

**STANDING BETWEEN RESERVATION AND NATION:  
INDIGENOUS PERFORMANCE IN NORTH AMERICA  
AFTER THE END OF THE INDIAN WARS**

by

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## **Standing Between Reservation and Nation:**

### **Indigenous performance in North America after the end of the Indian Wars**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

This dissertation asserts that performance as a means of representation has a profound connection to the political position and projects of Indigenous peoples in North America. Through three case studies, my project is a constellational history of Indigenous performance's decolonial imaginary and enactment. I theorize that the act of standing -- both figuratively standing for, i.e. representation, as well as the physical act of standing -- is a visible decolonial intervention into historical narratives of the Americas constructed and upheld by national (i.e. nation-state based) politics. Drawing from theatre and performance studies methodologies and historiographies, border theory, and coloniality, I argue that performances by Indigenous women function as critical moments of standing that destabilize and reconfigure nation-state bound histories, narratives, and borders. This is explored through three case studies of Indigenous women's performances that span the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the first discusses Princess White Deer's vaudeville and Broadway performances in the 1910s-1920s and questions of citizenship; the second examines Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's acts of standing during the protests of the American Indian Movement from 1968-1976 and questions of sovereignty; and the third analyzes Monique Mojica's play and production of *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* and a decolonial dramaturgy in the 1990s. As a whole, this project points to the complicated political position of Indigenous peoples in North America and the necessity of acts of decolonial imagining

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## **PREFACE**

This has been a long journey, and I have many people to thank. First thanks are due to my advisor Lisa Jackson-Schebetta for taking me aside after her seminar on the conquest my very first semester of grad school and asking if I had considered the Americas, instead of locating my research within the United States. That was the first step of a reorientation that eventually lead to this project. Thanks also to my chair's patience, guidance, and thought-provoking comments. Thanks to my committee for supporting this project. Without Don Mangone's generosity in gifting me so many wonderful books and resources on Indigenous drama when he retired, I believe this project would have gone an entirely different direction, and so my thanks also go to Don. Writing, while primarily a solitary engagement, requires a great amount of support- thanks go to David Bisaha, Esther Terry, Vivian Appler, Diego Villada, Dahlia Al-Habieli, Claire Syler, Ariel Nereson, Kristi Good, Paige Strasburgh, and many others for their advice, for reading this work, and for listening to my ideas, and giving productive and wonderful feedback and encouragement. Thank you to my mother, Leslie Molldrem, for her patience and her keen editing eye. I primarily write in cafes, and so thanks also go to Biddles Escape, where much of this was written, and the staff and regulars who kindly listened to me and worked in solidarity. Thanks and ever thanks to my husband, John Harkulich, who has stood by me throughout this process and believed in me.



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION: POCAHONTAS AND AFTER**

I began writing about Pocahontas in performance in 2005, as part of my undergraduate honors thesis on storytelling and early American playwriting at Wellesley College. While this project is not explicitly about Pocahontas, the questions that I ask and the stories I explore are deeply influenced by the story and legacy of that Powhatan woman. I came to this project in a roundabout way, which, I suppose, given the constellational nature of this project is appropriate. In 2005, I did not intend to spend a lot of time working on Pocahontas. Twelve years later I am still working on the afterlives of Pocahontas in the Americas. In the midst of my coursework, it became clear to me that the 19<sup>th</sup> century redface performances of Pocahontas that I had begun studying in 2005 did not fill the most urgent gap in the field. I felt that writing about redface, even in critique, would reiterate the absence in the academy of literature on and about Indigenous performers. My project, while still dealing with the legacy of Pocahontas, instead highlights and theorizes the performances by Indigenous women in the United States, Canada, and Mexico as decolonial acts, and it began from an impulse to decolonize my own work.

During my initial research for this project I found myself listening to singer-songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie (Piapot Plains Cree). While my research on Sainte-Marie has not made it into the final version of this document, her music has been both inspirational and foundational to my thinking on this project. I stumbled onto Buffy Sainte-Marie when researching Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, the central figure of chapter two. They were friends, and Sainte-Marie has

written Anna Mae into several of her songs. Buffy Sainte-Marie has been a part of the folk music scene since the 1960s. She was a member of the Greenwich village music scene that included Leonard Cohen, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and many others. Her songs, like “Cod’ine” and “Universal Soldier” were covered by top recording artists such as Donovan and Janis Joplin. “Universal Soldier” was written as a protest song, and many of her songs are part of the warp and weave of protest music born out of the 1960s. Her music is often political and reflects her experience as an Indigenous woman who was born on a reservation in Saskatchewan, and navigates the world of professional music. The songs incorporate Indigenous lived experiences as well as traditional folk song elements while critiquing the government.

