“These Type of Sites Are Really Hard to Find”: Lakota Oral Tradition and Resistance Against the Dakota Access Pipeline

By
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Submitted to the graduate degree program in the Department of Religious Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

The Dakota Access Pipeline resistance movement provides a poignant example of the way in which oral traditions remain authoritative in the religious lives of American Indian peoples. The members of Lakota communities confronted with the restriction of their religious freedoms and access to clean drinking water by DAPL's construction have faced the consequences brought on in part by scholarly assessment of the veracity and importance of oral traditions. As I demonstrate in this thesis, the exclusion of Native voices from conversations about these traditions, both within and outside academia, has larger impacts than just incomplete understandings. Going forward, those engaged in scholarly discourses must understand that they have greater obligations than merely the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Understanding the wider impact of discussions like those surrounding oral traditions provides a stimulus for reflection and reevaluation of the research being conducted about, for, and with American Indian communities.

Acknowledgments

Without the support and encouragement of a whole community of people, this project would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank the citizens of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation for their endless hospitality and willingness to visit with me during my time in their community. Specifically, without the help of Chip and Trini Bird Necklace the most important parts of this project would not have gotten off the ground. I will forever be grateful for their assistance in acquiring tribal approvals as well as identifying community members whose voices I have included here.

I would like to thank my thesis committee for their never-ending support and guidance in and out of the classroom, not just on this project, but in my entire graduate career. Their expertise served as a guiding force during the completion of this project. Furthermore, I am grateful for the financial support of my thesis research from the Department of Religious Studies and the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies.

I would like to thank the members of the American Indian Heath Research and Education Alliance (AIHREA), also for their support. Without the encouragement of AIHREA directors Sean and Chris Daley, I would not have begun my work with American Indian communities or cultivated the skills necessary to complete this project both ethically and effectively.

Furthermore, I would like to thank both Snoop Dogg and Rage Against the Machine for providing a fitting soundtrack to the writing of this project.

To my cohort, thank you for your stimulating conversations that have challenged me to think about my research in different ways. Also, thank you to my friend and colleague Jay Bohanon. We made it! Thank you for all of your late night support and writing assistance.

Last, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family. Without their encouragement and their part in cultivating my love of reading, I would not have been nearly as successful with this project and in my entire academic career. Specifically, I would like to thank my fiancée, Alexzandria, who is a constant source of support and encouragement in everything that I do.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to all water protectors in Lakota communities and elsewhere fighting for access to clean drinking water and the free expression of American Indian religious traditions.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The acrid smell of tear gas lingered as the sounds of whizzing rubber bullets, gushing water cannons and the piercing wail of the Long Range Acoustic Device cut through the cold North Dakota air. Individuals known as "water protectors" were under attack by law enforcement from five states, including the local Morton County Sheriff's Department. These water protectors had assembled to clear Highway 1806 in Morton County, ND of a blockade of burnt-out vehicles that had cut off travel to and from the Standing Rock Sioux Indian community. As they were met with the spray of water cannons in below-freezing temperatures, some water protectors prayed, while others shouted at the militarized police force assembled to quell the protests.

The night of November 20, 2016 was the culmination of a months'-long struggle between American Indian protesters and their allies over the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).[1] This was one of the most brutal exchanges between water protectors and the police force during the entire campaign against the Pipeline's construction, resulting in numerous injuries, including the near amputation of one water protector's arm after taking a direct hit from a concussion grenade.[2] Despite the lack of mainstream media coverage until the later stages of

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[1] Use of the term "American Indian" to describe the indigenous peoples of the lower 48 contiguous United States is informed by the preference of community members whom I have worked. I will use the term "Native" in the same way, and for the same reasons, throughout. However, I am aware of the contention surrounding self-identification by indigenous peoples in the United States. For more on this discussion, see Michael Yellow Bird, "What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels," *American Indian Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1999).

[2] The events described were largely ignored by mainstream media sources apart from limited coverage of the conflict between the citizens of the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Community and Dakota Access. However, they were covered by a variety of alternative media sources and Facebook livestreams from the protest itself. For example, see Jim Naureckas, "48 Words at 4 Am Is All Network News Has to Say About Pipeline Protests," Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, http://fair.org/home/48-words-at-4-am-is-all-network-news-has-to-say-about-pipeline-protests/; "Dakota Access Blackout Continues on Abc, Nbc News," Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, http://fair.org/home/dakota-access-blackout-continues-on-abc-nbc-news/; "'Nothing to See Here' Headlines Conceal Police Violence at Dakota Access," Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, http://fair.org/home/nothing-to-see-here-headlines-conceal-police-violence-at-dakota-access/; Janet Monet, "Mainstream Media Mia as Dapl Action Is Met with Water Cannons and Mace," Indian Country Today Media Network,

the protest movement, individuals in Indian Country, non-Natives, and members of the global community watched in shock as guerrilla media groups broadcast video of water protectors, being confronted by militarized police forces, National Guard troops, and private mercenaries as they protected their rights to clean water.

The construction of DAPL and the resulting outrage and resistance from Lakota communities brought to the forefront questions of governmental overreach, corporate indifference, tribal sovereignty, and recognition of treaty agreements between Tribal nations and the United States government. Additionally, concerns regarding the Pipeline's environmental impact remained central to calls for halting construction. However, an essential feature of this resistance that was chronically under-reported was that they were frequently framed *in a religious context*.

The controversy surrounding DAPL provides a compelling illustration of how the exclusion of Native voices in the academic study of religions and cultures can impact contemporary indigenous communities. The hesitance of anthropologists, historians, religious studies scholars and academics from other related areas of study to recognize the importance of oral traditions and the authority they possess has produced widespread detrimental impacts to scholarly understandings of these traditions. Furthermore, the lack of serious scholarly attention

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https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/native-news/mainstream-media-mia-as-dapl-action-is-met-with-water-cannons-and-mace/; Sacredstonecamp.org, "Water Cannons Fired at Water Protectors in Freezing Temperatures Injure Hundreds," http://sacredstonecamp.org/blog/2016/11/21/water-cannons-fired-at-water-protectors-in-freezing-temperatures-injure-hundreds; RedactedTonight, "400 Dapl Protesters 'Trapped on Bridge' as Police Fire Tear Gas, Water Cannon," https://www.rt.com/usa/367592-dapl-protest-bridge-teargas/; "Police Threw a Grenade at Dapl Protesters - Father of Activist Who Faces Amputation," https://www.rt.com/usa/367771-dapl-protester-arm-amputation/; Indian County Today Media Network Staff, "Amnesty Internation USA Derides Nd for Subfreezing Water Onslaught," Indian Country Today Media Network, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/native-news/amnesty-international-usa-derides-nd-for-subfreezing-water-onslaught/.

to Lakota oral traditions has produced tangible impacts in certain contemporary Lakota communities, including among members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation.

Studying oral traditions remains a contentious topic among many academics, and has contributed to government officials' and attorney's hesitance about the reliability of the claims made by indigenous peoples in the United States.[3] This reticence to consider oral traditions as admissible evidence for land claims disputes has had a direct impact on the religious practices of American Indian communities. By dismissing the importance of oral traditions' claims, indigenous people are denied their rights to freely practice and express their religious traditions. Oral traditions are in many cases the authoritative source for American Indian land claims and, as I will argue, this knowledge ought to be used to identify traditional sites, instead of relying solely upon scholarship about such matters. Furthermore, it is the keepers of American Indian traditions upon whom the authority to make these indications should rest. The identification of spiritually significant sites within the DAPL corridor provides a compelling argument for this change in practice.

Most media coverage, with the exception of Amy Goodman and the Democracy Now! media network, remained focused on narratives surrounding police brutality or corporate and governmental indifference toward ethnic minorities in the United States. These discourses placed the fight against DAPL in the same category as police responses to protest actions around the country, such as those surrounding the police killing of Michael Brown, a young, unarmed African American man, in 2014; and the Flint Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan. Yet throughout this resistance, cries of "*Mní Wičhóni*" ("Water is Life," in Lakota) were understood by participants to reference the centrality of water in many Lakota religious ceremonies such as

[3] L. Orlando Camline, "Aboriginal Title Claims in the Indian Claims Commission: United States V. Dann and Its Due Process Implications," *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 13 (1986).

inípi ("purification lodge"), *Wiwáŋyaŋg Wačhípi* ("Sun Dance"), and *haŋbléčheyapipi* ("vision quest") as well as being insistent calls for access to clean drinking water.[4] Furthermore, protectors found themselves confronted with the destruction of Lakota sacred sites in September of 2016. Nevertheless, information about these sites and their religious significance for water protectors remained elusive to those outside the protest camps and communities directly affected by DAPL's construction. Because of this reframing of the narrative, many members of the public still remain unaware of the documentation supporting these religiously significant sites.

In fact, the sites desecrated by workers for Energy Transfer Partners, the corporation constructing the Pipeline, previously had been documented by a cultural resource management firm from the Standing Rock community, Makoche Wowapi ("Land Writings" in Lakota). Informed by Lakota oral traditions, this firm had documented 2,400 Lakota cultural sites along a three-mile stretch of the Pipeline's planned route in April of 2014.[5] These features continue to

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[4] Many orthographies of the Lakota language exist. Throughout this manuscript I will be using the orthography standardized by the Lakota Language Consortium, LLC. in the *New Lakota Dictionary* for consistency and ease of pronunciation. This orthography was created not only for the dictionary itself, but also to aid in Lakota language instruction. The only instances in which I will not follow the orthography for Lakota language spellings are when community members use a more common spelling, such as with the word Lakota (spelled *Lakȟóta*). I also will honor the standard spellings of the communities themselves. Because spellings for Lakota *thiópaye* (bands) vary between standard usage in communities and the *New Lakota Dictionary*, when there are discrepancies, I will use the spelling employed by those communities. For example, the spelling for the Mnicoujou (*Mnikȟówžu* or "Planters by the Water") varies widely, but I will use the spelling preferred by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council, as this is one of the four bands that make up their Nation. For more on the history of Lakota orthography and the work done by the Lakota Language Consortium, LLC see Lakota Language Consortium LLC, "New Lakota Dictionary : LakȟÓTiyapi-English / English-LakȟÓTiyapi & Incorporating the Dakota Dialects of Yankton-Yanktonai & Santee-Sisseton," in *New Lakota dictionary : Lakȟótiyapi-English / English-Lakȟótiyapi & incorporating the Dakota dialects of Yankton-Yanktonai & Santee-Sisseton* (Bloomington, Ind.: Lakota Language Consortium, 2008).

[5] I am choosing to use the term "Lakota" throughout this manuscript with the understanding that nomenclature related to the groups that have called themselves the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* (Seven Council Fires) is both complicated and messy due to failures by early researchers in these communities to "differentiate between dialectical, political, and geographic designations" amongst these groups (Powers, 3). My use of this terminology is informed by my work with community members who, when not using a more specific *thiópaye* (band) designation, describe themselves as Lakota. For more on these issues regarding nomenclature see William K. Powers, *Oglala Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 3-14.

have religious significance and are connected to Lakota ceremonies still performed today.[6] Unfortunately, it appears that this documentation served as a road map for workers to destroy these sites. Two days after the submission of these findings to the court in the July 27, 2016 case *Standing Rock Sioux Tribe v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, workers for Dakota Access, LLC., a partner of the parent company Energy Transfer Partners, bulldozed the entire corridor that contained these features.[7]

The testimony and identification of these sites by Tim Mentz, Sr., founder of Makoche Wowapi, is informed by traditional knowledge about Lakota spiritual life and history. Identification of these sites was only possible because of the deep knowledge of oral traditions held by members of the Makoche Wowapi team. This information includes knowledge of traditional ceremonies, tribal societies, and Lakota astronomy. Some of this knowledge has only received academic attention within the last 50 years, particularly the ethnoastronomies of Native peoples, including the Lakota.[8] However, in denying an injunction filed by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST) against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Dakota Access, LLC, a judge ruled that CRST claims that the Pipeline would obstruct expression of their religion were not sufficient or timely enough to merit halting construction.[9]

This example clearly demonstrates that the debate about the historicity surrounding oral traditions is not just contained within the academy. Moreover, it exemplifies the continued

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[6] Jan E Hasselman, "Plaintiff's Motion for Leave to File Supplemental Declaration," (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers2016), 2; Tim Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2016), 15.
[7] KOLC-TV, "Tim Mentz: Updated," (2016).
[8] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8, 10-12.
[9] Renae Ditmer, "Judge Denies Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe's Anti-Dapl Religious Freedom Argument," Indian Country Today Media Network, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/politics/judge-denies-cheyenne-river-sioux-tribes-anti-dapl-argument/; "Latest Dapl Hearing: Cheyenne River Sioux Religious Beliefs on Trial," Indian Country Today Media Network, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/politics/latest-dapl-hearing-cheyenne-river-sioux-religious-beliefs-trial/.

colonization of American Indian lands and resources for corporate and governmental gain. Reflecting the hegemonic power structures within and without the academy, indigenous voices continue to be devalued and rejected.[10]

Oral Traditions and Lived Religion

Establishing an understanding of what it means for something to be "oral tradition" is essential to gaining a clear understanding of how academic discourses have affected the religious freedoms of indigenous communities like the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation. Pawnee historian Roger Echo-Hawk defines "oral traditions" as verbal accounts passed down from firsthand observers to those living today. This method of transmission distinguishes them from what Echo-Hawk terms "oral histories," which are the accounts of firsthand observers themselves.[11] This is an important distinction as many of the oral accounts used by American Indian communities to legitimize claims to land are based on traditional knowledge rather than eyewitness testimony. These types of verbal accounts are not limited to origin narratives and other cultural narratives as some might assume. In American Indian communities, oral tradition is a much broader category including ritual prescriptions as well as prayers, songs, astronomical information, and the personal experiences of other community members.[12]

This classification raises the question of what scholars should do when religion bleeds over into a variety of experiences that might not readily be deemed "religious." This dilemma

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[10] Devon A Mihesuah, "Overcoming Hegemony in Native Studies Programs," in *Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Expose Anti-Indianism in America*, ed. Donald Trent Jacobs (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 200; Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies : Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Pub., 1997), 34.

[11] Roger C. Echo-Hawk, "Ancient History in the New World: Integrating Oral Traditions and the Archaeological Record in Deep Time," *American Antiquity* 65, no. 2 (2000): 270.

[12] William B. Matson, *Crazy Horse : The Lakota Warrior's Life & Legacy*, First ed. (Layton: Gibbs Smith, 2016), 16-17; Nicole E. Ducheneaux, "Intervenor-Plaintiff Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe's Ex Parte Motion for Temporary Restraining Order," (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Dakota Access, LLP, 2017), 5-6; Ronald Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology* (Rosebud: Sinte Gleska University, 1992), 1.

among religious studies scholars continues to be a source of debate within the discipline. Historically, religion as an academic concept is rooted in Protestant theology and global European colonialism. In an effort to establish a concept of religion "free of denominational specificity," Protestant theologians and scholars bound "religion" by a defined set of symbols and practices predicated on various Protestant denominations.[13] Consequently, early scholars of religion identified certain cultural elements in colonized territories that were recognizable as religious (i.e. textual sources, monotheism, and clearly identifiable religious leaders). However incongruent the traditions they encountered in European colonies were to Christianity, most specifically Protestant Christianity, these progenitors of contemporary religious studies scholars found elements that fit their assumptions. In many instances, early studies placed much more emphasis on cultural and religious aspects than the practitioners did themselves.[14] While most examples of this type of misunderstanding are found in the earliest writings by religious studies scholars such as *Elements of the Science of Religion* published in 1897 by Cornelius Petrus, this still continues today.[15] One example relevant to the current discussion of Lakota religious traditions includes misunderstandings about the concept of *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* as being the sole creator of the universe in Lakota worldview. When glossed in this way, it negates the more nuanced understanding of the concept as a collective of *wakȟáŋ* beings that includes spirits important in the creation of the world, among others.[16]

This question of what does and does not "count" as religion carries with it real world implications as will be discussed in terms of resistance to DAPL. Hailing from a variety of

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[13] Robert A Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 32.
[14] Ibid., 32-37.
[15] C. P. Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2 vols., Gifford Lectures (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1897), 89.
[16] The concept of *wakȟáŋ* and *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* will be explained in following chapters. Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 120, 70-71.

research foci, scholars have weighed in on the implications of what Robert Orsi calls this posturing within the discipline as the "policing" of religion.[17] A scholar of American religious history, Orsi argues that the study of what he terms "lived religion" can counter these often racist and colonial understandings. He defines this subject of study as including "the world of social agents/actors themselves as narrators and interpreters (and reinterpreters) of their own experiences and histories, recognizing that the stories we tell about others exist alongside the many and varied stories they tell about themselves."[18] Giving precedence to the perspectives of those living within religious communities, Orsi argues that it is these perspectives that should be just as informative to scholars as academic sources, if not more so. By the same token, understanding the more nuanced manifestations of oral tradition in the lives of religious communities requires close relationships and conversations with community members. Such interaction provides scholars with valuable insight into the way religious convictions affect all aspects of life including politics and medical care.[19]

In the Community

As expressed above, I will argue that conventional assumptions about "religion" and related concepts have given rise to many of the outcomes related to DAPL resistance. Furthermore, seeking to understand the ways that oral traditions remain authoritative in communities has required me to employ methods in my approach to this topic that continue to be underutilized in the field of religious studies. Although there have been scholars more comfortable engaging in ethnographic research in the last few decades, according to my

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[17] Robert A Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street : Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), xxxiv; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion : From Babylon to Jonestown*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Orsi, *History and Presence*, 32-37.

[18] *The Madonna of 115th Street : Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, xxxviii-xxxix.

[19] Ibid., xxi-xxii.

experience, it still remains to be the exception rather than the rule within the field. In contrast, my scholarly career and experience working in the American Indian community have highlighted the importance of including voices from community members in all aspects of my research.

