mexico Militarized Zone of Occupation*, (2009).1.

³⁶ Adolf Hungry-Wolf, *The Blackfoot Papers: Volume One: Pikunni History and Culture* (British Columbia: Good Medicine Cultural Foundation, 2006), 507.

Miraculous Messages From Water: Water has a very important message for us. Water is telling us to take a much deeper look at our selves. When we do look at our selves through the mirror of water, the message becomes amazingly, crystal, clear. We know that human life is directly connected to the quality of our water, both within and all around us.³⁷

Water is used as a healing element. How water responds to emotions and words in and of itself is a miracle alone. Water has been given to my brothers and sisters, the buffalo peoples. These peoples have been given the sacred ability to use the buffalo medicine and use water to heal the wounded with it. Indigenous women's bodies went from being sacred and cherished to being inhuman and therefore their very survival had to go in hiding with ceremony and equality.

As Indigenous women's power went underground as a direct result of institutional violence, so did her standing as an equal amongst all peoples. She is the equal sacred one. She is the one raising the children, keeping the culture. Now however, she is serving men, her body detached from her head, to keep "safe" and "sane." Her soul is struggling to survive the severity of being represented as a squaw and a drudge for 500 years that has taken its toll. Indigenous women are the beautiful ones; their hearts come from the earth as her equal.

Death, Loss, and Destruction in Amskapi Pikuni Country:

³⁷ Reiko Myanoto Dewey; More Messages in Water: The Spirit of Water, Interview Dr. Masaru Emoto. (Ma'at Magazine. 2007), 33.

Waking up to a cold house and floor had been a common ritual to one Indigenous family residing on the Blackfeet reservation. The woodstove would be crackling, but the heat took longer to travel to our bedroom. Every morning during winter months my sister Sally and I would wake in the cold. We would rise and go help our father feed the cattle and horses. In our territory, the weather can get to 65 degrees Fahrenheit below zero wind chill factor. When I say cold, I am writing about the kind of cold that can carve through your skin and into your blood cells straight to the bones. Dad would tell us, “Now come on, fight your sleep. Sit on the edge of the bed and put your feet on the floor. Just sit there until you wake up.” Then we'd get dressed, because as country kids, a shower was not an everyday need. Our father did not practice the social conditioning of gender. He always told his daughters to be tough; he taught us that we could do anything we wanted. Our lives reflected the non gendering practices. While outdoors we were his right hand. It is not easy keeping up a ranch; he made it look easy, though. What is so beautiful is the part of him that made everything fun. Even getting up at 5:00 am was fun because of the manner in which he woke us. His beautiful voice speaking the words “rise and shine lil ones ... come and get it while it’s hot.” Every morning he would have hot breakfast prepared for us and he would make busy noises like the wind to hurry us along.

Never did he raise his voice, or use belittling words; his “say” was kind and gentle and understanding. He did not use his male privilege to silence us or use

militarism to hurt us; he was 100% Indigenous. In the present day, my father has 63 grandchildren and great grandchildren. He has lived to witness hundreds of accomplishments and sorrows. The loss of his granddaughter, his grandson, his daughter and his wife, within a very short period of time between 2005 and 2006 was another layer of colonization. The Indigenous women, land and militarism point directly to colonialist institutions which negate, belittle, shun, and use lies to silence the truths of Indigenous peoples, and the Amskapi Pikuni. The process/methods used to colonize continue to silence my Father and siblings. Our mourning in silence creates much anger, resentment, and our silence deafens our hearing. He cannot cry out loud; his militarization silenced him.

Conclusion: Blackfeet People Answer Questions:

I began this chapter with the disturbing death of my niece. To this very day her death goes uninvestigated as though she never existed. Once again the Institution participates in the murder of Indigenous peoples. They continue to silence us and carry on the genocidal practices by continuing to portray our bodies as dispensable. We Amskapi Pikuni are still under the U.S. Department of War and the attitude of Indian Health Service (IHS) continues to treat us as wards.

The evidence of this conclusion is the death of thousands of Amskapi Pikuni under the care of IHS. In our community Indigenous bodies are still test subjects. These bodies are no longer human and have no agency. When the

professional practitioners using modern technologies come to the reservation to practice, it is evident their worldview of Indigenous peoples continues to be clouded by the Western Education that only writes and records their narrow beliefs of us. Those beliefs are strategically biased, racist, sexist, romanticized and they are created by the Academic Researcher and Writer. These beliefs help the government to continue to steal our lands and resources. The belief that the only good Indian is a dead one continues to come through at IHS.

The last time I saw my niece she said, "I wish I could go with you auntie, you should take my little sister, I love her so much." Diedre was my sister's eldest daughter. I promised my sister that I would always treat her children as my own. That is the way of the Indigenous woman's societies. My sister, Sally Jane Pepion, who was two years older than me, will continue to be one of my heroes until I see her again. I wanted to give back to her the way she gave to me her whole life, which ended a year before her daughter's, Deidre Mary Spotted Bear.