Songs like “My Country Tis of Thy People (We’re dying)” (1964) and “Now That The Buffalo’s Gone”(1964) spoke of the dire situation that many Indigenous peoples living on reservations throughout the United States and Canada found themselves in. These songs earned Sainte-Marie both critical acclaim and the ire of government officials who reacted poorly to her critique of the government on popular radio. Sainte-Marie claims she was blacklisted by the Johnson administration during the height of the Red Power movement.<sup>1</sup> Her music, as she intended, has opened my ears and my mind to the sorrows and joys of her lived experience as an Indigenous woman. Her voice and music exist in a cultural borderland between the reservation and the nation, a nation founded on settler colonial principles.

I must also credit Buffy Sainte-Marie lyrics as the inspiration for the title of this dissertation and the concept of standing. The song “Bury My heart at Wounded Knee” is Sainte-Marie’s account of Anna Mae Aquash’s life, and it contains the following lyric: “I learned a

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<sup>1</sup> Blair Stonechild. *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It’s My Way*. (Markham, ON: Fifth House, 2012).

safety rule/I don't know who thank/don't stand between the federal marshals/ and the corporate tank." The lyric is a warning about how to survive. It also illuminates the stakes of what standing (up for) yourself/your people/the environment/your values/your culture can mean. There is not much room for humanity between the federal marshals and the corporate tank. Likely, there is violence and death in that space. The twin forces, sometimes in tandem and sometimes at cross-purposes, of the government and capitalism create a situation of life and death for those who refuse to be invisible, for those who stand.

This dissertation asserts that performance as a means of representation has a profound connection to the political position and projects of Indigenous peoples in North America. Through three case studies, my project is a constellational history of Indigenous performance's decolonial imaginary and enactment. I theorize that the act of standing -- both figuratively standing for, i.e. representation, as well as the physical act of standing -- is a visible decolonial intervention into historical narratives of the Americas constructed and upheld by national (i.e. nation-state based) politics. My three case studies span the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the first discusses Princess White Deer's vaudeville and Broadway performances in the the 1910s-1920s and questions of citizenship; the second covers Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's acts of standing during the protests of the American Indian Movement from 1968-1976 and questions of sovereignty; and the third analyzes Monique Mojica's play and production of *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* and a decolonial dramaturgy in the 1990s.

Drawing from the methodologies and historiographies of theatre and performance studies, as well as border theory, and coloniality, I argue that performances by Indigenous women function as critical moments of standing that destabilize and reconfigure nation-state bound histories, narratives, and borders which in turn reshapes the way we understand the past

and the world around us. Performance, in its ephemerality, is a method of remembering the past and of imagining potential futures, despite the lack of written records. Assimilation policies, in both the United States and Canada, detrimentally affected the cultural legacy of nations like the Haudenosaunee, the Oglala Lakota, and the Mi'kmaq. My work relies on Diana Taylor's concept of the repertoire as cultural memory passed down through the actions of the body across generations. I simultaneously rely on archival materials, seeking to destabilize the binary between archive and repertoire in productive ways. My work is a performance history; yet, it is also intended as an act of scholarly allyship with the Indigenous communities, an act of complex and distinct representation of these performers within the academy.

### **1.1 A NOTE ON INDIGENOUS NAMING**

As a point of clarification and as an entry point into the conversation of borders and identities, I'd like to address the ways in which language is used to categorize people. At the point of contact, European explorers/conquerors/ began to use language to mark the peoples who occupied this land as other, initially through the word "Indian." The entire history, problematic as it is, of the word Indian in the context of the Americas is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but its colonial roots misidentifying a continent and thereby its people are tied to a political project that this dissertation is invested in breaking apart. To that end, while many of my sources will use the term "Indian", in my own writing I will not. Since many of these terms are loaded, and also tied to the interaction between the people and the state in which they reside, I will be using the term Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples, as a term, encompasses multiple networks and identities within North America. In Canada, often, Indigenous peoples who have

specific tribal/nation designations and the Canadian government use the term First Nation. In the United States, Indigenous peoples have sometimes embraced Native American, or American Indian. In Mexico, the terms Native Mexicans, or Mexican Indian is sometimes used. My use of the word Indigenous encompasses all of these designations, but also de-emphasizes the role of the colonial state in categorizing people.