I have focused on contemporary American Indian communities in both my undergraduate and graduate studies. In doing so I have become very familiar with the history of abuses carried out by medical and academic researchers in these communities.[20] Even more impactful than this understanding, are the experiences I have had while working with the American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance (AIHREA). Since the summer of 2014 I have worked at the Center for American Indian Community Health at the University of Kansas Medical Center, one of the founding members of AIRHEA. During this time, I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of American Indian communities including the four reservation communities in Kansas, the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, the urban community in the Kansas City-metro area, and the Haskell Indian Nations University community in Lawrence, Kansas. Due to this dubious legacy of research in many Native communities, it is imperative that any research conducted in American Indian communities be grounded in the voices and perspectives of community members themselves.

Experiences working on projects such as a national American Indian ethnic identity study that included interviewing nearly 650 Native people from across the United States fueled my interest in ethnographic methods. While much of the current project contends with the academic literature surrounding understandings of oral tradition and its relevance today, throughout this thesis I will foreground community voices wherever possible. In particular, as part of my work

[20] For a brief discussion on the history of this distrust and current efforts to mend this relationship, see C. M. Pacheco et al., "Moving Forward: Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust between American Indians and Researchers," *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 12 (2013): 2152-53.

with AIHREA I have had the opportunity to develop relationships with members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation through our work there every summer. Established in 1889 and located just south of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation stands to be directly affected by potential spills and complications related to DAPL.[21]

Relationships in this community have led to valuable contacts affording me the chance to learn from community members themselves how Lakota oral traditions remain significant today. As such, the cornerstone on which this project rests is a series of interviews conducted among members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation. These interviews will allow me to understand, at least to some degree, how the fight against DAPL is related to Lakota religious traditions and oral traditions. The interview portion of this thesis was submitted to the University of Kansas Institutional Review Board and approved on October 25, 2017. On March 7, 2018, Cheyenne River Sioux Nation Tribal Chairman Harold Frazier granted permission to conduct interviews in this community as a part of this project.

[21] "Cheyenne River Sioux History," Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, http://sioux.org/cheyenne-river-sioux-history.html.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Scholarly Assessments of Oral Traditions

Anthropologists at the turn of the twentieth century were highly skeptical of any claims made by communities relying upon oral traditions. Additionally, scholarship in this period concerned with oral traditions often focused on indigenous cultures around the globe. An all too common, yet misguided, opinion held by many anthropologists during this period was that these communities being studied had what could be considered an "expiration date." This attitude cultivated a sense among many academics that the cultural "data" held by these communities needed to be saved from being lost, or salvaged. It was these "salvage ethnographers" who not only encountered oral traditions, but in many cases, also documented and collected aspects of them.[22]

This sentiment is rooted in an even earlier period that gave rise to the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution. In an effort to bolster scientific inquiry in the nation's capital, the Smithsonian was established in 1846. Its earliest research was firmly entrenched in the "salvage ethnology" of the day.[23] In a meeting held that same year with *Haudenosaunee* (commonly referred to as the Iroquois) community members in Rochester, New York, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft provided a clear example of the popular attitudes of the day toward American Indian peoples. He explained that the success of European-Americans in what had become the United States was at the expense of Native people and this "obliged him to preserve the memory of the aborigine."[24] This malicious statement, disguised by good intentions, serves as a fitting prelude to what would become American anthropological study in American Indian communities in the

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[22] Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian : Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 22-23.
[23] Ibid., 23.
[24] Ibid., 20.

early twentieth century. Having foretold of a future where "America is the tomb of the Red Man," Schoolcraft quickly submitted a proposal to the newly founded Smithsonian planning the future of ethnological study in the United States that intended to found a "Museum of Mankind" for the preservation of material artifacts from American Indian tribes, among other things.[25]

Furthermore, it seems that at least some of these early Smithsonian Institution members were concerned about the extinction of American Indian peoples out of religious self-interest. One of the many research foci being explored by both American and British ethnologists was to understand the diversity of humankind through the Biblical creation narrative. They hoped to achieve evidence of the truth of this narrative by means of tracing human groups back to one single genesis, that of the Biblical Adam and Eve. One famous example that was hotly debated during this period was the Bering Strait theory as an explanation for the origins of American Indians. Christian assumptions about the creation of humankind run throughout Alexander von Humboldt's explanation for this theory.[26] This goal "lay at the religious core of American anthropology into the twentieth century" and for American anthropologists, the "inevitable" disappearance of American Indian peoples made this task an immediate concern.[27]

This bleak outlook on the futures of American Indian communities was only compounded by the events of the latter years of the nineteenth century. The Wounded Knee Massacre serving as the symbolic end of the "Indian Wars" along with the unadulterated seizure of Native lands through the Dawes Act of 1887 only incited additional fervor among American anthropologists to collect the last available data from Native peoples. An early example of this perspective

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Michael Wadyko, "Alexander Von Humboldt and Nineteenth-Century Ideas on the Origin of American Indians" (Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2000), 23-24, 34. The Bering Strait theory continues to be debated among archaeologists despite many studies that have problematized this assessment. Additionally, many American Indian scholars have responded to this explanation for their existence. Vine Deloria, Jr. discusses this extensively in *Red Earth, White Lies* (1997).

[27] Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian : Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America*, 22-23.

comes from Robert Lowie, an American anthropologist whose work focused primarily on various American Indian communities including the *Sahnish* (Arikara) and the *Newe* (Shoshone).[28] In *Oral Tradition and History,* Lowie was highly critical of the work of R.B. Dixon and J. R. Swanton, who treated oral traditions as historically accurate when coupled with other corroborating evidence.[29] Completely ignoring the implications these narratives might have when viewed holistically, he remarked, "I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any circumstances whatsoever."[30] Central to this argument was his privileging of other forms of data such as linguistic, ethnographic and archaeological evidence. Utilizing this approach allowed scholars to conclude that information contained in oral traditions was largely superfluous when other forms of data were available.[31]

Not only did Lowie argue that oral traditions are inherently inaccurate, he asserted that any accuracies they may contain are also completely useless to scholars. For example, in describing winter counts of numerous Plains tribes, he argued that any historically accurate information by academic standards contained therein simply is uninteresting to scholars. He argued that such information is not history in the academic sense "any more than the fact…of my neighbor's cat having kittens is history."[32]

However, Lakota scholars did and do not find this information useless. The information within winter counts is one of the key pieces of evidence used by the producers of *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe* to support the argument that astronomy has

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[28] I have chosen to employ the names that these communities use for themselves recognizing the often complex decision-making process that members of these communities engage in when determining how to self-identify. Whenever possible, I will use traditional names for tribal nations, with the "common" name following in parentheses.
[29] John R. Swanton and Roland B. Dixon, "Primitive American History," *American Anthropologist* 16, no. 3 (1914); Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1965), 9.
[30] Robert H. Lowie, "Oral Tradition and History," *American Anthropologist* 17, no. 3 (1915): 598.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 599.

age-old importance to Lakota people.[33] Funded by a grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Craig Howe, director of the Center for American Indian Research and Natives Studies in Martin, SD created this film along with Lakota middle school students from the Rosebud Sioux Nation to help them learn about traditional Lakota star knowledge.

One of the clearest examples of the importance of historical information found in winter counts is called "The Year the Stars Fell."[34] In November of 1833, the Leonids meteor shower was spectacular, according to accounts from across the United States.[35] This meteor shower was recorded in all extant American Indian winter counts and subsequently was used as the measuring stick to determine the dates of other events in the winter counts.[36] This is just one example that scholars have utilized during the last 50 years to embolden their claims about the importance of astronomy to Lakota people.

While Lowie represents one of the most hardline positions regarding oral traditions in early twentieth-century anthropology his viewpoint is shared by many of his contemporaries. Alexander Goldenweisser (who studied the *Haudenosaunee*), Edward Sapir (who studied various American Indian communities), Melville Herskovits (who studied various African communities), and C.E. Fuller (who studied Southeast African communities) all suggested that oral traditions should be approached with caution. They agree that such traditions should only be taken seriously when their claims could be corroborated by other forms of evidence such as those

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[33] Sam Hurst, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe* (2014), DVD.
[34] There are several other notable examples of astronomical phenomena recorded in Lakota winter counts including sightings of comets and eclipses.
[35] Joe Rao, "The Leonids: King of the Meteor Showers," *Sky and telescope* 90, no. 5 (1995).
[36] The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History has an online exhibit featuring 10 Lakota winter counts side-by-side including the Battiste Good Winter Count which records the reception of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe by the Lakota. This exhibit can be accessed at http://wayback.archive-it.org/org-660/20170620024142/http://wintercounts.si.edu/

suggested by Lowie.[37] Furthermore, their breadth of research areas illustrates that this viewpoint was not limited to one ethnic group, or even to a particular culture area. Rather, it was applied broadly to any culture in which a written history did not exist. This was the normative scholarly perspective for much of the first half of the twentieth century.

It was not until scholars offered a useful methodology for understanding the potential historicity of oral traditions that these opinions began to shift. Historian and anthropologist Jan Vansina posed the following question: because oral traditions have narrative structures to facilitate transmission, should this mean they are deserving of the ridicule they receive? These features, he argued, led many scholars to believe that these traditions were lacking in truth, allowing for selective additions and subtractions by the keepers of these stories.[38] Vansina asserted that early studies of oral traditions were insufficient because researchers dealt with traditions outside of a context in which they were still being transmitted. For instance, he mentioned scholars who were concerned with the historical accuracy of Greco-Roman literature.[39]

For Vansina, it was no wonder that these scholars arrived at the conclusion that these sources could not be trusted without corroboration by outside sources. Instead, he contended that it is as important, if not more so, to understand the methods and purposes of transmission of these oral traditions as it is to understand the traditions themselves.[40] This "chain of transmission" can allow scholars to determine the historicity of a text by learning its character

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[37] AA Goldenweiser, "The Heuristic Value of Traditional Records," *American Anthropologist* 17, no. 4 (1915); Edward Sapir, "Time Perspective in Aboriginal American Culture," in *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Melville J. Herskovits, "Anthropology and Africa—a Wider Perspective," *Africa* 29, no. 3 (1959); C.E. Fuller, "Ethnohistory in the Study of Culture Change in Africa," in *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, ed. William Russell Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).
[38] Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, 3.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 3-4.

(poetic, narrative, etc.) and the methods by which it was passed down.[41] This methodology provided by Vansina has enabled scholars to understand the historicity of oral traditions in the anthropological and historical literature by providing a standardized methodology accommodating scholarly rigor.

Specifically, in terms of American Indian oral traditions, it was not until late in the twentieth-century that scholars began to respect the authority and importance of these traditions on their own terms. A prime example of this can be found in the volume *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature*.[42] Edited by Brian Swann, this collection brings together scholars from a variety of backgrounds including anthropology, literary studies, and linguistics. In this collection, the authors understand oral literature broadly to include "prayer, story, speech, or song" taking into account the complex importance of the spoken word for American Indian communities.[43] They not only recognize the authority that it commands, but the power that it has to create understandings of the world around those who are a part of the tradition.[44]

While Swann persistently uses the past tense when laying the groundwork for the importance of oral literatures and traditions, he raises an important point to be considered when working with American Indian oral traditions. It is predicated on the "definition" or understanding of the word "religion" in a Western sense. Much like religious studies scholars such as Robert Orsi and Tomoko Masuzawa, he states that scholars must "cleanse our own words

[41] Ibid., 21-23.
[42] Brian Swann, *Smoothing the Ground : Essays on Native American Oral Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
[43] Ibid., xi.
[44] Ibid., xi-xii.

and reorient our minds," with regard to the terminology informed by Western assumptions used to describe religious phenomena and determine what does or does not constitute religion.

However, in my opinion, Swann seems slightly too optimistic in terms of his analysis of interest in American Indian oral traditions. He argues that while certain assumptions and attitudes have certainly not disappeared, nevertheless Western cultural change has shifted, softening logocentric predilections. He even goes so far as to argue that "attitudes of cultural imperialism…have weakened," although this seems to run contrary to the controversy surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline's construction which will be discussed below.[45] With these slightly problematic perspectives in mind, Swann's *Smoothing the Ground* offers scholars with an impressive collection of analyses and translations of American Indian oral traditions that presents them as valid objects of study within the academy.

Another scholar whose work has tried to problematize these assumptions is Dell Hymes. A linguist, Hymes argues, in his work *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*, that these assumptions regarding oral traditions are intensified by a lack of disciplinary specificity required to understand oral traditions. In fact, no discipline can lay claim to the study of oral traditions whether it be linguistics, anthropology, folklore, or literary studies.[46] In his view, this hesitance to work with oral traditional materials has seen them fall by the wayside altogether in terms of scholarly engagement. Furthermore, Hymes stresses the importance of analyzing these texts in the original language whenever possible. In addition to understanding narrative structures, stressed by Vansina, he argues for a greater understanding of

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[45] Ibid., xiv.

[46] Dell H. Hymes, *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You" : Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 6-7.

the linguistic structure of cultural narratives so much so that he envisions a day when scholars will be unable to publish works without using the narratives in their indigenous language.[47]

Despite this appearance of changing opinions, the enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 has reignited this debate among archaeologists. Seeking to return the remains of their ancestors to American Indian communities along with objects of religious importance, this legislation directly affected archaeologists and archaeological collections at federally funded institutions by requiring them to assess and repatriate items in their collections.[48] Walter Echo-Hawk, one of the founders of the Native American Rights Fund, has argued that much of the pushback from archaeologists against NAGRPA and, by extension, the incorporation of oral traditions into their conclusions, comes from the difference in burden of proof between the academy and the United States legal system.

NAGPRA claims made by American Indian communities need only to establish a "cultural affiliation" to the objects or remains in question. A "cultural affiliation" as defined by NAGPRA "is a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group."[49] Furthermore, these claims need only to show a "preponderance of evidence" that includes "geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, folkloric, oral traditional, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion."[50] Echo-Hawk contended that archaeologists presuppose that NAGPRA is a vehicle for moderating archaeological debates and scientific fact rather than understanding that its purpose is to serve as

[47] Ibid. Also see *Now I Know Only So Far : Essays in Ethnopoetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).
[48] Sangita Chari and Jaime M. N. Lavallee, *Accomplishing Nagpra : Perspectives on the Intent, Impact, and Future of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013), 8.
[49] *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990*, 101-601.
[50] Ibid.

a way for American Indian peoples to have a voice in what happens to the remains of their ancestors.[51] By disregarding the concerns of Native people, these archaeologists hold the concerns of the academy and their discipline above those of American Indian peoples.

This interpretation is reflected by Peter Whiteley in *Archaeology and Oral Tradition: The Scientific Importance of Dialogue* (2002). Whiteley argued that not only do archaeologists privilege their concerns about scientific accuracy over ancestral concerns of American Indian peoples, but they hold the corpus of their disciplinary knowledge above that of keepers of oral traditions in terms of veracity. Viewing archaeological knowledge as objectively reliable and valid, archaeologists easily can deny authority to oral traditions because of their sometimes supernatural subject matter. If oral traditions are admitted into the conversation about archaeological "fact" then, in the eyes of many archaeologists, why even engage in archaeology? Put another way, if we already know about the origin of human communities through oral traditions, why do archaeologists need to dig anything up? In short, this privileging is a self-preservation tactic as well as a judgement regarding the validity of these traditions. It perpetuates the narrative that oral traditions are of little or no importance.[52]

Additionally, this privileging extends to all written records. Whiteley contended that while archaeologists argue that oral traditions can be interpretively problematic in their character, many sources frequently employed in archaeological and historical research are not any less so. Such sources include journals and official reports by exploratory and colonial authorities. Whiteley argued that even in the twenty-first century, many scholars are "willing to

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[51] Echo-Hawk, "Ancient History in the New World: Integrating Oral Traditions and the Archaeological Record in Deep Time," 269.

[52] Peter M. Whiteley, "Archaeology and Oral Tradition: The Scientific Importance of Dialogue. (Forum)," ibid.67, no. 3 (2002).

take literally Spanish exploratory or colonial records without problematizing their textuality."[53] This is not to say that there are not many examples of ethnographic accounts sourced from missionaries and early colonial authorities that contain accurate documentation of the lives and cultures of various American Indian peoples. Rather, the point is that inclusion of these sources as valid interpretations without addressing their potentially problematic character is poor scholarship. Although there is much to glean from these reports, giving these accounts principle authority does not allow the people to speak for themselves in instances where Native sources of knowledge, whether written or oral, are available.

It is of paramount importance for scholars to critique their sources carefully. When working with colonial and missionary accounts of indigenous peoples the inherent biases of those who provided the accounts can quickly become problematic. However, it is also important to note that some communities have benefitted from the knowledge contained in some of these accounts. For instance, the German-born Jesuit missionary Fr. Eugene Buechel spent fifty-two years in the Pine Ridge Indian community in southern South Dakota. During this time, he recorded Lakota cultural knowledge concerning a wide variety of subject matter including concepts of time, constellations and religious ceremonies.[54] Moreover, his published Lakota-English dictionary still is considered as one of the earliest comprehensive dictionaries in existence with over thirty thousand entries.[55]

What makes Buechel's work so impressive, in addition to the effort he exerted to record as much knowledge of traditional Lakota life as he could, is the fact that his collection of

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Raymond A Bucko, "Father Eugene Buechel's Collection of Lakota Materials," *Material Culture* 39, no. 2 (2007): 18-19.
[55] Eugene Buechel and Paul Manhart, *Lakota Dictionary : Lakota-English/English-Lakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

material objects along with his field notes never left Lakota communities. Unlike many of his contemporaries who were collecting artifacts for sale to museums around the world, his entire collection of 638 pieces is held at the Buechel Memorial Lakota Museum in St. Francis, SD.[56] These materials, particularly his field notes recording elements of Lakota astronomy and oral traditions held by living tribal members at the time, have served as the starting point for multiple scholars to begin to grapple with the Lakota astronomical system and understand its manifold connections to Lakota society.[57] In his own words, Buechel's undertaking was to "take what is good and noble in their way of life and preserve it, not destroy it," rather than to salvage Lakota culture at a time of tumultuous change.[58] This preservation of materials and lifeways has provided many Lakota community members and scholars opportunities to revitalize traditions. For example, both Craig Howe's and Ronald Goodman's works on Lakota astronomy drew from Buechel's research.[59]

In response to Whiteley's perspective and resulting conversations with American Indian communities with regard to NAGPRA claims, there are some archaeologists seeking to incorporate Native perspectives into their work. For example, archaeologist Chip Colwell-Chanthaphohn proposes a multivocal approach to contemporary archaeology when working with these communities. While he sometimes glorifies the work of archaeologists identifying cultural resources with "bulldozers roaring behind them," he does highlight examples of limited but incremental changes occurring in archaeological circles.[60]

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[56] Bucko, "Father Eugene Buechel's Collection of Lakota Materials," 18-19.
[57] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 54-55, 60; Hurst, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe*.
[58] Quoted in Bucko, "Father Eugene Buechel's Collection of Lakota Materials," 35.
[59] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*; Hurst, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe*.
[60] Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, "Reconciling American Archaeology & Native America," *Daedalus* 138, no. 2 (2009): 98.