Deidre was 5'11 and she had long arms and long strong hands. She said "Before you go back to WSU auntie let me put make-up on you in case you meet someone on your way back!" My elder sister Debra May Pepion Spotted Eagle was also with me at the time, and she laughed as I did. I agreed. Deidre was so close. I could feel her gentleness and her kindness and I started remembering her as she was when she was little. She was so full of wonder! *How does the world work?* seemed to always be on her mind. Yet her colonized internal-external oppression over time made her believe, like a majority of Indigenous

women, that she was *squaw*—a drudge and beneath others. This belief is strategic for the sake of continuing to drain our resources and continuing to attempt to vanish the Amskapi Pikuni.

Deidre Mary wrapped her long strong fingers curved around my face, and she looked deep into my eyes and said “I love you auntie,” gently kissing me on my cheek. Only two months passed between that moment and my return to bury a loved one on October 12, 2006. This would be the fourth time I came to my 10,000 year old home to put one of my family members back into the belly of our mother earth. For the first time in our Catholicized-male-dominated place, we had all woman pallbearers for her. She wanted it that way. The Spotted Eagle singers would sing her home the old way. As she went into the belly of our Mother Earth four eagles circled. I knew they had come to take her home.

Conclusion

I remember when I first learned the terms *oppressed*, *internal oppression* and *white privilege*. I learned it wasn't me—that I am not the term—the term created to justify the raping of my body the beating of my body—the use of my labor the use of my womb. I am not squaw. I learned the Euro-American system affects the Amskapi Pikuni as well as all in Indigenous country (one continent with no borders) as well as effecting global Indigenous peoples. The irony is that it also affects the colonizers.

Amskapi Pikuni are always blaming ourselves, blaming each other, and hardened to internal self-reflecting toward family and community and mother earth. Colonization has given rise to verbal abuse toward each other, constant fighting and calling each other “failures,” disheartening violence against one another, the loss of our young and increasing death rates. The conflict of our identities through the invisible blood quantum enforced upon us through US empirical laws also threatens to divide us. Yet, we stay together because again that is our original natural law. We are Amskapi Pikuni we have always been together, we do not know how else to be. Some of us believe we were put on our reservations or reserves for a reason.

Through my studies I have been taught our ancestors negotiated our territories very intelligently; they maneuvered with their relations right by their side. Look at our territory. We are very fortunate to have uncontaminated water,

we do not get engulfed with runoff from farmer's chemicals. We have over 500 Indigenous plant roots and we are the only ones that didn't murder our sisters and brothers the wolverine peoples. Yet we are participating in our own genocide.

High violence against Amskapi women, both internal as well as external by men and women (women on women) never stops. Amskapi Pikuni men are not held accountable for the many atrocities they bring to the families and communities by being violent to the women, children and each other.

Sexual violence is never spoken about or rape of women and children on our reservation is not even written into our tribal government and court systems. Sexism in our work environments creates so many barriers, leaving again our governmental decisions to be 100% male dominated. Amskapi Pikuni women's work continues to be unrecognized, spoken about or even acknowledged. Often it is looked upon as secondary to men's work. Of course this is a reflection of the dominant society—a reflection of how patriarchal power systems hold their power through isolation and violence.

Patriarchy affects us in this way: it creates borders, barriers and walls it isolates, it brings fear and internal pain with a force that almost cannot be broken. There is no power in "one." Our Amskapi Pikuni elders and ancestors have taught us this. This is one of our natural clan mother's laws—one of our 10,000 year old laws that precedes the recently created Patriarchal United States' legal system.

The hidden patriarchal system creates violences internally and externally against self and others through male dominated systems which then affects our internal beliefs of self and others. The military continues to uphold hyper-masculine traits by recreating patriarchal training rooted in masculinity. An example would be using sexist language with officers calling a soldier a “pussy.” This term is associated with a female body part and weakness and so teaches our soldiers unconditionally that women have no agency no meaning no value. Soldiers are taught to shut down any internal feelings of compassion toward all of life, women and children and they themselves are consumed as well. These lessons are brought home with them, they weave in and out of our lives. Hyper-masculinity presented as natural is a constant lesson being taught and rewarded.

The external forces created to keep patriarchal dominant white male systems unnoticed will continue to use genocidal tactics through institutions with hidden and not-so-hidden languages and agendas. This is why imperialism continues. Recreating a history that covers, hides, and erases the attempts of genocide against Indigenous peoples has proven a success thus far, yet today many Indigenous peoples, globally, are getting educated about these unjust violences against our bodies, minds and our lands. We are speaking back.

The Amskapi Pikuni continue to send our young people into their militaries; they use our poverty to make sure that we do. This may seem isolated but this is happening all over the world and will continue as long as we send our

young men and women into a military that creates wars against Indigenous peoples globally.

Today the Amskapi Pikuni are not considered humans but instead are portrayed as vanishing. Our lands and water as well as our bodies are being looked at from a colonizing and a corporate view to be isolated and controlled. Yet we are here. We have voice. We have our treaty of 1855 and are, once again, using our voices to see that it gets upheld. We have begun to recover our ceremony. We must continue to recover our ceremonies to create a well state of being in order to continue our Indigenous way of knowing. It is our Indigenous way of knowing that continues to bring hope to our next generations.

I titled this dissertation “those people that have sacred ceremonies,” meaning the Indigenous peoples—women who have been murdered or silenced. Yet some of our women survived, and even when they were murdered, some women’s voices survived. We are the people who have sacred ceremonies. We are the sacred ceremonies, surviving with all heart and soul intact. The Indigenous women, globally, are the sacred ceremony.

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