Indigenous, however, is a general term that can erase important nuances. Whenever possible I will use the specific identifiers that my subjects use to refer to themselves. In my research, I have learned that many of the tribal names taught in schools are Anglicized. Wherever possible I will utilize the Indigenous tribal name, with a footnote that elucidates the other names. For example, Princess Esther White Deer- the subject of my first chapter- was a member of the Mohawk tribe. Mohawk is a Dutch corruption of a description of the area that the tribe occupied. The term they use for themselves from their own language is Kanien'kehá:ka. The Kanien'kehá:ka are a member of what is often called the Iroquois Nation, however Iroquois is a French corruption of an Algonquin insult and the word from their own language that they use to describe themselves is Haudenosaunee. This type of clarification puts the colonial vocabulary in context and privileges Indigenous language. Language, especially in how a person self-identifies, is an important cultural marker. It is my hope that this type of clarity and care towards Indigenous naming practices will de-center colonial and imperial practices that make nuances of Indigenous culture invisible.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS: INDIGENOUS DECOLONIAL PERFORMANCE

In this project I argue that performance is an essential form of both survivance and of decolonial action for Indigenous women. Performance, be it on-stage or in a protest, is a moment of negotiation. These women, through their work, negotiate identities and cultural borderlands. I also argue that these performances are decolonial, in both imagination and in action. To that end this project is in conversation with scholars in Native studies, in Latin American Studies, and Post-colonial studies.

Most predominantly I am in conversation with Walter D. Mignolo and Anibal Quijano whose proposal of Coloniality/Modernity/Decoloniality is a central concept in this dissertation. Quijano and Mignolo argue that the distinction of modernity arises out of the colonial moment and that coloniality and modernity are intrinsically linked. Coloniality includes the structures of colonialism that linger past the colonial moment and support the power structures of modern society. The lens of coloniality makes evident the interwoven aspects of race, gender, class, religion, and sexuality that are bound in colonial power structures. Coloniality creates a multiplicity of binaries; i.e. Male and Female, White and Other, Christian and Other, Heterosexual or Homosexual. The power structures (including the post-colonial) left in contemporary society from colonization help to privilege the white heterosexual Christian man.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." trans. Michael Ennis. *Neplanta: Views from South*, Volume 1, Issue 3, 2000. 533-580, and Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations. Durham [N.C.]: (Duke University Press, 2011). See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 240-70. doi:10.1080/09502380601162548.

Quijano calls this process Coloniality/Modernity, and the logic that upholds Coloniality/Modernity creates a world where skin color can delineate the difference between who can and cannot be treated as property, who can and cannot be treated as a human being. The logic of coloniality is the logic that allows for slavery, that creates the borders of reservations. It is the logic that supports assimilationist policies. Coloniality denies a multiplicity of human experience as valid and worthwhile. Mignolo picks up Quijano's theorization of Coloniality/Modernity and refers to coloniality as "the darker side of western modernity," i.e. that the oppressive power structures that guide contemporary government are the ugly underbelly of the narrative of the progress of western civilization. Mignolo pushes past identifying the structures of coloniality towards identifying decolonial options.<sup>3</sup> He identifies that it is not enough to change the content of the conversation, to decolonize "the terms of the conversation must change."<sup>4</sup> Changing the terms involves "disobedience and delinking" from disciplinary conversations that do not upend control of knowledge. Decolonial possibilities are first an act of imagination, of creating a "what if" possibility that articulates an alternative way of being; i.e. that changes the terms. My third case study in particular, is in conversation with Emma Pérez's *Decolonial Imaginary* that articulates methods of creating decolonial literary and artistic work.

I am also drawing on Indigenous scholars like Gerald Vizenor (Anishnabbe), Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca), and Adrienne Keene (Cherokee Nation). Stories are central to building identity and community. Ernest Stromberg and Gerald Vizenor in literary studies introduces the rhetoric of survivance in Indigenous American literature. This concept stresses the importance of the continuation of stories that "create a sense of narrative resistance to absence,

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<sup>3</sup> Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*.