The clearest example of this adjustment comes from his work among the Hopi and Zuni studying the meanings of ancestral sites located in the San Pedro Valley in southern Arizona. Part of this project involved visits to ancestral sites in the region with elders from both communities. From these community members, he learned the importance and utility of oral traditional understandings of these sites.[61] During these visits, elders provided a perspective all too often neglected in most archaeological literature. Elders provided important context to over a decade of archaeological research by calling upon oral traditional knowledge to assist archaeologists in understanding the importance and continued relevance of ancestral sites to Hopi and Zuni communities.[62]

One of the multilayered histories constructed through these consultations was a clearer picture of the greater Hopi cultural context of archaeological findings at these sites. While archaeologists may rely on scientific processes for explaining how certain sites or artifacts have survived to the present day, Hopi elders instructed Colwell-Chanthaphonh that there was much more to this preservation than soil deposition and erosion. They explained that, under the instruction of the spirit being *Màasaw*, during their migration to the Hopi mesas the Hopi clans were to "leave *kuktota*" or "footprints" representing an important covenant with this spirit.[63] Elders were thus understanding these sites not only in the context of the archaeological record, but rather in concert with their own traditional understandings of the primordial histories of the Hopi people. This collaboration, Colwell-Chanthaphonh argues, strengthens archaeological research through "improving our collective understanding of the past."[64] A small group of

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[61] Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson, "Memory Pieces and Footprints: Multivocality and the Meanings of Ancient Times and Ancestral Places among the Zuni and Hopi," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006): 150.
[62] Ibid., 159.
[63] Ibid., 154-56.
[64] Colwell-Chanthaphonh, "Reconciling American Archaeology & Native America," 101.

archaeologists, Colwell-Chanthaphonh included, are experimenting with similar research methodologies working with Native communities in other parts of the United States, including the northeast.[65] Despite these tenuous improvements in the relationship American Indian communities have with archaeologists, even Colwell-Chathaphonh contends "there is still much work to be done."[66]

"Land Writings"

Contemporary works of scholarship in history and anthropology incorporating oral traditions have tended to focus on unique sources such as place names and the way the traditional landscape is understood and explained. While this body of literature is certainly related to and informed by oral tradition, since I am not focusing on place naming per se, but rather sacred space and its relationship to Lakota spirituality, providing a full survey of American Indian place naming literature would be distracting. However, much of this literature, specifically those examples to follow, directly engage with American Indian oral traditions in relationship to place. Here I will focus on three important examples that I draw from in my work, Whiteley's discussion on the Hopi landscape and two Western Apache examples from Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places*. First, Whiteley, in the work I cited above, suggested that the landscape of the Hopi is just one additional source of traditional knowledge available to scholars. Serving as a "text," explanations of the Hopi landscape can provide a lens into the events that occurred at these locations. Much like Jan Vansina, Whiteley argues that the structure and content of any given oral narrative can provide hesitant scholars with tangible, easily verifiable sections. In the

[65] Jeffrey L. Hantman, "Indigenous Archaeologies: The Quiet Revolution Is Here.," *American Antiquity* 74, no. 1 (2009).
[66] Colwell-Chanthaphonh, "Reconciling American Archaeology & Native America," 102.

case of the Hopi, Whiteley explains that, in addition to supernatural forces and beings, Hopi narratives often include named leaders who are identified in the ethnohistorical literature.[67]

This approach resonates with Keith Basso's work among the Western Apache. In his book *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Basso described the function of place names on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona. Along with several Apache consultants, Basso assisted in the documentation of nearly 300 Apache place names within a 45 square-mile area around the community of Cibecue. In addition to documenting the names of these locations, he learned that it was not so much about the names of the places, but rather the events that occurred there.[68] Basso identified the action of "place-making" as "a universal tool of the historical imagination" to transform the present with meanings evoked from actions of the past.[69] The associated narratives are described using the present tense, making these histories appear as if they were taking place in the here and now. More importantly, Basso asserted that the content of these histories attached to place are essential to "the endless quest for survival, the crucial importance of community and kin, and the beneficial consequences…of adhering to moral norms."[70]

This importance becomes evident in one poignant example providing details about a place called *Cqq Bi Dalt'ohé,* "Shades of Shit." *Cqq Bi Dalt'ohé* recalls the story of a group of Apaches who, after a successful summer harvest of corn, refused to share their bounty with less fortunate peers. In retaliation, other groups of Apaches blocked them from leaving their camp to relieve themselves. Because of their actions, those who refused to share their harvest are forced to defecate within their own camp, filling their dwellings with excrement. This connection to

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[67] Whiteley, "Archaeology and Oral Tradition: The Scientific Importance of Dialogue. (Forum)," 411.
[68] Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places : Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 45.
[69] Ibid., 5.
[70] Ibid., 33.

place and oral tradition highlights Apache standards of social conduct. One of Basso's consultants remarked that while community members continue to avoid this place, because of the sobering history associated with it, it still served as morally instructive.[71]

An additional example, *Tłiish Bi Tú'é*, or Snakes' Water, relates the story of a presently inactive spring. The narrative that accompanies this place exhibits the practice of connecting the present time to the past through narrative structures. Basso's consultant described an Apache man coming to the spring, and seeing it guarded by snakes sunning themselves on the rocks around the water. He talked to them, convincing them to leave and then left an offering for "the ones who own it."[72] His description takes place totally in the present, as if he is narrating the event as it unfolds rather than recalling a place that served a significant purpose as a water source of the Apache.

The strategies used in these two examples highlight the continued importance of these places despite avoidance in the case of *Cqq Bi Dalt'ohé* and environmental changes in the case of *Tłiish Bi Tú'é*. This continued importance takes many forms however, like in the previous discussion on Hopi "footprints," these connections to place provide the Western Apache with a deeper understanding of themselves and how they fit into their environment. These types of explanation will be central in understanding the importance of Lakota sacred sites in the context of DAPL's construction in the following chapters.

It is well-known that, even in the earliest ethnographies of Native communities, the connection between American Indians and their environment has been of interest to scholars. Much of this discourse, Basso laments, assumes a materialist perspective concerned with understanding all American Indian interactions with their environment as motivated by their

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[71] Ibid., 23-27.
[72] Ibid., 15.

concerns for biological survival.[73] In doing so, scholars have ignored the symbolic relationships that American Indian communities, like many communities around the globe, developed that had nothing to do with survival. Rather, Native peoples have used "cultural instruments" to understand and give meaning to their environments such as the narratives associated with place names recorded by Basso.[74] These symbolic relationships that develop between Native people and places are enacted through religious, historical, and social inscription.[75] For instance, as I will discuss below, connections to place described by Tim Mentz, Sr. contain associations with the physical environment based on society affiliation. For instance, he explained that some of the sites identified by his team are indicative of vows made to protect "the wom[e]n and oral history [and] knowledge of the tipi thereby safeguarding the future of our generations to come."[76]

Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. explained this connection between American Indians and their environments as a distinct theological premise. He argued that the context, or site, of religious experience and revelation hold the highest importance for Native people, he argues. While there are sacred places in non-Native religions (Deloria uses the Holy Land as one example) the American Indian sense of place is not one that is connected to the historical events that occurred at a location, but rather the experiences had by individuals at these sites.[77] He explained that "it was not what people believed to be true that was important but what they experienced as true."[78] Additionally, these experiences are viewed as communal in nature,

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[73] Ibid., 66.For an example of this perspective, see AJ Fynn, *The American Indian as a Product of Environment, with Special Reference to the Pueblos* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1907).
[74] Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places : Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*, 66.
[75] Ibid., 66-67.
[76] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 12.
[77] Vine Deloria Jr., "Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom," in *The Sacred Land Reader: For Use with the Film in the Light of Reverence*, ed. Marjorie Biggs and Christopher McLeod (La Honda: Sacred Land Film Project, 2003), 18.
[78] *God Is Red* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973), 65-66.

providing for the wellbeing of the entire community rather than one individual.[79] We see this theme also echoed in Basso's and Whiteley's works. Rather than connecting with the specific time in which these places received their names, Apache and Hopi people are connected with the experiences and narratives associated with the sites. Understanding these connections made through oral traditional narratives will be essential for understanding the importance of Lakota sacred sites and Lakota resistance in the context of the No DAPL movement.

Scholarship on Lakota Spirituality

The literature available to scholars examining Lakota spirituality is rooted in the same era of scholarship that bore the perspectives on oral tradition to be examined in this thesis. Like many American Indian communities during this period, Lakota communities were inundated by a constant stream of trained anthropologists and amateur ethnographers. Materials from individuals such as James R. Walker and Father Eugene Buechel provide some of the earliest recordings of Lakota lifeways, apart from oral traditional forms of evidence.

James R. Walker published only one comprehensive work on Lakota culture during his eighteen years of work on the Pine Ridge Reservation as a physician. However, the materials collected during this time, and since edited and published by Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner in a series of three books, still serve as a useful introduction into Lakota traditions during the early years of the reservation era.[80] Arriving in 1896, Walker was part of an effort to bring medical care on the Pine Ridge Reservation up to speed with contemporary advances in medicine. Although he was primarily concerned with addressing rampant tuberculosis in the

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[79] "Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom," 17."

[80] J. R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.: Published in cooperation with the Colorado Historical Society, 1991), xiii-xiv; *Lakota Myth*, ed. Elaine Jahner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); *Lakota Society*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

community, he was also interested in understanding Lakota people from their perspective. To this end, he set out to understand Lakota spirituality in an effort to be a more effective physician in the community.[81]

It was during this time that Clark Wissler, working for the Museum of Natural History in New York, began correspondence with Walker. Wissler, along with several other contemporary anthropologists working in other Plains communities, was beginning to organize a large-scale comparative project surveying American Indian groups from this region.[82] Much of Walker's work available to scholars today was collected at the behest of Wissler, with whom he continued corresponding until a year before his death in 1926.[83] The information he collected was a result of close relationships with many important spiritual figures from the Pine Ridge Reservation. Additionally, he frequently attempted to verify this information by consulting with multiple community members, producing an indispensable collection of literature for use in understanding the effects of European American colonialism on American Indian spiritual traditions.[84]

However, his work is not without complications. Despite his lack of formal anthropological training, he certainly was influenced by the prevailing opinions of the day. First and foremost, he was not fluent in Lakota and therefore relied on interpreters for much of his work. In correspondence with Wissler he often described the difficulties of determining correct translations for prayers and songs that he was collecting. In one instance, he struggled to arrive at a correct translation of invocations in the *huŋkálowaŋpi* (the "making of relatives ceremony").[85] Furthermore, the information being collected was to pertain to the way things

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[81] *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 6-9.
[82] Ibid., 13-14.
[83] Ibid., 43.
[84] Ibid., 18.
[85] Ibid., 20.

were done prior to the reservation era and to present it as if it were coming from a traditional Lakota individual.

This lack of interest in the way these traditions were being practiced at the time legitimated the perspective that American Indian cultures would not continue into the twentieth century and must be recorded through the efforts of non-Native amateur and professional ethnographers.[86] The work and collections of Father Eugene Buechel discussed previously fall into this same salvage ethnographic genre, albeit useful to both scholars and Lakota community members.[87] But it is also important to note here that there were a few Native scholars like Ella C. Deloria who were working at this time as well.[88]

In the following decades, scholarship on Lakota spirituality was overshadowed by the massive popularity of John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*. Despite its massive popularity today thanks in part to an increased interest in American Indian religious life in the 1960s, it received mediocre limited attention in the decades immediately following its release in 1932.[89] The work of Neihardt, a poet laureate of Nebraska, to record and disseminate the life and cultural knowledge of Black Elk, an Oglala holy man remains at present one of the most debated works on Lakota spirituality.[90] From consideration of topics such as Black Elk's Catholic background to works such as Raymond DeMallie's *The Sixth Grandfather*, the issue of whether this work

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[86] Additional scholars working in Lakota communities included Frances Densmore and James Dorsey, whose collection of tellings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative will be discussed in the next chapter.
[87] Eugene Buechel, *Lakota Tales & Texts*, ed. Paul Manhart (Chamberlain, S.D.: Tipi Press, 1998).
[88] Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 43-44; Ella Cara Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, ed. Agnes Picotte and Paul N. Pavich (Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1979); *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).
[89] John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, ed. Philip Joseph Deloria and Raymond J. DeMallie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), xiii-xiv.
[90] Ibid., xxix-xxxv.

represents the story of a Lakota holy man or the editorial work of Neihardt is hotly debated among some scholars.[91]

However, the fact remains that this book shaped perceptions of more than a generation of spiritual seekers, while also influencing scholarly discourse surrounding the influence of Christianity on Lakota communities, as well as discussions of legitimacy in the reporting of American Indian religious knowledge.[92] Nevertheless, biographical works of the lives of Lakota individuals remain as one of the central genres in scholarship discussing Lakota spirituality. Other notable examples providing important, and perhaps less problematic, perspectives for scholars include Richard Erdoes' work with John (Fire) Lame Deer and Thomas E. Mails work with Frank Fools Crow.[93]

Beyond scholarship focused on specific individuals and their experiences, William K. Powers' *Oglala Religion* provides scholars with a concise and comprehensive understanding of the continuation of Lakota culture into the latter half of the twentieth century.[94] Powers argues that a more nuanced understanding of Lakota spirituality focuses not on acculturation, but on continuity and change. Rather than understanding Lakota culture as being subsumed by Euro-American culture, he explains Lakota culture by highlighting the ways in which it has continued, even in novel forms wholly different from those at the time of European contact. He states that, "it is here in the local communities that we find the persistence of Oglala society, not in the form at which it appeared at contact time, but in one which differentiates itself from Euro-American

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[91] *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).
[92] Damian Costello, "Black Elk : Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism," (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005).
[93] John Fire, ed. *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); Fools Crow, "Fools Crow," ed. Thomas E. Mails, et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
[94] Powers, *Oglala Religion*.

society on the basis of religious values."[95] This theoretical approach underlines his analysis of Lakota social organization, politics, and spirituality.

Beginning in the 1990s, works that focus on aspects of Lakota culture that had been largely ignored by scholars previously began to proliferate. This was especially the case in terms of scholarship pertaining to Lakota spirituality in recent years. One example of this trend is *Walking in the Sacred Manner*, in which Mark St. Pierre and Tilda Long Soldier explore the involvement of Lakota women in traditional spiritual practices and healing.[96] Yet another failure of early scholarship in these communities was the lack of focus upon women and women's roles in these communities. While this is probably partially due to the fact that many of the ethnographers, amateur or otherwise, recording this literature were male themselves and therefore had limited access to knowledge specifically held by women, it still deserves mention. St. Pierre and Long Soldier's work seeks to eliminate some of the confusion surrounding women's roles in Lakota spirituality specifically stressing the relative level of power many women had in spiritual matters unlike in many non-Native religious traditions.[97] Complimentary to this work, Thomas H. Lewis' *The Medicine Men* provides a detailed examination of the healing practices on men in Lakota communities.[98]

Like Long Soldier's work, the works of Lakota scholars themselves have provided a fresh perspective on Lakota life are the works of Lakota scholars themselves. Two notable examples include Vine Deloria, Jr.'s final work *The World We Used to Live In* and Albert White Hat Sr.'s

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Mark St. Pierre and Tilda Long Soldier, *Walking in the Sacred Manner : Healers, Dreamers, and Pipe Carriers--Medicine Women of the Plains Indians* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).
[97] Ibid., 7.
[98] Thomas H. Lewis, *The Medicine Men : Oglala Sioux Ceremony and Healing*, Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in cooperation with the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indiana University, 1990).

book *Life's Journey-Zuya*.[99] Although Deloria's work is not solely focused on Lakota medicine people, he relies heavily on Lakota examples to highlight the powers that the medicine men were reported to have around the times of first Euro-American contact and before. He sees this as one way to reinvigorate traditional practices in American Indian communities.[100] To much the same end, Albert White Hat uses *Zuya* as an extension of a course taught at Sinte Gleska University located on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. After teaching a course with the assistance of local medicine men he saw the potential for this information to be spread to a wider audience in the Lakota communities to explain the philosophy of Lakota teachings practices.[101]

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[99] Vine Deloria Jr., *The World We Used to Live In : Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men* (Golden: Fulcrum Pub., 2006); Albert White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, ed. John Cunningham (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2012).
[100] Deloria Jr., *The World We Used to Live In : Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*, xvii-xii.
[101] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, xvii-xix. Other works indicative of this trend include the Sam Hurst documentary and the Ronald Goodman book mentioned above. Although both of these were not produced by Native scholars per se, Lakota community members were heavily involved in the process. Other examples include essays published by Arthur Amiotte in D.M. Dooling and Paul Jordan-Smith's *I Become Part of It* (1989).

Chapter 3 Perpetual Authority: The White Buffalo Calf Woman in Lakota Oral Tradition

Walking into the Cheyenne-Eagle Butte High School gym in Eagle Butte, South Dakota one's attention is immediately drawn to the numerous banners displayed prominently commemorating successful athletic teams, the flag of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, and the school's fight song. Displays such as these are common in high school gyms across the United States. However, the untrained eye may fail to notice the importance of one of the most conspicuous displays of artwork in this gymnasium: four murals depicting the reception of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe by the Lakota people from *Ptesáŋwiŋ*, the White Buffalo Calf Woman. The narrative of the White Buffalo Calf Woman persists as a "sacred text" within Lakota culture after 500 years of colonization, assimilation and Christian missionary work in Lakota communities, despite existing in a culture that did not traditionally possess written language.

A few comments regarding the concept of "sacred text" are in order here. Use of the term is deliberate. Oral traditions as the Lakota White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative are regarded as authoritative by Lakota people and address many of the same subjects as their written kin, including origin accounts, behavioral prescriptions, and ritual formulae. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the study of sacred texts has largely ignored the narratives of oral cultures, or to put it another way, those that did not traditionally possess a written language. Thus, range of cultural information has been omitted from comparative consideration, including American Indian creation narratives and other sacred knowledge.

The emergence of the academic study of religions in a context heavily influenced by Protestant Christian assumptions has served to limit what many scholars of religion have

considered as scriptural or as sacred text.[102] Historically, the focus of scholars of religious scripture has tended to emphasize texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, while ignoring the widespread phenomenon of sacred texts in religious communities around the globe. This perspective deserves reconsideration in light of the continued relevance of oral traditions in many communities.[103] By disregarding orally transmitted sources, scholars of religion have dismissed the religious experiences of a vast swath of the global population. As Jordan Paper describes in his study of pipe use across Native North America, there is a tendency to assume that "writtenness" is synonymous with fixedness.[104]

However, a study of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative and its relationship to lived religious life among Lakota people today problematizes this paradigm. Despite the fact that certain scholars have largely debunked the writtenness/fixedness assumption, most related scholarship has continued to omit orally transmitted "texts."[105] Furthermore, I argue that this assumption has contributed to a widespread lack of interest in the study of American Indian oral traditions and literatures including how they can impact events in Native communities such as the destruction of Lakota sacred sites during the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.[106] The White Buffalo Calf Woman serves as one such example in which studying the emic perspective and its relationship to interpretation can broaden the scope of the study of sacred

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[102] Vincent L. Wimbush, ed. *Theorizing Scriptures : New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 3.
[103] Miriam Levering, "Introduction: Rethinking Scripture," in *Rethinking Scripture : Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering and Miriam L. Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 3-4.
[104] Jordan D. Paper, *Offering Smoke : The Sacred Pipe and the Native American Religion* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1988), 43.
[105] Paula Richman, "Questioning Multiplicity within the Ramayana Tradition," in *Questioning Ramayanas : A South Asian Tradition*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Molly Zahn, ""Editing" and the Composition of Scripture: The Significance of the Qumran Evidence," *Hebrew and Ancient Israel* 3, no. 3 (2014); "Rewritten Scripture," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[106] Hymes, *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You" : Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*.

texts. To understand the nature of these accounts and their relevance for believers of these unwritten traditions it is imperative that scholars engage with the emic perspective: that of followers of the tradition in question.

The White Buffalo Calf Woman Brings the Pipe

This story, and the White Buffalo Calf Pipe itself, have been described as the heart of Lakota spirituality.[107] Many formal Lakota ceremonies as well as personal spiritual practices revolve around praying with pipes, a tradition which began with the arrival of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe. Arvol Looking Horse, the nineteenth keeper of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe has explained that since its arrival, “it has been our religion.”[108] Because the narrative and other elements of Lakota spirituality are foundational elements of the resistance to DAPL, before discussing this specific narrative and its importance, it is essential to identify several key concepts central to the Lakota belief system.

To begin, whether it is stated explicitly or inferred, the philosophy of *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ* or “all my relations” runs through every aspect of Lakota belief.[109] This concept is embedded in the Lakota origin narrative explaining how all of creation came into being. In the beginning there was *Iŋyaŋ* (stone), and in total darkness, it began creating by bleeding itself. Out of its blood, *Iŋyaŋ* first created *Makȟá*, the earth, which it further divided into the land and *Mní,* the water. At the request of Makȟá, *Aŋpétuwi*, the sun was created by *Iŋyaŋ* to bring light and warmth to the earth. Then, to provide balance to the light and warmth of the sun, *Haŋwí*, the moon was created.

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[107] Paper, *Offering Smoke : The Sacred Pipe and the Native American Religion*, 31-21; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 88; Paul B. Steinmetz, *The Sacred Pipe : An Archetypal Theology*, 1st ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 104; Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 83, 148.
[108] Arvol Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," in *Sioux Indian Religion : Tradition and Innovation*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 69.
[109] See White Hat (2012, 16-17) for an explanation of this concept.

Next, *Iŋyaŋ* sought to provide the breath of life in the form of the wind, *Tȟaté*. Concerned that it was naked, *Makȟá*, suggested that something be created to provide it a covering. After reaching an agreement with the other *wakȟáŋ* beings (this concept will be explained below) to provide for these creations, *Iŋyaŋ* granted this request ushering into being all of the plants and other creatures on the earth. At this point, *Iŋyaŋ* was very weak because it had been almost bled dry. The last creation was that of humanity. Creating women, "to be like the earth, to give life and nourishment to all of her children" and men, "to be like the universe, to provide nourishment and protection," *Iŋyaŋ* was completely dry and crumbled into many pieces spread across the world.[110]

Even in this truncated version of the narrative, the concept of *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ* can be easily understood. While the main purpose of this narrative is to understand the way in which everything was created it also illustrates *how* all of creation is related. From the "first relations…the rocks," to the various animal nations, to humanity all things are related through the blood of *Iŋyaŋ*.[111] Furthermore, all of creation is believed to care for one another, just as *Makȟá* is to provide for all of the things on its surface. Lakota scholar and elder Albert White Hat, Sr. explains that all the beings on the earth are collectively known as the *Wamákȟaškaŋ Oyáte*. These are further divided into other *Oyátepi*, or Nations, such as the *Pte Oyáte* (Buffalo Nation) and the *Šúŋkawakȟáŋ Oyáte* (Horse Nation).[112]

Each of the beings whose existence is explained through this narrative are considered *wakȟáŋ*. This is another concept that permeates all of Lakota spiritual life, as well. While it is

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110 White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 29-30; Walker, *Lakota Myth*, 194-97, 206-45.
111 Interview with No DAPL run participant, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018; White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 33.
112 *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 32; Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.

often translated to mean "holy" in the Judeo-Christian sense of the word being closer in definition to "transcendent," its true meaning is slightly more nuanced. When described by Lakota individuals its meaning is much closer to that of "spiritual efficacy" or "spiritual power."[113] While wakȟáŋ beings in the Lakota universe are imbued with this power, important ceremonial objects and the ceremonies themselves are as well. White Hat describes the *wakȟáŋ* in these as establishing kin relationships, further undergirding the importance of *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ* as a Lakota philosophical concept.[114]

Moreover, the powers of the Lakota universe are not the only forces or beings understood to share this spiritual empowerment or *wakȟáŋ*. In fact, the collective nature of all things *wakȟáŋ* is understood by means of the concept *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka*. This concept has been greatly affected by misunderstandings of early ethnographers (often Catholic missionaries) who used this term as a gloss for the Christian God, greatly simplifying the true nature of *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka*.[115] As it is frequently the direction in which prayers are directed, *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* represents the collectivity of all things *wakȟáŋ* and is critically important to ceremonial practice.[116] Sometimes also referred to as *Tóbtob*, meaning four sets of four (sixteen), *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* is explained as having four aspects each made up of four *wakȟáŋ* beings or classes of

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[113] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 31, 84; Raymond J. DeMallie, "Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century," in *Sioux Indian Religion : Tradition and Innovation*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 28-30; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 45.
[114] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 84.
[115] Ibid., 175; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 45.
[116] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 175; Black Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, ed. Joseph Epes Brown and Vera Louise Drysdale (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 5-6; Paper, *Offering Smoke : The Sacred Pipe and the Native American Religion*, 45-46; Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 31-32, 35.

wakȟáŋ beings.[117] These aspects are made up of a variety of *wakȟáŋ* beings including *Iŋyaŋ* and *Makȟá* incorporating others such as *Wakíŋyaŋ*, or the thunder beings.[118]

Many Lakota narratives provide a bridge for understanding how *Iŋyaŋ*'s creation connects to more recent oral traditions, however a brief consideration of the emergence narrative offers a basic introduction to the establishment of the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* and the Lakota's relationship with the American bison. After the creation, the Lakota people were living underneath the earth. The trickster, *Iktómi* grew bored with his pranks on the animals and other wakȟáŋ beings. With the help of other *wakȟáŋ* beings, *Iktómi* tricked a group of Lakota onto the surface of the earth. However, they were not prepared for the seasonal hardships related to living on the northern plains. As a result, they were turned into the bison and given the ability to speak directly to the spirits. At this time, the earth was ready for the Lakota people and the remaining seven individuals were led onto the surface of the earth and instructed to follow the bison in order to prosper. This place of emergence, known by the National Parks Service as Wind Cave, is called *Wašúŋ Niyá*.[119]

In bringing the Pipe to the Lakota people, the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought a new and integral method of communication with *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka.* In the following section of this chapter, I will offer a brief description of the story and highlight some of the major differences between "tellings" in the following section. Using this term is a conscious decision. Much like Ramanujan in his study of the multiplicity in the *Ramayana* tradition in South Asia, the use of

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[117] *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 127-28.
[118] Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 54, 170-71.
[119] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 35-36; Royal B. Hassrick, *The Sioux; Life and Customs of a Warrior Society*, 1st ed., The Civilization of the American Indian Series, (Norman,: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 211-13; Matson, *Crazy Horse : The Lakota Warrior's Life & Legacy*, 11-12. The South Dakota State Historical Society has also published a children's story based on this narrative in Donald F. Montileaux and South Dakota State Historical Society., *Tatanka and the Lakota People : A Creation Story*, 1 vols. (Pierre, S.D.: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2006).

tellings, instead of *versions*, avoids the assumption that these accounts all stem from one original, thus undermining the authority of each individual text by saying they derived from one urtext.[120] This is an important distinction to make in this case, as most tellings that exist in the literature are strikingly similar. While tellings differ, the basic message of the story remains the same.

At some time in the distant past, after the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ*, or the Seven Council Fires, had met for their annual gathering, the bands went their separate ways.[121] The *Itazipco*, one of the *Thítȟuŋwaŋ* bands, had traveled far looking for buffalo and other game but were unsuccessful. As a result, the council determined that a scouting party would be sent out and selected two young men for the task. After days of scouting the two men had found nothing. While planning their next move, they saw something approaching in the distance. As it got closer, they saw that it was a beautiful woman. One of the men lusted after her and approached her with bad intentions. The other cautioned him since he believed that she was *wakȟáŋ*. The lustful scout did not heed his companion's warning and approached anyway. As he advanced toward her he was engulfed in a large cloud of smoke. When the cloud dissipated, all that remained were his bones. The woman told the other hunter, now frightened, that he should return to his camp and tell his people to prepare a large lodge for her as she would be bringing something of great importance to his people.

The scout returned to camp and informed the elders what had transpired. The people followed the woman's directions and awaited her arrival with great anticipation and excitement.

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[120] AK Ramanujan, "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation," in *Many RāMāYaṇAs : The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 24.

[121] *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* refers to the traditional nomenclature referring to the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota speaking peoples collectively. For more explanation on the use of this terminology, see Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 11-14.

The next morning, the woman arrived at daybreak and came into the camp. She brought with her a bundle wrapped in buffalo calf skin. When she arrived at the lodge they had constructed she laid down the bundle, unwrapping it to reveal a pipe. She then instructed the people how to use the pipe and informed them that if they lived according to her instructions they would be prosperous and happy for all of their days. She also explained that this Pipe, and the seven ceremonies she taught them associated with it, would allow them to communicate with *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka*.[122] The smoke would carry their prayers and she would petition *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* on their behalf.

After instructing them in the ways of the Pipe and the seven sacred ceremonies, she left the camp.[123] When leaving the camp, she transformed into four different colored buffalo calves. The first was red, then black, then yellow and finally, white. Thus, she became known as the White Buffalo Calf Woman.[124]

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[122] When referring to the pipe brought by the White Buffalo Calf Woman throughout the text, I will use the capitalization as seen here.

[123] These seven ceremonies include *Inípi* (purification, or sweat, lodge), *Haŋbléčhyapi* (crying for vision), *Wiwáŋyaŋg Wačhípi* (Sun Dance), *Huŋkálowaŋpi* (making of relatives), *Išnáthi Awhíčhalowaŋpi* (female puberty ceremony), *Tȟápa Waŋkáyeyapi* (throwing of the ball), and *Wanáǧi Yuhápi* (soul keeping). For more on each of these ceremonies, see Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 86-103; Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*; White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 74-94, 111-29.

[124] Tellings consulted for this summary include Garnett Black Bear, "Voices: White Buffalo Calf Woman Legend Needs to Be Clarified," *Indian Country Today Media Network* 1996, 1-2; L. Davis, "The Socio-Cultural Changes in the Cheyenne River Sioux Indians as a Result of Contact with White Civilization" (Thesis, University of Southern California, 1944), 122-29; Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin 61 (Washington, DC: Smithosian Institution, 1916), 63-66; Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 3-9; Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends*, ed. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 47-52; Fire, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 251-55; Robert Kelly, "The Story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezNKgRbnVPY; KnewWays, "Chief Arvol Looking Horse Speaks of White Buffalo Prophecy," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHqVdZmpRgI; JL Smith, *A Short History of the Sacred Calf Pipe of the Teton Dakota* (Kendall Park: Lakota Books, 1994), 1-4; Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 109-12, 48-50; Richard R Loder and Ella C Deloria, "The Sacred Calf Pipe," 5-6; George A. Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," *The Journal of American Folklore* 19, no. 75 (1906): 326-29; JL Smith, "The Sacred Calf Pipe Bundle: It's Effect on the Present Teton Dakota," *Plains Anthropologist* 15, no. 48 (1970): 87-88; Matson, *Crazy Horse : The Lakota Warrior's Life & Legacy*, 13-14; St. Pierre and Long Soldier, *Walking in the Sacred Manner : Healers, Dreamers, and Pipe Carriers--Medicine Women of the Plains Indians*, 39-41; Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," 67-69; Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 1-3, 291-96; Buechel, *Lakota Tales & Texts*, 408-13; *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, 283-85.

Many tellings of this story exist in the literature, and countless others are extant in the oral tradition carried forward by Lakota people. Scholars began recording stories like this in the early 20th century. As discussed previously, anthropologists and folklorists flocked to American Indian communities after the end of the Indian Wars to collect what knowledge could be attained before the perceived extermination of Native North Americans took place at the hands of the United States government.

The earliest known account is the Battiste Good Winter Count recorded in 1880. This winter count, and the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative associated with it, were collected by U.S. Army surgeon William H. Corbusier, while he was stationed at Camp Sheridan in Nebraska.[125] With the help of interpreter, Reverend William J. Cleveland, Corbusier recorded the stories behind all the pictographs on this winter count. One of the earliest pictographs depicts the arrival of the Pipe to Lakota people. Despite the frequent references to "Heaven," likely insertions or mistranslations by Cleveland, this telling contains many of the standard elements, however it also explains the arrival of corn, as well as the Pipe. When the White Buffalo Calf Woman, "The-Woman-From-Heaven" in this telling, arrives she also gives corn to the two scouts which she explains will help to sustain the Lakota people along with prayer through the Pipe.[126]

Apart from this traditionally recorded account, the Percy Phillips telling collected by anthropologist George Dorsey represents the oldest account of the White Buffalo Calf Woman story available to scholars.[127] Although Dorsey is not often recognized in discussions of early American anthropologists, beginning in 1897, his twenty-year study of American Indian peoples

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[125] Garrick Mallery, *Picture-Writing of the American Indians*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 287.
[126] Ibid., 290-91.
[127] Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," 326.

on the Great Plains represents the first of its nature.[128] During this time, he had the opportunity to work on what would become the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation and record a telling of the arrival of the Pipe from Percy Phillips, a member of this community. There are a few distinguishing aspects of this telling. The first relates to the setting, in that it places the tale in a time "when the Indians were all living together in the east near a great lake."[129] It could be assumed that this is referring to a time when the Lakota people could have been living in the Great Lakes region as has been posited by some scholars, but this is unclear and only relevant in attempting to place an approximate date on the arrival of the Pipe.[130]

Furthermore, this telling highlights another characteristic of the story that has become important in contemporary Lakota communities. The telling details, specifically, the intentions of the lustful scout, including dialogue between himself and the other scout and himself and the White Buffalo Calf Woman. It describes how he throws her on the ground, as if to rape her, before all but his skeleton is consumed by a mist.[131] The somewhat graphic nature of the description in this telling hints at the ways that this narrative has been and continues to be understood in Lakota communities as a message of empowerment for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in Lakota communities. The clearest example of this connection is the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society operating in the Rosebud Sioux Nation. Established in 1977, this organization specializes in providing education and support for those affected by intimate partner

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[128] Raymond J DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, "George A. Dorsey and the Development of Plains Indian Anthropology," in *Anthropology, History, and American Indians: Essays in Honor of William Curtis Sturtevant*, ed. William L. Merrill and Ives Goddard (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 59.
[129] Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," 326.
[130] North Dakota Studies Program, "Lakota Migration," State Historical Society of North Dakota, https://www.ndstudies.gov/content/lakota-migration.
[131] Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," 327.

violence, sexual assault, and stalking "guided by the teachings of *Ptesáŋwiŋ* [White Buffalo Calf Woman] to restore the spirit of every individual who seeks our help in their time of need."[132]

In addition to these unique differences, Percy's telling includes extensive detail explaining the events that followed the departure of the White Buffalo Calf Woman. He briefly describes the decision-making process surrounding the selection of the Pipe Keeper as well as how, per the White Buffalo Calf Woman's directions, some of the Pipe's accoutrements such as an ear and scalp came to be associated with the Pipe. He also explains how the Pipe Keeper at the time of the telling's recording was thought to be the last Pipe Keeper ever, although he neglects to give much in the way of justification for this claim.[133]

As noted in the previous chapter, James R. Walker conducted fieldwork and wrote his findings around the same time as Dorsey. Walker collected two tellings of the narrative from Thomas Tyon in 1911 and Finger in 1914. First and foremost, in both of these tellings the White Buffalo Calf Woman is naked, at least for part of the story. In the Tyon telling, she is described as being naked when she arrives in the camp to bring the Pipe and to instruct the Lakota people in the ceremonies she is credited with bringing. [134] In the Finger telling, when the scouts find her on the prairie, she is only covered by her long hair. However, once she arrives in the camp, she is described as being adorned in "the softest deer skin which was ornamented with fringes and colors more beautiful than any woman of the Lakota had ever worked.[135]

In both of these tellings, the narrators also explain the specific actions of the White Buffalo Calf Woman during her stay in the camp, in addition to departing from typical

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[132] "White Buffalo Calf Woman Society: A Safe Haven for Community Families," http://www.wbcws.org/home.html; Frank Dillon, "Domestic Violence: White Buffalo Calf Women's Society Filling the Need on Rosebud," *Indian Country Today Media Network* 1985.
[133] Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," 328.
[134] Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 149.
[135] Ibid., 109, 11.

descriptions of her exit from the camp. Finger explains how she remained in camp for many days visiting with families in each tipi before her departure. When she was ready to leave the camp, she calls for the construction of a large fire and a gathering around it. After the fire had been burning for some time, she asked the spiritual leaders in the camp to light some sweet grass.[136] She then entered the resulting cloud of smoke and disappeared. This was indicative to those present that the White Buffalo Calf Woman was in fact *Wohpe* one of the many aspects of *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka*.[137] In the Tyon telling, she also instructed the people in the *Išnáthi Awhíčhalowaŋpi* (female puberty ceremony) and the *Huŋkálowaŋpi* (making of relatives).[138] However, Tyon did not offer any detail about the departure of the White Buffalo Calf Woman from the camp.