<sup>4</sup> Mignolo. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*. 122

literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimhood. Native survivance is an active sense of presence in historical absence, the dominance of cultural simulations, and manifest manners.”<sup>5</sup> In performance this resistance to absence is meant both in the textual sense in terms of scripts and in terms of an enactment of resistance. Survivance is a means to allow the possibility of decolonization. Survivance is a means of cultural survival and resistance. Mishuana Goeman takes these literary survivances further arguing that Indigenous women map the land, and that stories through the land constitute community. Storied-land and mapping is central to Indigenous identity, and is an text of survivance. I also utilize Adrienne Keene’s arguments about Indigenous identity’s continued struggle for representation amidst the stereotypes and sports mascots that devalue Indigenous lives.<sup>6</sup>

Performance is a means of enacting these stories of survivance, that resist and that I argue can decolonize. Goeman argues that performance enacts Avery Gordon’s concept of “complex personhood”, that is “complex personhood means that those called ‘Other’ are never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ernest Stromberg, ed. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006). and Gerald Vizenor. *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*.( Lincoln, US: Bison Books, 2009). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10340980>. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Adrienne Keene. *Native Appropriations*. Nativeappropriations.com

<sup>7</sup>Avery Gordon quoted in Goeman. “Goeman, Mishuana. “Introduction to Indigenous Performances: Upsetting the Terrains of Settler Colonialism.” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (January 1, 2011): 1–18. doi:10.17953/aicr.35.4.4g4l8435059r0g31. 5.



Stories and narratives that challenge absence, resist tragic lenses, and create space are means to decolonize Indigenous existence. Decolonizing involves survivance, but it does more than survivance. Decolonial acts change the terms of the conversation, and survivance can be understood as a means of developing and remembering those different terms.

Colonialism within the United States, Canada, and to an extent in Mexico, is a form of settler colonialism. There is no post-colonial moment because the settlers never left, instead the settlers created new countries and then created reservations for Indigenous peoples who were removed and displaced from their ancestral lands.<sup>8</sup> For Indigenous tribal nations, the question of Sovereignty becomes central to an individual's relationship to their culture, to the nation surrounding their reservation, and to their ability to travel. Sovereignty, that is the ability to self-govern within the boundaries of your nation's land and to treat with other nations, is denied to most Indigenous tribal nations within the United States and Canada. This creates pressure on Indigenous peoples to conform to projects of coloniality/modernity in order to survive. It also deeply politicizes space and land. I utilize Doreen Massey's conception of space "as the simultaneity of stories so far," a concept that transforms land in storied space, which as Goeman

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<sup>8</sup>For further work on Settler Colonialism see: Tracey Banivanua-Mar and Penelope Edmonds, eds. *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Arvin, Maile, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill. "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy." *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 8–34. doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0006. Audra Simpson. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. (Duke University Press, 2014). and Lorenzo Veracini. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

says builds community.<sup>9</sup> I argue, especially in the second chapter, that performance asserts sovereignty and excavates the simultaneity of space--which is both an act of survivance and a decolonial act because it can change the terms of the conversation about borders and land rights.

### 1.3 METHODS OF THE DISSERTATION

“The history of peoples with a history is, as they say, the history of class struggle; the history of people without history is, we should say at least with equal conviction the history of their struggle against the state.”- Hardt and Negri<sup>10</sup>

My project, at its core, is a performance history of twentieth century Indigenous women that is positioned within intersections of coloniality, feminism, and border theory. These women are members of groups of people who have been historically marginalized and/or erased from historical records. My case studies, which span the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the present moment, lie at this critical intersection and require a complex understanding of the relationship between coloniality and history, history and performance, the borders that separate and categorize these women, and women and gender’s roles within these borders. This project is also a history of histories, all three of my case studies involve performances that decolonize historical narratives and rewrite/dance/enact an alternative narrative of the past.

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<sup>9</sup> Doreen Massey. *For Space*. (SAGE, 2005). 9

<sup>10</sup> Hardt and Negri quoted in José Rabasa. *Without History: Subaltern Studies, the Zapatista Insurgency, and the Specter of History*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010). 139.

In order to frame how I understand these women as members of Indigenous peoples' positionality I employ José Rabasa's concept of "without history."<sup>11</sup> For Rabasa, to be without history is not the same as being without a sense of past, it is rather to be absent from or outside of state projects, "official" histories, and narrative structures borne of Eurocentrism. Rabasa uses *without* as a way to clarify a group's position in relationship to state projects, projects that are inherently tied to political processes of colonization and modernity. Those groups who are "without", viewed by those who are within, are construed as pre-history and therefore pre-modern from a Western perspective. Often, pre-modern equates to a position of less-than human within historical records. This tendency seeps into the ways in which contemporary society views these people who are without history. For example, each year at Halloween many white college students will dress up as "sexy Indians", or another version of this pernicious costume, with no regards for the culture they are appropriating because they do not see it as a living culture. The culture/people/race is a costume to the dominant culture and has no connection to actual living people. For many who have a place within the state's history, Indigenous Americans are often reduced to Halloween costumes and school mascots. They are no longer living human beings, but rather objects of pre-history in western culture. The students who dress up as the "Sexy Indian" have been taught that "Indians" no longer exist, perhaps not directly, but through history books that frame Indigenous cultures as part of the past.<sup>12</sup> The young Cherokee boy, if he reads the same history textbook, will come to understand himself as outside and absent from that version of history.