Yet another telling of the narrative from the early reservation years, was a highly detailed account collected by Frances Densmore during the time of her extensive study of Lakota music on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation between 1911 and 1914.[139] Told by Lone Man and translated by Robert P. High Eagle, this telling provides readers with a wealth of information regarding the specific instructions given by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, as well as preserving dialogue between the White Buffalo Calf Woman and the Lakota people in the narrative.[140] Some of the dialogue includes detailed instructions given by the White Buffalo Calf Woman to the scouts regarding the specific preparations to be made in camp for the arrival of the Pipe.

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[136] For a brief discussion of Lakota spiritual and medicinal plant use, see George Robert Morgan and Ronald R. Weedon, "Oglala Sioux Use of Medicinal Herbs," *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1990).
[137] Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 111.
[138] Ibid., 149.
[139] Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music*.
[140] Ibid., 63.

For example, she explained that a specific altar must be constructed with a rack for the Pipe and a buffalo skull as well as provisions made for the place of honor in the tipi.[141] After her arrival, she further delineated particular expectations for Lakota people. First and foremost, she stressed the importance of kin relationships between members of the community as well as the *wakȟáŋ* beings. As a reward for their respect for these relationships, she brought the Pipe to both provide a mechanism for peace and healing.[142]

Next, she focused on the responsibilities of women, children, and men, respectively, in relationship to the Pipe. For women, she stressed the role of caregivers for Lakota families, while children were encouraged to listen to their parents and live pure lives. Lastly, men were encouraged to act rightly toward women and children as well as to pray with the Pipe daily.[143] In addition to providing this detailed telling of the narrative, Densmore also provided a White Buffalo Calf Woman song that is sung during the *Wanáǧi Yuhápi* (soul keeping) "when the man who is keeping the spirit of his child can afford to have a white buffalo robe used in the ceremony."[144]

In the ensuing decades, while attempting to understand the effects of European-American contact upon members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, Lawrence J. Davis spoke with the keeper of the Pipe in 1941, Ernest Two Runs. Davis compared this telling to Lone Man's (translated by High Eagle and collected by Densmore), noting its similarities though Lone Man provided additional details about the White Buffalo Calf Woman prayer ceremony.[145] However, despite these inclusions, Davis misunderstood the role of the White Buffalo Calf Woman as the

[141] Ibid., 64.
[142] Ibid., 65.
[143] Ibid., 65-66.
[144] Ibid., 67-68.
[145] Davis, "The Socio-Cultural Changes in the Cheyenne River Sioux Indians as a Result of Contact with White Civilization," 125-27.

bringer of the Pipe and conflated this with the Judeo-Christian concept of a "messiah," supposing that "some early contact with Christian whites influenced [Lakotas] in adopting this important concept into their religious beliefs."[146] He went on to explain his lack of confidence in the continuation of Lakota religious practice surrounding the Pipe after Ernest Two Runs' death because of his perception that Ehli Two Runs' "knowledge of the legend [was] so inaccurate that he could not repeat it to [Davis]."[147] While this may have been the case, it also seems possible that Davis' misunderstandings and arrogance may have surfaced during his field research, tarnishing his reputation with community members.

Shortly after Densmore had completed her ethnomusicology survey of the Lakota in 1914, Father Eugene Buechel collected a telling of the narrative from Iron Shield, an individual from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. What is unique about this telling is not so much the telling itself, although there are a few details I will discuss shortly, rather the fact that Buechel preserved the telling not only in translation. Buechel was a skilled linguist and so the original Lakota versions of the narratives he collected have been preserved. Thus, the English translation of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative is published side-by-side with its Lakota counterpart, preserving an early translation of the story in its original language.[148] However, there are two notable omissions of detail in this telling that are often found in others. Iron Shield does explain the impure thoughts had by one of the scouts who initially sees the White Buffalo Calf Woman, but he does not act upon these impulses and thus is not destroyed by her.[149] Also, it does not

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[146] Ibid., 129.
[147] Ibid., 132.
[148] Buechel, *Lakota Tales & Texts*, 408-10.
[149] Ibid., 411-12.

contain any mention of instruction in ceremony or her transformation into a buffalo calf upon her parting.[150]

After Buechel, there is limited evidence of the story in scholarship relating to Lakota culture until 1932 when, with all likelihood, the most widely read version of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative was published in *Black Elk Speaks*. Serving as the definitive text on Lakota spirituality for a generation of both non-Native and Native readers, *Black Elk Speaks* chronicled the life and visionary experience of Lakota holy man Nicholas Black Elk through the editorial lens of poet John G. Neihardt.[151] While the book is most widely recognized for its focus on his visionary experience, it also provides readers with some wider context to Lakota spirituality through the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative.[152]

The most notable aspect of Black Elk's telling in *Black Elk Speaks* is the description of the White Buffalo Calf Woman singing as she comes into the camp. He explains that as she entered the tipi she said:

> With visible breath I am walking.
> A voice I am sending as I walk.
> In a sacred manner I am walking.
> With visible tracks I am walking.
> In a sacred manner I am walking.[153]

The significance of this song is unclear, as Black Elk nor Neihardt provide any explanation. However, as with much of *Black Elk Speaks*, this narrative in particular has received special attention for Neihardt's selective editing which omitted some detail from the story overall in several of its printings. An example of this editorial liberty and somewhat related to this song is

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[150] Ibid., 413.
[151] Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, xiii-xiv; *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, 57-58.
[152] For Black Elk's vision and discussion thereof see, *Black Elk Speaks*, 13-29; *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, 93-99, 111-42.
[153] *Black Elk Speaks*, 3, 294, 95; *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, 284.

that in the original handwritten draft Black Elk explained immediately after providing her song that "as she sang there came from her mouth a white cloud that was sweet to smell."[154]

Black Elk provided one final telling of this narrative prior to his death to Joseph Epes Brown in 1947, three years before Black Elk's death.[155] In this telling, Black Elk did not include the song he provided to Neihardt. Rather, he went into much more detail describing the dialogue in the narrative as was the case with certain earlier tellings. For instance, he offers a deeper explanation of the Pipe itself including the appearance and relevant associations of the Pipe with other *wakȟáŋ* beings.[156]

In 1964, J. L. Smith completed a brief survey of pipe use among the Lakota, with special attention being paid to the White Buffalo Calf Pipe. It is unclear from whom the telling he relates in *The Sacred Calf Pipe Bundle: Its Effects on the Present Teton Dakota* is sourced, though it bears the most resemblance to Black Elk's tellings. In this telling Smith provided even more specificity in explaining what group within the *Itazipco* were given the Pipe, describing them as the "Red Water band of the [*Itazipco*]."[157] However, the most interesting similarity to Black Elk's telling is the White Buffalo Calf Woman's song as she approaches the camp. It bears some resemblance to the song Black Elk describes, but with some variation. Smith related the lyrics of the song as follows:

With visible breath I am walking/
This nation I walk toward and my voice is heard/
I am walking/
With visible breath I am walking/
This sacred relic I am walking.[158]

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[154] *Black Elk Speaks*, 295.
[155] Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, xiii-xiv.
[156] Ibid., 6-7.
[157] Smith, "The Sacred Calf Pipe Bundle: It's Effect on the Present Teton Dakota," 87.
[158] Ibid., 88.

Again, no explanation of the meaning behind this verse is given.

Smith also mentions Davis' lack of confidence in Ehli Bad Warrior as the Pipe Keeper. However, he explains that at his death it was passed on to his daughter Lucy Looking Horse and then, at her death to the current keeper, her grandson Arvol Looking Horse.[159] He describes him as "a not-so-knowledgeable fifteen year old boy" however he believes there is "a good possibility that a reawakening of the Sioux today, toward the old symbolism and belief in the Pipe and pride in themselves as Indians, is coming."[160] This statement symbolized a turn in scholarly perspectives toward the Pipe.

Possibly influenced by the popularity of *Black Elk Speaks*, a greater interest in American Indian spiritual traditions, and the Red Power movement, the 1970s saw an increase in popular literature relating to Native peoples. Among these publications were several works by Richard Erdoes. During his work among several different American Indian cultures, Erdoes had the opportunity to work with John (Fire) Lame Deer. A citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Nation, Lame Deer was a Lakota holy man who shared his life stories and spiritual experiences with Erdoes and provided two tellings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative.

The first of these was collected in 1967 and published in *American Indian Myths and Legends*. This telling of the narrative is closest in content to Black Elk's; however, it also included the White Buffalo Calf Woman's explanation of the roles for Lakota women and children as in Lone Man's telling collected by Densmore. Additionally, Lame Deer described gifts brought for the women that included several traditional foods including corn, *wasná*, and wild turnips.[161]

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[159] Ibid., 90.
[160] Ibid., 90-91.
[161] Erdoes and Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends*, 50.

The other telling collected by Erdoes is largely similar, with the only notable difference being the White Buffalo Calf Woman's description of the pipestone that the Pipe's bowl is made out of. Here Lame Deer presents an interpretation that takes on a slightly different flavor. Instead of focusing on the greater cosmic implications for the teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman, he describes the ways that this story is symbolized in other ritual activities carried out by the Lakota. In this telling of the story, special attention is paid to the stone that the pipe bowl is made of.

Pipestone, or catlinite, named after the European American artist George Catlin, is only found in Pipestone, Minnesota at what is now the Pipestone National Monument.[162] In another Lakota oral tradition, it is said that many years before the Pipe was brought to the Lakota a great flood nearly annihilated all Indian people. The blood from the Native people that did not survive the flood was formed into pipestone.[163] Lame Deer explains that this was how the White Buffalo Calf Woman described pipestone, thus accounting for the importance of the philosophy *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ* in important Lakota ceremonies.[164]

Again, in 1971, a telling was collected that refers to the singing of the White Buffalo Calf Woman that was documented in *Black Elk Speak*, however it bears a stronger resemblance to the telling recorded by Smith. During his work in Lakota communities, Mark St. Pierre described an instance when he was brought out to Green Grass, South Dakota and was told the White Buffalo Calf narrative by Manuel Red Bear. In this telling, all of the key elements of the story are present including the attempted rape by and subsequent killing of the lustful scout as well as the

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[162] National Parks Service, "Pipestone National Monument Minnesota," US Department of the Interior, https://www.nps.gov/pipe/index.htm.
[163] Fire, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 258-59.
[164] Ibid., 253; Steinmetz, *The Sacred Pipe : An Archetypal Theology*, 115.

White Buffalo Calf Woman's instruction pertaining to important Lakota ceremonies. However, her singing as she approached was described as follows:

> With a visible breath I am walking;
> I am walking toward a buffalo nation,
> And my voice is loud.
> With a visible breath I am walking;
> I am walking toward this sacred object.[165]

While the author still provides scant explanation for this song, here the meaning becomes slightly clearer. Immediately before the song, as in several tellings, the White Buffalo Calf Woman is described as appearing to be floating on a cloud as she came into the camp. This is likely what the lines "with visible breath I am walking" that are present in all descriptions of this story could be referring to.[166] Red Bear also explains how the White Buffalo Calf Woman is *Wohpe*, as was the case in tellings collected by Walker at the turn of the century discussed above.[167]

The 1980s and 1990s saw a resurgence of conversation about the White Buffalo Calf Woman story because of the birth of numerous white buffalo calves all over the United States.[168] It was at this time that the Pipe Keeper himself engaged in the telling of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative to a wider audience. In Raymond J. DeMallie's edited volume *Sioux Indian Religion*, Arvol Looking Horse provides the first telling of the story by a Pipe Keeper since Davis' study in the early 1940s. Looking Horse's telling is relatively short, although he provided an interesting connection between the Pipe and other important spiritual objects for other Native communities. He describes how, before the Pipe was brought to the Lakota:

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[165] St. Pierre and Long Soldier, *Walking in the Sacred Manner : Healers, Dreamers, and Pipe Carriers--Medicine Women of the Plains Indians*, 40.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., 39.
[168] Jodi Rave, "White Buffalo Calves Still Potent Symbols for Native Americans," *The Journal Times* 1998.

> a man was out scouting and came upon what we now call Devil's Tower, in Wyoming. This is a sacred place, a sacred hill. There used to be a hole through it, straight across from the east to the west. It looked like a big tipi, open both on the east and the west. The man entered, and on the north side of the tipi he saw the Sacred Pipe, and on the south side he saw a sacred bow and arrows. He was going to pick up the Pope, but instead chose the bow and arrows and walked out the west side of the tipi. Since then the Cheyennes have had the Sacred Arrows.[169]

This represents the first time that a telling of this narrative has given any indication to the origin of the Pipe before the White Buffalo Calf Woman arrives. He also explains that the location where the Pipe was brought to the Lakota people is on the Cheyenne River Reservation, near the community Iron Lightning.[170]

In 2010, Arvol Looking Horse was interviewed and provided a telling of the story that is the closest in terms of mode of transmission to the way the narrative is told traditionally. As part of this story, he highlighted the prophecy given by the White Buffalo Calf Woman along with the Pipe. He explains that the appearance of white animals, not just buffalo, should be viewed as a blessing, but also heeded as a warning. The arrival of these animals is a sign of great changes to come and he states that we are in a period of great change, specifically in relationship to the climate. This bears direct relevance to the resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline as many community members and water protectors I interviewed explained that part of the initiative for their involvement included concerns over climate change.[171] Looking Horse also mentioned that the White Buffalo Calf Woman sang as she arrived in camp but did not give any details related to the song itself.[172]

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[169] Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," 67-68.
[170] Ibid., 68.
[171] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader; Interview with brother of camp cook, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018; Interview with Lakota two spirit water protector, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.
[172] KnewWays, "Chief Arvol Looking Horse Speaks of White Buffalo Prophecy".

Also responding to the resurgence of white buffalo calf births, Garnett Black Bear wrote in a 1996 editorial for *Indian Country Today Media Network* that the story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman needs to be revisited and lived in the everyday lives of Lakota people. One unique aspect in his telling is that he described how the White Buffalo Calf Woman adjudicated specific lifeways that Lakota people were to follow in order to be prosperous. She then went on to say that the future will be difficult for Lakota people, but if they live in the way she has instructed, they will "see the Kingdom of Heaven."[173] While there is some obvious Christian influence in this telling, it is interesting that Black Bear then used this narrative to explain some of the contemporary issues in Lakota communities including drug and alcohol abuse. Furthermore, he argued that if Lakota people were to live in the correct way, many of these problems could be eradicated.[174] This sentiment, albeit without the Christian influence, was also reflected by one water protector who described how living in the DAPL resistance camps and participating in the prayers that frequently took place there provided this individual with direction and focused attention away from their personal problems.[175]

In 2007, American Indian Movement member Bill Means related his telling of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative. While his telling is likely the shortest of all discussed here, he did contribute an interesting piece of the story in providing an explanation for where the Pipe might have been brought to the Lakota people and at what time in history. He explains, in disagreement with Looking Horse, that the Pipe was brought to the Lakota people during a migration eastward just as they crossed the Missouri River. Moreover, he explains that

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[173] Black Bear, "Voices: White Buffalo Calf Woman Legend Needs to Be Clarified."
[174] Ibid.
[175] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.

according to traditional historians and individuals who testified during the Wounded Knee trials, that the Pipe was brought to the Lakota people around 10-12 B.C.[176]

As with the last several tellings, the telling by Albert White Hat, Sr. is not mediated by any non-Native scholars. In his last book before his death in 2013, White Hat, a former Lakota language and culture professor at Sinte Gleska University in Mission, South Dakota, gave an introduction to Lakota spiritual life and cultivating "a better understanding of Lakota philosophy and [Lakota] rituals and traditions."[177] He began his discussion of the Pipe by summarizing and problematizing Black Elk's telling, saying that he "felt it gave an image of rolling out the red carpet to receive someone very holy…that story sounds like a description of the Blessed Virgin Mary or some Christ-like figure coming down to earth."[178]

Then he offered two narratives about the arrival of the Pipe. The first he explained was from someone within the lineage of Pipe Keepers but did not specify who it was only that they passed on in 1998. That being said, this telling is most closely related to Arvol Looking Horse's telling in *Sioux Indian Religion*, as it specifically included the source of the Pipe being Devil's Tower. He also explained that he believes this telling of the story to be older than Black Elk's.[179]

Additionally, he explained that his brother learned a story from their grandparents that gave an alternate origin for the Pipe. A long time ago, he explained, the Cree attacked a Lakota camp and only one woman was left alive. When she awoke after the attack she could hear a baby crying. All she could find was a buffalo calf running around the camp crying like a baby. She took care of the buffalo calf and after it had calmed down she decided to go look for other Lakota camps. As she was leaving she heard a voice say, "You saved my son, and I will bring

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[176] Kelly, "The Story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman".
[177] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud.*
[178] Ibid., 96.
[179] Ibid., 97-98.

you a gift."[180] She turned to see a bull buffalo standing behind her.[181] It may be that White Hat offered this as an alternative prequel to the standard narrative, however there is no conclusive evidence to support this conclusion.