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<sup>11</sup>Rabasa. *Without History*: 13.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Adrienne K, member of the Cherokee nation, writes about the problem of Indian costumes and mascots at length and with great argumentation on her blog *Native Appropriations*.

While Rabasa is not explicitly a performance historian, his conceptualization of the Zapatistas as/and the Subaltern in his book *Without History*, is formative to my thinking about indigeneity and can transfer effectively to the discipline of theatre and performance studies. While engaging with the colonial past, he works towards a recuperation of Indigenous values and meaning in conversation and in opposition to history, History, and histories. Rabasa makes a space to engage with different epistemologies of the past. His work frames my historical methodology, forcing an awareness of the colonial and imperial influences of historical projects and utilizing different sources that are often marked as outside of history --even dismissed as worthless-- to challenge accepted understandings and uses of the past.

In order to articulate performance's relationship to history, I use the works of Diana Taylor and Patricia Ybarra to frame how I think about performance as both a meaning making event and as an act of historiography. These two scholars work in conversation with Rabasa's conceptualization of indigeneity and history. Taylor theorizes that performance itself is often outside of historical discourse.<sup>13</sup> While Diana Taylor is most well known for *The Archive and the Repertoire*, I will not be directly utilizing that framework for my case studies. Instead, I am engaging with Taylor's ideas of performance as history from her article "Performance and/as History" in *The Drama Review*, an idea that Patricia Ybarra builds on in her book *Performing Conquest*. As Taylor writes "If we take a historical look at the tension between performance and history,... it has been strategically positioned outside of history, rendered invalid as a form of cultural transmission, in short *made* un- and anti-historical by conquerors and colonists who

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<sup>13</sup> Diana Taylor. "Performance And/As History." *TDR: The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 67–86. doi:10.1162/105420406776092421. 70.

wanted to monopolize power.”<sup>14</sup> Taylor values performances as a viable and useful means for the transmission of knowledge, for Taylor a narrative and understanding of the past can be transferred through the act of performance. Ybarra builds on Taylor’s concept in her work on performances of the conquest in Tlaxcala, Mexico. Ybarra claims that a sense of history is transferred from performer to audience member during the performance, but she adds to this that the act of performing- of creating, crafting, practicing and putting it before an audience- is in itself a mode of historiography. In Tlaxcala the performers and community embody these deeply political narratives of the conquest and through the repetitive performances year after year “utilize and revise the assumptions embedded in them.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, performance can be an act of history, and the act of creation is a method of historiography. Considering Rabasa, Taylor and Ybarra, my project contends that performance, as a political and cultural tool, becomes a way for those who are without history to revise history from outside of the archive. It is with this understanding of performance as means of meaning-making that my dissertation will examine the works of Esther White Deer, the Protests of the AIM movement, and the plays and performances of Monique Mojica and Jesusa Rodríguez.

Border theory is inherent in thinking of the binary between absence and presence, within and without, that informs Rabasa’s work. Central to the parameters of my project is that performance enacted by the people that Rabasa calls “with” history forces the borders between Indigenous and westernized America to be made visible; and my project employs an idea of border that encompasses both physical and cultural boundaries. I use Gloria Anzaldúa’s writings

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<sup>14</sup> Taylor, “Performance And/As History,” 70.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia A. Ybarra. *Performing Conquest: Five Centuries of Theater, History, and Identity in Tlaxcala, Mexico*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009). 26.

to understand what the border looks like to those who are without. Anzaldúa's position as a queer chicana looking at the border places her as a member of a group "without" history. Anzaldúa defines borders broadly stating: "the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the southwest. In fact, the borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy."<sup>16</sup> Borderlands, and borders, for Anzaldúa are not only national boundaries (as she writes explicitly about the border between Mexico and the United States), but are also the cultural borders of our embodied experience. The borders between black and white, rich and poor, healthy and sick, straight and queer, are multiple and often intersectional. Anzaldúa grounds her understanding of the world through lived experience which takes place in the body and in space, thereby making the intersectionality of space and embodied experience a constant and continual process. Identity is a far more complex than the either/or forced binary of a physical border. Borders require negotiation, and performances across and in the borders require a willingness on the part of the performer to make their work understood (or simply confronted) by the audience on both sides of the border. While not all artists are concerned with being fully understood, the performers in my case studies are explicitly chosen because their works are attempts to make their voice heard and body visible across and/or within the border, often for political reasons. Each of my case studies negotiates the borders between cultures and space, as well as the ways that they confront the past in their present.