After White Hat's telling, the most contemporary telling of the narrative can be found in William Matson's *Crazy Horse: The Lakota Warrior's Life and Legacy*. In this work, the Edward Clown family of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, along with the help of author William Matson, attempted to set the record straight about the true clan affiliation and oral tradition surrounding one of the most famous American Indians in United States history. As a part of this project, they began by explaining the genesis of the Lakota people as well as the arrival and importance of the Pipe in Lakota spiritual life. One unique attribute of this telling includes the actions of the wholesome scout after his companion was killed by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Here, the scout knelt in prayer for his fallen companion and it is in this way that she knew his heart is good. Also, when she arrived at the camp she was not in the form of a woman as she had been on the prairie. First, she appeared as a white buffalo calf and was swept up "in a whirlwind swirled and the white buffalo calf once again turned into the sacred woman."[182]

This telling is further framed by the explanation that the Lakota people had fallen out of the correct way of living. The Pipe was brought to the people in order to explain to them how to live in a correct way again through prayer and the ceremonies taught by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Moreover, this telling also included the prophecy that she will return and the sign will

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[180] Ibid., 98.
[181] Ibid., 99.
[182] Matson, *Crazy Horse : The Lakota Warrior's Life & Legacy*, 14.

be the birth of a white buffalo calf, however there was no mention of whether or not this was to be understood as a good or bad omen.[183]

Continued Relevance

Tellings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative collected over a period of over one hundred years offer a glimpse into one of the most central narratives in the Lakota belief system. Whether traditionally recorded in the form of winter counts or inscribed by non-Native and Native scholars, the crux of the narrative remains the same throughout: the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought the Pipe to the Lakota people to provide a way for prayer and continuation of Lakota culture.

Evidenced by the existence of the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society, continued significance of the Pipe Keeper, and display of representations of this story in the Cheyenne-Eagle Butte High School gymnasium, the White Buffalo Calf Woman story clearly remains significant in the lives of many Lakota people. The themes and instructions given to the Lakota people by the White Buffalo Calf Woman are viewed as binding by practitioners of Lakota spiritual traditions today. Through the variety of contexts in which this text has been recorded and utilized, particularly more recently and in the present, its continued importance seems quite obvious.

The use of the pipe throughout Lakota spiritual practice also demonstrates the pervasiveness of this narrative. In 2018, several water protectors explained in interviews how the pipe was central to the organization of resistance to DAPL's construction as well as daily

[183] Ibid.

camp life. Prayer brought both of these parts of the movement together and provided a spiritual foundation for the movement.[184]

Likewise, the existence of continued interpretation of this text also accounts for its pervasiveness. In the context of the White Buffalo Calf Woman story, one poignant example of continued relevance and interpretation comes from Phillip Percy's telling collected by Dorsey. In closing, his telling related that General George Armstrong Custer, infamous for his defeat in1876 at the Battle of the Greasy Grass, otherwise known as the Battle of the Little Bighorn, swore by the Pipe that he would discontinue his fight against American Indian people. Breaking this promise, Percy argues, resulted in his ultimate defeat.[185] As I will discuss in the following chapter, this concept of success through prayer by the pipe is key to understanding how community members perceived successes in the resistance against DAPL.

In addition to successes, several of the narrators of White Buffalo Calf Woman tellings understood this narrative to explain contemporary issues in Lakota communities. Specifically, in the telling by Garnett Black Bear, he describes how the way of life prescribed by the White Buffalo Calf Woman was meant to sustain Lakota people. The distancing from these traditions caused by years of colonial and assimilationist policies by the United States federal government, has diminished these practices, to some degree. He argues that it is only through the traditions and practices brought by the White Buffalo Calf Woman that Lakota people can overcome the rampant drug and alcohol abuse in their communities.[186]

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[184] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader; Interview with brother of camp cook; Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee; Interview with sister of camp cook, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018; Interview with Lakota water protector, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.

[185] Dorsey, "Legend of the Teton Sioux Medicine Pipe," 329.

[186] Black Bear, "Voices: White Buffalo Calf Woman Legend Needs to Be Clarified."

These interpretations of the White Buffalo Calf Woman story illustrate a connection between the authoritative oral traditions of the Lakota and their associated behavioral prescriptions and ceremonial practices. This connection represents what would be regarded by scholars as scripture in many other contexts, particularly Jewish, Christian and Muslim. Wilfred Cantwell Smith outlines this issue by describing the ways that scripture functions for the people who consider it to be authoritative. Scriptures serve a variety of purposes for different groups. They can support a group cohesiveness that helps to establish group identity while at other times they can assist believers in rising above their current circumstances.[187] He goes on to say the term has come to mean a text that has been ascribed a particular "special status" by believers and that no text is scripture by itself. Rather, the believers who assign authority to a text make that distinction, not scholars.[188]

The Lakota White Buffalo Calf Woman story provides explanations for how Lakota people can identify themselves as Lakota through the use of the pipe and understand their place in the greater Lakota cosmology. Because of this, the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative is one example supporting greater consideration of oral traditional narratives in the understanding of "sacred text" and how these narratives continue to be relevant today.

To illustrate this point, as recently as 2003, Chief Arvol Looking Horse along with numerous other spiritual leaders from the various bands of the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* met to discuss how they should respond to ever-increasing use of traditional Lakota ceremonies and the Pipe by non-Native people. In the statement released as a result of this meeting tribal leaders not only invoked the prescription that only those of pure mind and heart should use the Pipe and by

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[187] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What Is Scripture? : A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 9, 14.
[188] Ibid., 12, 18.

extension, participate in the ceremonies brought by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, but they also outlined the various ways in which these ceremonies should be conducted in accordance with the teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman.[189]

The White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative represents one of the most frequently documented Lakota oral traditions within both scholarly and popular literature. This may be because it explains the arrival of the Pipe, which is central to Lakota spirituality. However, the meanings and understandings of this narrative continue to be reworked in order to help Lakota people understand their current situation, provide greater context for oral traditional narratives such as describing the life of Crazy Horse, and assist in understanding greater philosophical concepts within the Lakota belief system. Despite the fact that many scholars of Lakota religion have suggested that the Pipe and its associated practices were on the verge of extinction, these assertions have been proven largely unsupported by the continued importance of the White Buffalo Calf Women narrative to contemporary Lakota communities. This sustained importance was formative in calls to halt DAPL's construction in the interest of preserving spiritually significant sites and in the No DAPL resistance movement itself.

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[189] Arvol Looking Horse, "Looking Horse Proclamation on the Protection of Ceremonies," *Indian Country Today Media Network* 2003.

Chapter 4 "Evidence of Our Existence"

Serving as the foundation for Lakota spiritual practice, the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative provides guidance with regard to historical and contemporary spiritual practice, thereby offering a guide to practitioners today. In addition to serving part of the spiritual foundation for DAPL resistance, the tangible representations of the ceremonies brought as methods to commune with *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* have strengthened the resistance against the Pipeline's construction in Lakota communities. One individual who led these efforts was Tim Mentz, Sr., along with members of his cultural resource management firm Makoche Wowapi. Recognized by the National Parks Service in 1996 as the first Tribal Historic Preservation Officer from the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, Mentz consults in the states of North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa with the team.[190] Identifications of these sites by the Makoche Wowapi team required a deep knowledge of Lakota history, culture, and oral tradition to make both accurate and compelling arguments for the preservation of the sites in question. These sites provide corporeal evidence for and are physical endorsements of authoritative Lakota oral traditions.

***Naǧí Yata*, "Place of the Spirits"**

In the case of the sites identified by Tim Mentz, Sr. and his team, nearly all are connected to Lakota beliefs about the spirit world and the afterlife. One of the principle ceremonies that continues to be practiced in Lakota communities across the Northern Plains is *haŋbléčheyapi*, or "crying for vision." Often referred to colloquially as "vision quest," *haŋbléčheyapi* is undertaken by any Lakota person wishing to receive direction from the *wakȟáŋ* beings and typically takes place for the first time during adolescence.[191]

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[190] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 14-15.
[191] Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 91-92; Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8. William K. Powers, "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the Twenty-First Century," in *Native*

Providing "understanding about their life, how they are living it, and how they can live it," Lakota people use this ceremony to communicate with a variety of wakȟáŋ beings.[192] The complexities of this ritual need not be explained here, but it is important to understand the designation of ritual space that takes place as a part of *haŋbléčheyapi* as it relates to the classification of Lakota sites identified by Mentz and his team. As part of this ritual, participants in this ritual construct a "fasting altar," where over a period of four days they will fast and pray to receive a vision. These altars make up many of the findings of Makoche Wowapi.

Contemporary Lakota practice of *haŋbléčheyapi* directs practitioners to construct this altar in a specific way. Lakota anthropologist Sebastian Lebeau describes them as follows:

> The basic components of a fasting altar consist of a buffalo skin and four directional staffs on which are hung a large tobacco offering commonly referred to as a tobacco flag. A long, continuous strand of small tobacco offerings, referred to as tobacco ties, is strung between and around the directional staffs encircling the interior area of the altar where the individual will remain praying until the ceremony is complete.[193]

This basic altar structure is documented in much of the literature on this topic, as is the fact that these sites are meant to be temporary.[194] However, what makes the findings of the Makoche Wowapi team so groundbreaking is that they identify more permanent structures that are termed altars as well. These sites, both Mentz and Lebeau argue, are representative of one type of a variety used by Lakota people when "crying for vision." Termed *wa hóčhoka* by both, they are not well documented in anthropological literature, but from accounts in the oral traditions.

Religions and Cultures of North America: Anthropology of the Sacred, ed. Lawrence Eugene Sullivan (New York: Continuum, 2000), 112-13; Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 44. DeMallie, "Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century," 35-38.

[192] Sebastian Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites" (Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2009), 32.

[193] Ibid., 32-33.

[194] Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 57; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 92; Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 9; DeMallie, "Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century," 35; Arthur Amiotte, "Eagles Fly Over," in *I Become Part of It : Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*, ed. D. M. Dooling and Paul Jordan-Smith (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 213-14.

Lebeau describes them as "constructed from stones ranging in sizes from small 5 to 10 centimeters in diameter, medium sized 11 to 20 centimeters in diameter, to large sized 21 to 30 centimeters in diameter."[195]

Contrary to their more temporary cousins, these altars were meant to be used continually throughout an individual's life. During this repeated use, persons would be directed by the wakȟáŋ beings, through vision, to construct additional effigies attached to their original *wa hóčhoka*. This is evident in the oral traditions described by Mentz and used to identify societal affiliation of vision seekers at the sites the Makoche Wowapi team identified.[196]

In addition to these affiliations, Lakota astronomical knowledge is closely tied to these formations. Mentz notes that many of the features identified in the DAPL corridor depict various constellations and astronomical symbols such as the Big Dipper and a half moon.[197] Furthermore, grave cairns were associated with many of these same sites (Fig. 2 shows one example). These associations, particularly the connections between Big Dipper effigies and grave cairns, are informed by oral traditions detailing Lakota beliefs about the afterlife.[198]

When the *nağí*, loosely translated as spirit or soul, leaves a Lakota individual's physical body around the time of death, it travels to its place of origin, the Big Dipper. A Lakota narrative provides additional detail about this journey. It is believed that at some

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[195] Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites," 34.
[196] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8.
[197] Ibid., 9-12.
[198] Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites," 141, 92. Apart from denoting burial locations, cairns such as those identified by the Makoche Wowapi team also have been explained as being associated with honoring specific spirits or serving as altars on which offerings are placed.

time in the distant past, a Lakota woman married a member of the *Wičháȟpi Oyáte* (or Star Nation) and went to live in the star realm with her new husband. While there, he instructed her not to pick any of the plants.[199] Shortly thereafter she became pregnant and increasingly homesick. Craving the taste of the *thíŋpsiŋla*, or wild turnip, she picked one against his directions. When she plucked the turnip, a hole was created, and looking through it she could see her family members. This made her even more lonesome, so she decided to braid together everything that she could find into a rope. She then attempted to lower herself down to earth, but the rope was too short. The woman fell to her death, but her child, Fallen Star, survived.[200]

It is through this hole that Lakota people believe the soul travels when a woman becomes pregnant and when an individual dies.[201] This hole is located directly in the center of the bowl of the constellation the Big Dipper. Passing through this hole, the *naǧí* travels along the *Wanáǧi Tȟačháŋku*, or "spirit road" known by astronomers as the Milky Way. At the end of this road, the spirit finds itself at the *Naǧí Yata*, or "the place of the spirits."[202] Lakota oral tradition informs these connections, allowing for the identification of such sites that South Dakota state archaeologists missed because of their lack of knowledge of these traditions.

"Tangible Evidence of Our People"

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[199] For a brief explanation on the *Wičháȟpi Oyáte*, see White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 32-33.
[200] Hurst, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe*; Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 3; Buechel, *Lakota Tales & Texts*, 45-63.
[201] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 36.
[202] Ibid., 22-23; Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 93; "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the Twenty-First Century," 118; Buechel, *Lakota Tales & Texts*, 231-35.

These traditions, in addition to many others, were required knowledge by the Makoche Wowapi team as they worked to identify important spiritual sites in the DAPL corridor. The statements made by Tim Mentz, Sr. in support of an injunction against DAPL's construction supply a detailed explanation of how oral traditions and concepts of place collide in Lakota spiritual practice. In his statement as an expert witness to the court in the case of the *Standing Rock Sioux Tribe v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, Mentz explains that, while surveying for another client, his team realized that the corridor they were surveying overlapped the DAPL easement at certain places. They also observed the DAPL-hired archaeological team conducting their survey of this section of the route.[203]

As they continued their survey, the Makoche Wowapi team identified several locations where the DAPL archaeologists had walked over stone features without documenting them. To reiterate my point from above, I argue that these stone features, described by Mentz "as evidence of our existence," are physical endorsements of the authoritative oral traditions of Lakota people today. The sites include stone rings, grave cairns, and effigies central to Lakota belief.[204]

The standard archaeological explanation for many of the sites identified by Mentz and his team is that they are "tipi rings." Despite the assertions of archaeologists, Mentz insists that these are *haŋbléčheyapi* rings, or *wa' hóčhoka* as described previously. Yet Mentz is not the only dissenting voice in the scholarly discourse concerning "tipi rings." Arguments are ongoing within the archaeological community about their intended purpose. While many scholars have made the argument that these rings represent evidence of encampments (Wedel [1953], Kehoe [1958], Finnigan [1982], Neuman [2010]) there are some scholars who argue for a more spiritual explanation (Krieger [1956], Conner [1982], Dormaar and Reevers [1993], Sundstrom [2003],

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[203] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 14-15.
[204] Ibid., 5.

Lebaeu [2009]).[205] Needless to say, none of these surveys consider the fact that Lakota people were traditionally nomadic, taking all of their belongings with them, including the accoutrements necessary to erect tipis. Additionally, this archaeological understanding lacks an explanation for the various effigies associated with supposed "tipi rings" documented by Metz and his team.

If this much indecision exists in the "authoritative" archaeological literature then how is one to assess the Lakota oral traditions regarding such features? The physical evidence of fasting stone rings, or *wa hocho'ka*, offer one example of the authority of the oral traditions themselves as indications of where an individual sought vision and communion with the *wakȟáŋ* beings.[206] Over time the construction of *haŋbléčheyapi* altars has evolved resulting in a variety of altar forms with varying degrees of identifiability and permanence.[207] While oral traditions frequently are viewed as immaterial, connections such as these provide scholars with tangible representations that speak to their authority. This establishment of relationships between the *wakȟáŋ* beings and the individual is what Robert Orsi describes as the most central part of religion. Although his discussion focuses on lived religious life among Catholics in the United States, specifically, Orsi's argument that interactions between religious practitioners and *wakȟáŋ*

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[205] Robert W. Neuman, "North American Indian Tent Encampments: Tipi Rings, Wooden Wall Anchors, and Windbreaks," *Plains Anthropologist* 55, no. 215 (2010); Thomas Kehoe, "Tipi Rings: The 'Direct Ethnological' Approach Applied to an Archeological Problem," *American Anthropologist* 60, no. 5 (1958); James T. Finnigan, "Tipi Rings and Plains Prehistory : A Reassessment of Their Archaeological Potential," (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1982); Alex D Krieger, "Early Man: Alberta," *American Antiquity* 21, no. 4 (1956); Waldo R. Wedel, "Review: The Northern Plains by William Mulloy " review of The Northern Plains, William Mulloy, ibid.19, no. 2 (1953). S. W. Conner, "Archaeology of the Crow Indian Vision Quest," *Archaeology of Montana* 23 (1982); J Dormaar and B. O. K. Reeves, "Vision Quest Sites in Southern Alberta and Northern Montana," in *Kunaitupii : Coming Together on Native Sacred Sites : Their Sacredness, Conservation and Interpretation : A Native & Non-Native Forum : Proceedings of the First Joint Meeting of the Archaeological Society of Alberta and the Montana Archaeological Society, May 2-6, 1990, Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta, Canada*, ed. Brian O. K. Reeves and Margaret Anne Kennedy (Calgary: Archaeological Society of Alberta, 1993); Linea Sundstrom, *Storied Stone : Indian Rock Art in the Black Hills Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites."

[206] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 7.

[207] Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites," 121-28.

beings (whoever those may be) directly correlates to Lakota individuals' communion with *wakȟáŋ* beings during *haŋbléčheyapi*.[208] As Orsi suggests, religion as a network of relationships between humans and the divine is a simple way to understand how these sites and this ceremony establish relationships with *wakȟáŋ* beings. To put this in Lakota terms, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is through *haŋbléčheyapi* that Lakota individuals relate to the *wakȟáŋ* beings, illustrating the Lakota philosophy of *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ*.