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<sup>16</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007). 19.

The act of crossing, re-crossing and interacting with the border makes the bodies' movement through space the focal point and the embodied journey becomes the way in which meaning can be redefined. As Ramón Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young write in *Performance in The Borderlands*, utilizing a lens of borders opens up the ways in which the physical and cultural world interact to make meaning. Paige A. McGinley gives an example of how this might work in her contribution to *Performance in the Borderlands* through an examination of the staged performance of Folk Songs by John Lomax and Lead Belly.<sup>17</sup> John Lomax, an intrepid folk song collector of the 1930s, was able to criss-cross the U.S. South, prison walls, and black communities in order to collect his "folk songs" because of his status as a White U.S. citizen. He then performed the songs on lecture circuits and for the Modern Language Association conference. When Lomax hired Huddie Ledbetter (otherwise known as LeadBelly) to perform the songs for him, Ledbetter's status as a formerly incarcerated black man crossing into White American space gave a kind of authenticity to Lomax's lecture circuit performances. McGinley's essay looks at the borders between spaces, and the racialized nature of these borders in the 1930's United States, to understand how the same song can take on an entirely different set of meanings when performed by two different bodies. Focusing on the border opens up a multiplicity of meanings and challenges assumed truths about performances.

Finally, my case studies and research are viewed through the lens of women's positions within the complex relationships of performance, coloniality, and history. Indigenous women are

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<sup>17</sup>Ramón H. Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young, eds. *Performance in the Borderlands*. Performance Interventions. (Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). 128

doubly marginalized through what María Lugones calls the “colonial/modern gender system.”<sup>18</sup> First they are marked as the exotic other, and then through the heterosexual gender system that arrived with colonialism, women are marked as weaker and voiceless in deference to men. Official state histories, built on colonial systems of power, mark these women as twice ‘without’, both for their race and then again for their gender. Lugones’ intersectional approach to gender’s position makes it clear that Indigenous women must cross the borders that mark their identity in order to be seen and heard. Recouping women’s voices and performances and the way they remake history with their bodies is a decolonial act. Positioning each case study within Lugones’ complex understanding of gender in the colonial-based power system of the Americas prevents analyses based only on race, or only on gender, creating an argument that is intersectional.

Indigenous women face increased threats of violence in crossing borders, cultural or real, because of the amount of power that they are speaking/performing/enacting against. As Anzaldúa writes in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, even women attempting to cross the border in hiding are particularly vulnerable to violence. She writes of the position of the Coyote in a U.S/Mexico border crossing; a person who can make any demand on the woman knowing she will comply because of the power he has to expose her and control her journey’s end. These women are often met with death, jail, rape, and other atrocities. These are the women who are undocumented, and so the risk for them is to be seen and/or heard. What of the women who are trying to be seen? By choosing to make their bodies the site of meaning making through performance, they are bravely placing themselves in a precarious position. The choice to perform has put them at the intersection of power. When they perform their truth to power, power

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<sup>18</sup> María Lugones. “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 186–219. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01156.x. 187.



threatens and sometimes enacts violence in order to silence them. In my case studies, these women have made conscious decisions to stand between where they've come from and the state that others them. It is in this act of standing that they are in a pivotal moment of power and they choose to act. There are real consequences for their actions, sometimes positive and sometimes not. For Annie Mae Aquash, the AIM activist in my second case study, her choice to stand between results in her death, but it doesn't make her action any less powerful or important.

#### **1.4 RELATED WORK IN THE THEATRE STUDIES FIELD**

The field of Indigenous American theatrical history within the U.S. field of theatre and performance studies is fairly sparse and the majority of relevant sources were written in the late 1980s to the present. From the literature there are several reasons for the current growth of the field. First, as Ann Haugo pointed out in her dissertation "Staging intervention: Native women, decolonization, and the American Theatre", this scarcity is partially caused by scholars like Oscar Brockett and Bernard Hewitt whose foundational texts on the history of the American theatre deny any Indigenous tradition and discount its potential for serious academic study. Secondly, as Ann Haugo, Birgit Däwes, and Henning Schäfer write in the edited collection *Indigenous North American Drama: A Multivocal History*, it wasn't until the 1970's in both the United States and Canada that indigenous peoples embraced the western theatrical forms and spaces to create their own theatre. While their plays are often based in a much longer performance tradition, the publication and performance history in traditional western theatrical spaces begins in the 1970s. The creation of these dramas, and those that followed in the 1980s and 1990s, led to the publication of multiple anthologies. Publication is often an entryway into

academia, and with greater access to these “Native Dramas”, more critical scholarly work followed.