Additionally, the permanence of these sites contradicts archaeological explanations relying on habitation patterns. As noted above, there is evidence that these features were used over several years, as individuals would construct "additional rings, arcs, stone effigies or alignments…add[ing] on to the initial ring."[209] An elaborate example of this can be seen in Figure 1 where the fasting ring (F7) is joined by additional effigies such as hook staffs that exhibit specific tribal society affiliations.[210]

In addition to an individual making his or her first connection with the *wakȟáŋ* beings in their *wa hocho'ka,* Lakota individuals' fasting rings would serve as their final resting place, where their *naǧí*, or spirit, would travel on the *Wanáǧi Thačháŋku,* the Milky Way, to the *Naǧí Yata,* or place of the spirits.[211] If an individual could not be returned to their fasting ring and given a traditional scaffold-style burial, their spirit would be kept through *Wanáǧi Yuhápi* (soul keeping) and then brought to the site and marked by a grave cairn (F5, F6) at the first

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[208] Robert A Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth : The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2.
[209] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8.
[210] For a discussion of historical Lakota societies, their function and organization, see Clark Wissler, "Societies and Ceremonial Associations in the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota," in *Societies of the Plains Indians* (New York: The Trustees, 1912).
[211] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 22-23; Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8; Powers, "Wiping the Tears: Lakota Religion in the Twenty-First Century," 118; *Oglala Religion*, 93.

opportunity.[212] Mentz attributes this change to adaptations during the reservation era when Lakota people were forced to practice their religion out of sight of authorities within the confines of their reservation, thus restricting access to these inherited sites.[213] Furthermore, the importance of stones in Lakota oral traditions and ceremonies deepens the connections being made to these specific sites. The Lakota creation narrative discussed in the previous chapter undergirds this centrality. Not only was the world created at the expense of *Iŋyaŋ*, as one citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation explained, "[the] oldest relation is the rocks."[214]

Another ritual activity that illustrates links to oral tradition is the *inípi*, commonly referred to as the sweat lodge. Likely the most frequently practiced ceremony among the Lakota, it exists as both a stand-alone ceremony in its own right as well as a pre- and postlude to many other ritual activities including but not limited to the *Wiwáŋyaŋg Wačhípi* (Sun Dance).[215] The purpose of this ceremony is for participants to be purified by the steam created by pouring water on heated rocks inside the lodge. *Inípi* is often compared to a rebirth of sorts, with the lodge serving as the womb and participants being reborn with clear minds and bodies.[216]

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[212]Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 8; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 93.

[213] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 9. For more on the evolution of *haŋbléčheyapi* altars, see Lebeau, "Reconstructing Lakota Ritual in the Landscape: The Identification and Typing System for Traditional Cultural Property Sites," 121-28.

[214] Interview with No DAPL run participant.

[215] Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 43; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 89; Raymond J DeMallie and Douglas R Parks, *Sioux Indian Religion : Tradition and Innovation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," 72; White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*; Fire, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 174, 76.

[216] Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 32; White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 122.

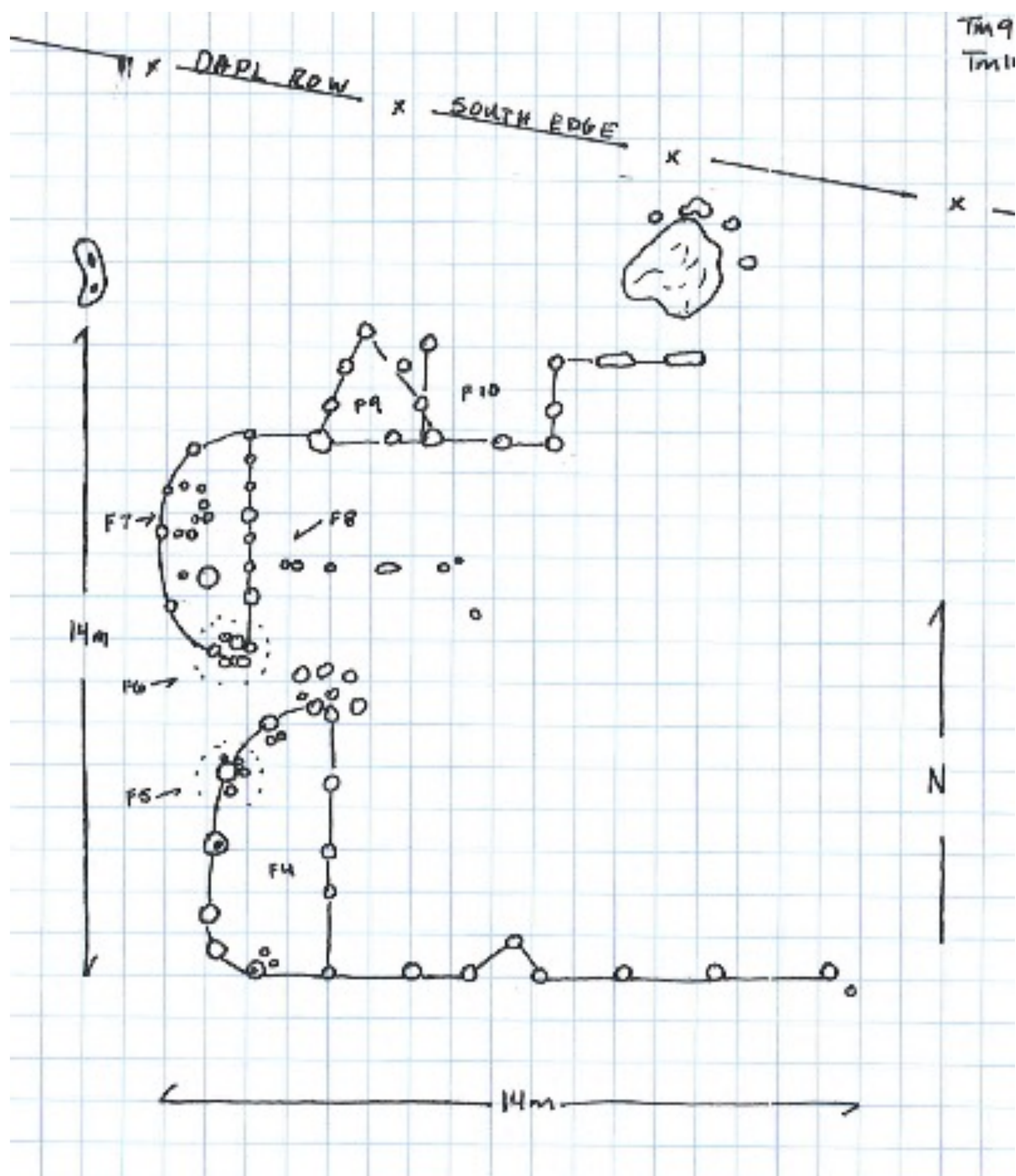

Fig. 1. Hook Staff Effigies Recorded by Makoche Wowapi near DAPL easement. This illustrates how an initial fasting ring (F7) may have additional features added to it over time such as hook staffs to denote society affiliation and grave cairns (F5, F6). Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction, 20.

Additionally, aspects of the ceremony reveal close ties to Lakota oral tradition. For example, in preparation for the ceremony, a number of rocks are heated in a fire not far from the lodge. These are not just any stones. Vine Deloria, Jr. reported that these stones must be collected under very specific circumstances or that an individual holding a ceremony will go out and talk to the stones, "telling the stones that he was going to hold a ceremony and asking different stones if they wished to participate."[217] This agency provided to the stones themselves is reflected in their role in the *inípi* itself.

After the participants have entered the lodge and the ceremony is about to begin, the stones are placed in the small depression in the center of the lodge heralding the arrival of a variety of important spirits in Lakota spiritual life. These can include all of the spirits that make up the collective understanding of *Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka* among others.[218] The number of stones brought into an *inípi* largely depends on the individual leading the ceremony with seven being most common while sixteen and twenty-eight are also possibilities.[219] It is these stones, as representatives of the various *wakȟáŋ* beings in the Lakota cosmos, to whom participants can direct their prayers to and it is through the heat and steam created in the *inípi* that healing occurs.[220]

"Stellar Scriptures"

Traveling along the *Wanáǧi Tȟačháŋku* to *Naǧí Yata* via an individual's initial fasting ring is only one connection between Lakota astronomy, oral tradition, and physical

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[217] Deloria Jr., *The World We Used to Live In : Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*, 153.
[218] Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," 71-72; Fire, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 179; Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 49, 90; Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 36.
[219] The numbers four and seven, as well as the products of four and four and four and seven are important to Lakota belief. For more on numerology in Lakota spirituality see Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 47-51.
[220] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 128; Fire, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 180-81; Elk, *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe : Based on Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 37.

manifestations of Lakota spirituality. Scholars only recently have given sustained attention to ethnoastronomy among American Indian peoples and as a result scholarship on Lakota astronomy is minimal. Mentz addressed this deficiency by describing various types of information, including ethnoastronomical data, that are "not common knowledge among archaeologists."[221] As discussed above, one key source of such information is the corpus of traditional Lakota narratives as many are associated with constellations such as the stories of *Wičhaȟpi Hiŋȟpáya* or Fallen Star.[222] Additionally, the available literature also allows for several other connections to be made with physical manifestations of Lakota belief documented by Mentz's team. One example of this includes the correlation between *Mathȟó Thípila* or "Devil's Tower" and the Lakota constellation associated with it.[223] Many constellations, including that which is associated with *Mathȟó Thípila*, were created by *Wičhaȟpi Hiŋȟpáya*. In this instance, the Lakota oral tradition explains that he created *Mathȟó Thípila* to "protect children threatened by bears."[224]

Understanding the relationship between the earth and the stars in Lakota belief is necessary before the significance of these narratives can be made clear. According to Ronald Goodman's work with over sixty Lakota consultants, Lakota traditions purport that "what is below on earth is like what is above in the star world."[225] This means that there are direct correspondences between landmarks on earth and landmarks in the star world. Whenever a ceremony is being performed here on earth it is also being performed simultaneously in the spirit world allowing sacred power to be drawn down to people on earth.[226]

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[221] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 9.
[222] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 3; Hurst, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe*.
[223] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 9.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid., 15.
[226] Ibid., 1, 15.

The Fallen Star stories and their associated traditions provide examples of both concepts discussed above. In stories featuring the culture hero Fallen Star, *Wičhaȟpi Hiŋȟpáya*, he creates or gives meaning to many Lakota spiritual landmarks as well as to their corresponding constellations.[227] One clear example of this can be found in the story of the designation of Black Elk (formerly Harney) Peak and the creation of its respective constellation. As one version of the narrative relates, when Lakota people were camped near the peak, an eagle swooped down and stole a young girl, carried her to the top of the peak and ate her. This reoccurred for seven days before Fallen Star could shoot the eagle. After killing the eagle, he placed the seven girls' spirits in the sky as the constellation *Wičhiŋčala Šakówiŋ*, or the "Seven Little Girls" (the Pleiades to Western astronomers).[228] This constellation then came to be associated with Harney Peak and the ceremonies to be performed there.

Celestial movements also inform the timing of *Yate Iwákičhipi*, a ceremony welcoming back the *Wakíŋyaŋ*, which takes place when the sun has passed through *Wičhiŋčala Šakówiŋ* (sometime between the spring equinox and the month of May). The *Wakíŋyaŋ*, or Thunder Beings, are a class of powerful beings who when seen during *haŋbléčheyapipi*, signal an individual's requirement to become a *heyókȟa*, a specific ritual specialist who acts as a contrary.[229] The timing of this ceremony, and others with associated constellations, is traditionally determined by when the sun passed through these constellations in the sky. It was preferred that these ceremonies would be performed at their associated location, but bands had specific ceremonies for adapting rituals to different locations.[230]

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[227] Ibid., 3-4.
[228] Ibid., 3.
[229] Powers, *Oglala Religion*, 54, 57.
[230] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 7, 11-13; Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 10.

Mentz's description of the importance of Lakota astronomy relies on some of the same concepts as those described above. He described the constellations as "the portal or spiritual openings that allowed man and all living things to connect to the spirit Mother Nature."[231] Linking this statement to the ideas expressed about Lakota concepts of the afterlife may explain some of the effigy formations documented by Mentz's team.

One example of this relationship can be seen in Figure 2, which shows another feature recorded by Makoche Wowapi surveyors. It depicts a Big Dipper effigy (F13), half-moon effigy (F12), and a grave cairn (F11). These features relate to the belief discussed above that the Milky Way is the path to the afterlife in Lakota theology. To reiterate this point, when a spirit leaves this earth to travel to the place of the spirits it returns to an opening in the Big Dipper.[232]

As detailed above, this opening, or portal, is linked to the story of Fallen Star's mother. This correlation between the Big Dipper and the afterlife also could possibly explain the placement of the grave cairn (F11) in association with the Big Dipper effigy (F13) depicted in Figure 2. This is an explicit example of the Lakota concept of "mirroring."[233] Here, instead of associating a landmark, such as *Matȟó Thípila*, with a constellation in the sky, ritual practice of creating grave cairns is "mirroring" the traditional path of the *naǧí* through the Big Dipper and onto the spirit realm.

[231] "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 10.
[232] Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 22-23.
[233] Ibid., 15-19.

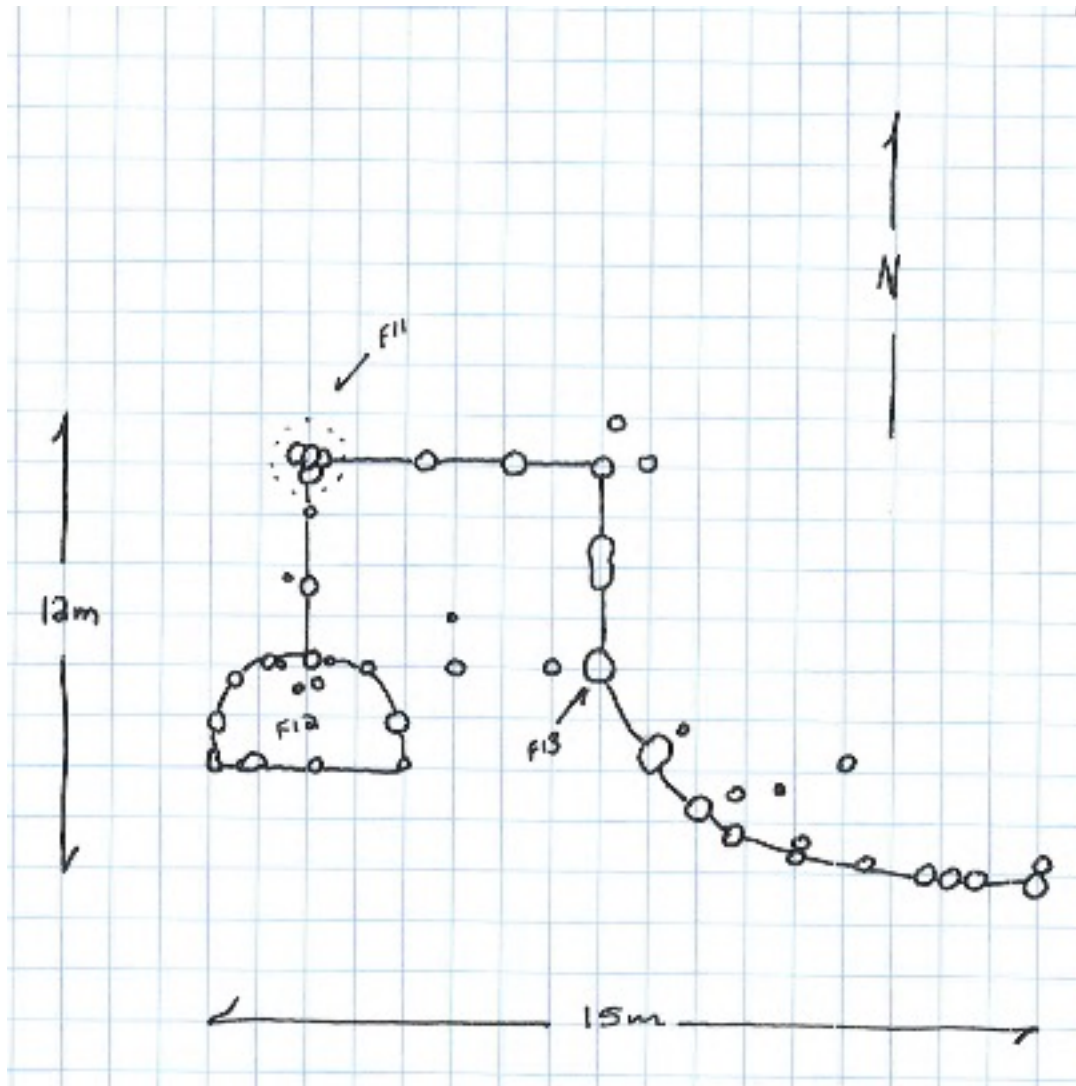

Fig. 2. Big Dipper Effigy Recorded by Makoche Wowapi near DAPL easement. This illustrates connection between Lakota astronomy and spiritual practices. Pictured is a Big Dipper Effigy (F13), a half-moon effigy (F12), and a grave cairn (F11). Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction, 28.

"From Generation to Generation"

Given the evolution of *haŋbléčheyapi* altars throughout history, it may appear that these sites would be of little spiritual significance to Lakota people today. This transition from a permanent designation of sacred space to the more temporary structures designated by fabric tobacco offerings, coupled with the often secret nature of this traditional knowledge, makes it

unclear if Lakotas practice their religious traditions in the way described by Mentz.[234] Yet, in his statement to the court, Mentz demonstrates how these sites are still connected to the religious lives of Lakotas today.

Mentz argued that these features represent the vows made by Lakota ancestors to protect their people, their traditions, and the generations to come. He illustrated this connection by examining the effigies constructed at some of these sites. He explains that the hook staff, like the effigy illustrated in Figure 1, serves as a metaphorical umbilical cord for the Lakota people connecting them to the spirit world and the traditions with which these leaders maintained and protected.[235]

In addition to being places to receive messages from the wakȟáŋ beings, sacred bundles created at these sites retain a direct connection to the spiritual power located there. The creation of these sacred spaces summons the power of the *wakȟáŋ* beings and continues to reside there. Bundles created in these rings, under the direction of the wakȟáŋ beings, remain connected to and draw their power from these features. When sites like these are destroyed, the associated bundles lose their spiritual efficacy.[236] Persistence of oral traditions is made physical through the personal experiences of Lakota people connected to these sites. Thus, the destruction of these sites permanently severs the connection between Lakota people and the spiritual beings that were contacted at those locations.

"Lakota People Are Prayerful People"

The sites identified by Makoche Wowapi provide a poignant case study for understanding the importance of Lakota oral traditions in relation to the resistance against DAPL. However,

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[234] Mentz Sr., "Declaration of Tim Mentz, Sr. In Support of Motion for Preliminary Injunction," 9.
[235] Ibid., 11-12.
[236] Ibid.

interviews with water protectors from the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation reveal that these traditions and practices pervaded the movement much more deeply than just in terms of the protection of ancestral burial and ritual sites. As explained in the introduction Cheyenne River Sioux Nation (CRST) shares its northern border with the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and is situated to be greatly affected by eventual leaks and failures in the Pipeline as its easternmost border runs along the Missouri River. While most of the media coverage related to the No DAPL movement focused on the Standing Sioux Nation, citizens of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation were involved with the protests from its inception.

Founders of the movement not only included members of these two communities, they brought with them the guiding force behind the entire movement: Lakota oral traditions and related spiritual practice. Even the earliest actions against the Pipeline's construction were grounded in Lakota spirituality. According to CRST members, in the spring of 2016, at the request of former Standing Rock Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II, a ride was organized to Cannonball, Standing Rock Sioux Nation just north of what would become one of the many resistance camp sites. Rides, events in which groups of individuals ride horses to a set location of significance, are commonplace in contemporary Lakota activism. Rides can take place for a variety of reasons including to promote reconciliation in the case of the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride in honor of Chief Big Foot and those massacred at Wounded Knee in 1890.[237]

Multiple interviewees discussed being involved in the planning stages of a ride in April of 2018 to commemorate the signing of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty and call for recognition of treaty agreements with Lakota communities.[238] Upon their arrival, they gathered to pray with the

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[237] Indian County Today Staff, "Annual Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride to Wounded Knee Concludes," *Indian Country Today Media Network* 2011.
[238] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader; Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe veteran, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.

pipe to protect the land, water, and people. Influential spiritual and political leaders from both communities were included and assisted in facilitation of these prayers and songs.

Furthermore, one individual I interviewed explained how his mother had been given a prophetic dream before the beginning of the protests. In this dream, her ancestors showed her the construction of the Pipeline including what the land looked like before and after its construction. This dream resonated strongly with this individual and provided much of his justification for his and his family members' involvement in resisting DAPL's construction.[239]

From the first ride up to what would become the site of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Camp, Lakota spiritual traditions would continue to shape how the resistance organized its activities and understood the successes and failures of the movement. Spiritual leaders from the Cheyenne River Sioux community, under the advisement of their spirits, encouraged water protectors to practice a prayerful, peaceful protest. While frontline actions involving law enforcement officials were certainly important to the movement, participants insisted that it was prayer that brought community members together and strengthened the movement. It was through this prayer, one spiritual leader explained, that new communities were welcomed into the camps through the exchange of prayer and song with American Indian communities already present in camp.[240] Prayer and song was central to camp life as many participants described how the camps were always full of singing and prayer. Whenever individuals talked about going up to camp their descriptions included praying in some capacity or another.[241]

[239] The content of dreams and visions among Lakota people is often only discussed under certain circumstances, explaining the lack of detail in this account as it was not appropriate for this interviewee to share finer details of his mother's experience with the author. Interview with brother of camp cook.
[240] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader.
[241] Interview with No DAPL run participant; Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader; Interview with brother of camp cook; Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee; Interview with sister of camp cook; Interview with Lakota water protector; Interview with parent of No DAPL run participant, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.

Prayer not only was present in the resistance camps, it was equally important on the frontlines of protest actions. While describing one of the most brutal exchanges between law enforcement and water protectors explained earlier, one community member explained how, even in the chaos of what she described as a warzone-like atmosphere, water protectors stood in prayer.[242] Another young man who participated in several of the runs organized by both CRST and SRST youth to raise awareness about DAPL described one protest action attempting to wrest control of another known ancestral Lakota burial site from the hands of North Dakota law enforcement officials. At this site, referred to as Turtle Island, he was sprayed with mace while attempting to pray at the foot of the site. Moreover, he explained that this movement for the most part brought disparate Lakota communities together and provided the impetus for many Lakota individuals to begin practicing or reinvigorating the practice of their traditional spirituality.[243] Although not directly addressing substance abuse problems, this seems to be what Garnett Black Bear was suggesting in his analysis of the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative: a return to traditional spirituality to heal Lakota communities.[244]

Prayer also was important for individuals when water protectors were not able to physically present in camp. When asked about the incident during Labor Day weekend of 2016 when security personnel hired by Energy Transfers released attack dogs on water protectors, one individual explained that even though he was not able to be in camp because of a prior commitment, he was able to pray in an effort to invoke *wakȟáŋ* beings to intervene on behalf of the water protectors. This prayer, he argues, also continues to perpetuate the movement despite the Pipeline's completion. This is because the work of these *wakȟáŋ* beings still can be seen in

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[242] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee.
[243] Interview with No DAPL run participant.
[244] Black Bear, "Voices: White Buffalo Calf Woman Legend Needs to Be Clarified."

events such as the hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico that damaged petroleum industry infrastructure.[245] Likewise, after the camps were broken up by Morton County law enforcement officials several individuals explained to me that prayer was, and continues to be, an important coping mechanisms, as well as a way for water protectors to continue to resist in diasporic camps around the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation.[246]

Through the mechanism of ongoing prayer, it is clear that Lakota spirituality had a tangible presence in the resistance against DAPL. This practice also was seen as the source for most of the successes in the movement by community members. Just as the aftermath of hurricanes on petroleum infrastructure was seen as the work of Lakota spiritual forces, other parts of the movement were interpreted as being caused by the powerful nature of Lakota prayer. One community member explained that early on in the movement it appeared that the water protectors were winning the fight. He credited much of this success to the presence of traditional Lakota prayer through drumming and singing on the frontline of protest actions.[247]

This sentiment that the Lakota way of life was both threatening to and inspired fear into law enforcement officials was reflected by several community members. Many also measured this success through the presence of Lakota spiritual forces in camp. One participant explained that, "in the midst of all that there, the horse nation came, the buffalo nation came, the eagle nation came, and the *Tȟoká Oyáte,* the first people, the stones...they all came there."[248] This statement directly refers to the Lakota creation narrative discussed in the previous chapter. It also illustrates that the Lakota concept of *Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ*, or "all of my relations," is clearly understood as all of the living things of the world are seen as belonging to relative *Oyátepi*, or

[245] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader.
[246] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee; Interview with No DAPL run participant.
[247] Interview with Lakota civil rights activist, interview by Ryan Goeckner, 2018.
[248] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spiritual leader.

Nations. Likewise, Albert White Hat, Sr. described this relationship in his discussion of the Lakota origin narrative noting that when, shortly after *Iŋyaŋ* is spent and broken apart, "everything on earth became known as *Wamákȟaškaŋ Oyáte*, the living beings of the earth."[249]

After the breakup of the camps in February of 2016, CRST Chairman Harold Frazier opened the Tribe's powwow grounds in Eagle Butte, Cheyenne River Sioux Nation to water protectors who had nowhere to go or who wanted to continue the fight against DAPL and the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline.[250] Since the establishment of this camp, however, fledgling camps all over the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation have been founded including camps in several of the communities around the reservation. The founders of these camps have a wide variety of ideas regarding what the community's next move should be. For example, one is focused on addressing post-traumatic stress disorder for water protectors while another emphasizes sustainable living solutions.

According to one of my interviewees, the success of these camps hinged solely on the continuance of Lakota spirituality and prayerful protest, much like what was present in the resistance camps during the height of the movement. She described how both prayer and the council fire fostered unity in the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* camp while the lack of these elements hindered the growth and development of disparate camps. As she described the situation, historically, the establishment of reservations split many of the Lakota bands into separate communities and prevented the continuance of unity amongst the seven *thiyóšpaye* (bands) of the

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[249] White Hat, *Life's Journey - Zuya : Oral Teachings from Rosebud*, 32.
[250] "Joye Braun on the Wakpa Waste Camp and the Fight to Stop the Keystone Xl Pipeline," Last Real Indians, https://lastrealindians.com/joye-braun-on-the-wakpa-waste-camp-and-the-fight-to-stop-the-keystone-xl-pipeline/.

Lakota people.[251] In the traditional Lakota camp organization has every band is situated around a central fire in a specific order.[252]

During the protest, the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* camp adhered to this structure and lit a sacred council fire in the center of these tipis. This participant explained that this campfire was tended day and night throughout the camp's existence and that after water protectors began to establish disparate camps they lost this connection and failed to establish this important connection to traditional Lakota life. She concluded that, "they didn't have that prayer…they didn't have that fire."[253] Lacking this fire, which traditionally represented the unity of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, prevented members of these camps from establishing themselves as legitimate resistance camps and fostering unity within the movement as a whole.[254]

From the very beginning of the No DAPL movement, Lakota spirituality, informed by oral tradition, served as the foundation for resistance strategies. The identification of sacred sites within the DAPL corridor further solidified the importance of this aspect of the movement providing a justification for protests as well as a methodology for the protests themselves. The sites identified by the Makoche Wowapi team, albeit destroyed by DAPL construction workers, strengthened the importance of Lakota oral traditions in contemporary Lakota communities by providing the framework for understanding and identifying such sites. Furthermore, in the greater movement of Lakota spirituality through prayer by the pipe, a tradition provided to Lakota people by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, undergirded approaches to resistance as well as interpretations of the perceived successes and failures of the movement. Although media attention tended to focus less on the specifically spiritual side of the No DAPL movement and

[251] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee.
[252] Walker, *Lakota Society*, 14-18.
[253] Interview with Cheyenne River Sioux tribal employee.
[254] Walker, *Lakota Society*, 17.

instead highlight the environmental impacts of the now completed pipeline, the testimony of Tim Mentz, Sr. and the perspectives of members of the Cheyenne River Sioux community have illustrated that motivations for the No DAPL movement were much more deeply rooted in the landscape and informed by Lakota cultural traditions than many in the public were led to believe.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Just days after being inaugurated as the forty-fifth President of the United States, President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order advancing approvals for both the Dakota Access Pipeline and Keystone XL Pipelines.[255] Despite nearly a year of resistance, corporate influence and a fledgling administration disregarded concerns by Native and non-Native water protectors from the United States and abroad about the construction of pipelines crossing important sources of freshwater in the Midwest. Representing a continuation of colonialism perpetuated by the United States federal government, this disregard for the sovereignty of American Indian nations threw into sharp relief the lack of consideration for concerns expressed by these communities.

As I have argued, this dismissal is at least in part the product of years of scholarly discussion regarding the validity of oral traditions, in American Indian communities and otherwise. During religious studies' formative years as a discipline, Protestant assumptions about what could and could not be considered religious prevailed resulting in a focus on the scriptural basis of religious traditions. These early discussions privileged traditions that had any semblance of a scriptural tradition in the Christian sense. In addition, this focus on written text cultivated a notion of "writtenness" being synonymous with fixedness. This perspective toward cultures and religious traditions lacking written language altogether continued to inform opinions about these communities well into the modern era.

During the early years of American anthropology, scholarly works in indigenous cultures focused on the oral traditions of these communities either explicitly or implicitly. Many scholars

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[255] Athena Jones, Jeremy Diamond, and Gregory Krieg, "Trump Advances Controversial Oil Pipelines with Executive Action," CNN, https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/24/politics/trump-keystone-xl-dakota-access-pipelines-executive-actions/index.html.

conducting this research refused to recognize any relevance of these traditions for the academy. Furthermore, any information contained therein also was considered no to be historically accurate, and thus of little or no use to scholars. Despite this bias, perspectives regarding oral traditions continued to evolve as did disciplinary knowledge. In the latter half of the twentieth century, views altered to include both methodologies for utilizing oral traditions in historical and ethnographic research and for incorporating increasingly diverse perspectives highlighting the importance of these traditions in the communities themselves.

However, the enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) reignited debate surrounding oral traditions with specific focus on archaeological research. The resulting increased involvement of Native communities in archaeological discourses through disputes over ancestral remains and cultural artifacts upset the archaeological establishment. With the stroke of a pen, oral traditions were thrown into the body of evidence that could be included when interpreting the patrimony of archaeological finds. While this was clear victory for American Indian communities, this functional endorsement of oral traditions as nearly as being authoritative as scholarly knowledge left many scholars questioning the validity of these claims and the authority of oral traditions.

As I have demonstrated, there are many oral traditional narratives that problematize many of these claims including the White Buffalo Calf Woman narrative. In addition to explaining the delivery of the Pipe and many of the most important ceremonies to the Lakota people, it is likely the most documented narrative in both scholarly and popular literature related to Lakota spirituality. With the earliest account of this narrative being recorded in a traditional manner in the Battiste Good Winter Count, recorded tellings of this narrative span over one hundred years of scholarly research and community accounts. A survey of these tellings confirms explanations

by Lakota individuals that the oral traditions remain largely unchanged despite elapsed time and difference in narration. Despite the fact that many of the scholars reporting on it lacked confidence in the viability of this tradition by many of the scholars reporting on this tradition, it has remained central to Lakota belief.

Furthermore, the use of the pipe in Lakota spirituality, initiated by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, provides a concrete manifestation for scholars to understand the sustained importance of this narrative and of Lakota oral traditions more broadly. In particular, according to Lakota water protectors themselves, resistance to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline led by Lakota peoples was grounded in these traditions. The movement itself was symbolically opened with prayer with the pipe and such prayer would continue to be a central theme in protest actions and protest camp life. Even in the "camp diaspora" on the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation this prayer remains central for many water protectors.

One of the events providing fuel to the resistance was the identification of Lakota spiritual sites directly in the path of the Pipeline. The findings of the Makoche Wowapi team were facilitated through the deep knowledge of Lakota oral tradition and religious life. Without this intense familiarity with these traditions, these sites may have gone unidentified as they were by the archaeological surveyors hired by the Dakota Access Pipeline. Not only is authorizing identification of significant Lakota cultural sites by a non-Native team of archaeologists paternalistic in nature, it represents the overarching privileging of scholarly knowledge over that of Native people themselves. The arrogance associated with the perspective that these sites need to be identified by archaeologists trained not in the oral traditional knowledge necessary to accurately identify these sites, but in disciplinary knowledge focused on material culture and

human remains illustrates the necessity of the involvement of Native people in every aspect of this process.

The Dakota Access Pipeline resistance movement provides a poignant example of the way in which oral traditions remain authoritative in the religious lives of American Indian peoples. The members of communities confronted with the restriction of their religious freedoms and access to clean drinking water by DAPL's construction have faced the consequences brought on in part by scholarly assessment of the veracity and concerning the importance of oral traditions. As I have demonstrated, the exclusion of Native voices from conversations about these traditions, both within and outside academia, has larger impacts than just incomplete understandings. Going forward, those engaged in scholarly discourses must understand that they have greater obligations than merely the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Understanding the wider impact of discussions like those surrounding oral traditions provides a stimulus for reflection and reevaluation of the research being conducted about, for, and with American Indian communities.

The proliferation of petroleum and natural gas infrastructure across the United States virtually guarantees that similar instances will occur in which American Indian communities will strive to utilize oral traditions to justify and protect traditional lands in the face of continued colonialization of their ancestral lands. To give but one example, the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, the last leg of DAPL also being constructed by Energy Transfer Partners, is to be constructed through traditional Houma, Chitimacha, and Chata territory in the Louisiana bayou. Threatening Houma mound sites and the fragile bayou ecosystem, a resistance movement has been organized much like the No DAPL movement.[256] Another movement of note is the Bears Ears Coalition, a

[256] "Stop the Bayou Bridge Pipeline," http://nobbp.org/.

partnership between the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and the Ute Indian Tribe, formed in 2015 to resist the reduction of Bears Ears National Monument in an effort to protect important sacred and cultural sites within the monument's boundaries.[257]

These represent just two examples of a situation in which the religious freedoms of American Indian peoples are being threatened by government-supported corporate development. In each of these instances, in much the same ways as the No DAPL movement, communities are employing rich oral traditional evidence to justify their claims to these sites. Furthermore, both are using their respective spiritual traditions as methods of resistance. In my opinion, scholars of religion can have a role to play in these movements, even if it is distanced from the protest frontlines. Through the cultivation of discourses relating to oral traditions that critically assess its continuing relevance, while foregrounding voices from Native communities, both Native and non-Native academics can problematize decades-old assumptions that have lingering effects on American Indian communities.

[257] "Bears Ears Coalition," bearsearscoalition.org; Bears Ears Coalition, "Bears Ears: A Native Perspective," http://www.bearsearscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Bears-Ears-bro.sm_.pdf.

Appendix

Interview Script

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this study. As we talked about before, we are digitally recording this interview and it will be transcribed word for word. Your name will not be put in the transcript or will only be used with your express permission.

1. How did you first learn about the Dakota Access Pipeline?
2. What was your immediate reaction to it?
3. Did you or do you participate in any of the protests against its construction?
4. Can you describe your participation? (i.e. Did you stay in the camps? Did you participate in actions?)
5. What have your experiences been like (doing these things)?
6. Did/do you have any contact with individuals supporting the pipeline? What have these interactions been like?
7. Do you see the fight against DAPL as being connected to Lakota values, spirituality, and other religious thoughts or traditions? How so?
8. What was your reaction to the destruction of sites in the DAPL corridor over Labor Day weekend 2016?
9. Were you involved in protests or attempts to stop destruction of these sites? Can you describe that experience?
10. Given the history of the U.S. government's interactions with Native people, how do you understand DAPL's construction in that historical context?
11. What is your understanding of non-Natives' ideas about DAPL?
12. Do these views influence your reasons for opposing/supporting the pipeline?

13. Did you have any interactions with non-Native survey teams who surveyed the DAPL corridor for cultural sites? What about Native survey teams?
14. Were you or are you involved in the legal battles against DAPL? Can you describe those experiences?
15. What were the perceptions of non-Native members of legal teams, from both sides, of Lakota claims about the significance of cultural sites and the potential disruption of Lakota spiritual traditions if DAPL was constructed?

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