Most of the scholarly works that occur prior to the 1970’s deal with the image of the Native American presented in “redface” in works like John Augustus Stone’s *Metamora*. They deal with the making of the stage Indian: the figure of the “Noble Savage”. Works like Eugene Jones’s *Native Americans as shown on the stage, 1753-1916* create taxonomies of these character types, and there are quite a few dissertations and books that explore and critique the image of the stage Indian in this period.<sup>19</sup> Both Joseph Roach and Rosemarie Bank have taken the image of the stage Indian and put it in conversation with performances by Indigenous people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars have written explicitly about Indigenous performers playing the role of the savage Indian in Wild West Shows, which is an area of scholarship that my work on *Esther White Deer* in my first case study will build upon.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dissertations include: Thompson, Elizabeth J. “The Princess, the Convert, and the Schoolgirl: Indian Girls and Anglo Desire in American Literature, 1595--1934.” Ph.D., The University of Tulsa, 2008. ; Galloway, Margaret E. “Indian Princess or Indian Squaw: The Stereotype Lives On.” M.A., Texas Woman’s University, 1986; and Lush, Rebecca M. “The ‘Other’ Woman: Early Modern English Representations of Native American Women, 1579--1690.” Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance. The Social Foundations of Aesthetic Forms*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). and Rosemarie K. Bank. *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860*. Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Some of these include: Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000). Robert M. Lewis, ed. *From Traveling Show to vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910*. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Sam Maddra. *Hostiles?: The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). L.G. Moses,

Dance is the performance tradition that has seen the most scholarly attention with regards to Indigenous performers. While the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs attempted to ban traditional Indigenous dance practices, many of them managed to survive. Through “re-enactments” in Wild West Shows and in hidden ceremonies on various reservations the traditional dance practices continue today and can be seen at annual Pow-Wows. In dance scholarship, Jacqueline Shea Murphy’s book *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* does an excellent job connecting the narratives of Indigenous dance practices and putting them in conversation with major dance figures and movements (i.e. Modernism, Ballet etc) in the twentieth century. Shea Murphy’s work is one of the few works that span the chronological gap between scholarship on Wild West Dance shows and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. My own project will do similar work to Shea Murphy’s book by putting performance practices from the beginning and end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in conversation.

Related, but outside of the performance studies field, the Indigenous Americas series of books from the University of Minnesota Press highlights Indigenous voices in theoretical, literature, indigenous contemporary experience, and historical fields. Jodi Byrd’s *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* considers how U.S. Empire operates through

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*Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and the Wild West Show*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). Roger A. Hall, *Performing the American Frontier, 1870-1906*. Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama. (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). The only book on Esther White Deer is a popular biography Patricia Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. (Flint & Feather Press, 2013).

images of indigeneity in political, literary, and historical work. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nation* by Mishuna Goeman analyzes indigenous women's literary works to understand how the land informs their worldview and how their writing, in turn, remaps the world. Outside of the University of Minnesota Press Series, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* is a decolonial restructuring of popular national history. This series, and other works are all from the last decade. Prior to that Philip Deloria's 1998 work *Playing Indian*, as well as his 2004 *Indians in Unexpected Places*, examine the ways in which the image of the Indian has been used in popular culture (i.e. The Boston Tea Party) and what using that image means.

#### **1.4.1 Related Dissertations**

There are several dissertations that relate to my own work, although none duplicate my project. Jimmy Noriega's 2011 dissertation "Staging Presence/embodying Absence: Performance and Protest in the Americas" considers some of the same problems, namely what does it mean to embody Indigenous and Chicano issues in the Americas, however his work is primarily centered on Latin American contemporary theatre companies. Ann Haugo's 1999 dissertation "Staging Intervention: Native Women, Decolonization, and the American Theatre" comes closest in scope to my own work, as it centers on the inherent colonialism that pervades U.S. History in relationship to the place and work of Native Women artists. Haugo's work predates the theorists I am working with to frame coloniality, and while she mentions the problem of the border, Haugo's dissertation is primarily concerned with U.S. based Native Performers and their history. She is particularly invested in the Spiderwoman Theater, and the question of how Native women artists engage with colonialism in their work. Jill Carter's dissertation "Repairing the Web:

Spiderwoman's Children Staging the New Human Being” also focuses on Spiderwoman Theater, outlining their work, performance practices, and artistic legacy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Julie Pearson-Little Thunder’s 2006 dissertation “Native Emergence Theater, 1975--1985, and the Enactment of Indian Theatrical Space by Red Earth Performing Arts Company, Daystar Dance Company and American Indian Theater Company of Oklahoma” and Tiffany Noell’s 2011 dissertation “Confronting Convention: Discourse and Innovation in Contemporary Native American Women’s Theatre” both focus on the contemporary Indigenous theatre scene that has grown dramatically since the 1970’s. More recently, Heidi Nees, in her 2012 dissertation “‘Indian’ Summers: Querying Representations of Native American Cultures in Outdoor Historical Drama”, focused on the stakes of performing native in historical outdoor tourist sites like “Tecumseh!” in Ohio. Adron Ferris’s dissertation, “These Hills, This Trail: Cherokee Outdoor Drama and the Power of Change / Change of Power”, continues to interrogate what place and consequence tourism through historical drama has through performances that occur at the beginning and end of the Trail of Tears.

## **1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Through three case study chapters I ask: what does decolonial Indigenous performance look like? How does it enact change? In chapter one, “Standing For: Princess White Deer and the Praxis of History, Representation and Decolonial Dance,” I examine the performances, both on stage and off, of Esther Georgette Deer. Better known as the vaudeville and Broadway Star Princess White Deer, I argue she constructed and performed her Indigenous dance acts as a performed historiography. Her act blended traditional Indigenous dance practices with

contemporary dances, and allowed her to navigate and challenge stereotypes. While Princess White Deer lived from 1891-1992, I examine her career and life from 1917-1924. These years frame her performances, and her representation of Indigenous people as capable of existing within modernity, within the political moment of world war I and the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

In Chapter two, titled “Anna Mae Pictou Aquash and the Stakes of Protest for Indigenous Women in the American Indian Movement,” I explore protest as performance and ideas of sovereignty in decolonial action. Anna Mae Pictou Aquash was the most visible woman leader within the American Indian Movement (AIM), and she was murdered by her own people. In this chapter I trace the means of AIM’s protest as a decolonial action, and its failure to decolonize gender as well as state relationships in Aquash’s death. AIM’s protests create opportunities for decolonization of space through the act of standing. This standing, I argue, is an act of historiography that excavates the past and changes the linear nature of nation-state based histories by adding to the simultaneity of space. I do this through the examination of three of AIM’s protests where Anna Mae was present: Thanksgiving Day 1970, The Trail of Broken Treaties, and The Occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. AIM’s protests and calls for sovereignty made them a threat in the eyes of the FBI. I analyze the hostility between the FBI and AIM through Aquash’s death, and the role and status of Indigenous peoples within the United States.

Chapter three, titled “Giving Voice to Pocahontas in the 1990s: Decolonial Dramaturgy in Indigenous Women’s playwriting,” examines the potential for decolonial dramaturgy as a means of decolonial historiography through a close reading and performance history of Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*. First I articulate what a decolonial

dramaturgy can look like through an examination of Mojica's work and the work of Spiderwoman Theater. I then examine how Mojica, and other Indigenous women playwrights in the 1990s, utilize figures like Pocahontas, La Malinche, Sacagawea and other female Indigenous historical figures to give women a voice the past. This is a method of historiography, I argue, that decolonizes beyond what the archive provides. Finally, I examine the hemispheric nature of this decolonial dramaturgical history in relationship to border theories and the creation of NAFTA.

As I mentioned in the opening of the introduction, this project focuses on highlighting presence in the face of overwhelming absence and trauma. In my conclusion I return to a continued need for Indigenous performers to confront presence and absence in their performances. Decolonization is continuous work, and the forces of modernity/coloniality are also continually reinforcing themselves in the structures of the state. Buffy Sainte-Marie is still singing about the ways for Indigenous people to imagine their future in 2016, work she began in the 1960s. The last song on *Power In The Blood*, her most recent album, is titled "Carry It On," and it is a call to survivance. In it she sings "It ain't money that makes the world go round/That's only temporary confusion/ It ain't governments that make the people strong/ It's the opposite illusion/Look right now and you will see/ they're only here by the skin of our teeth as it is so take heart and take care of your link with Life." Survivance and decolonization are still needed.

## 2.0 STANDING FOR; PRINCESS WHITE DEER AND THE PRAXIS OF HISTORY, REPRESENTATION AND DECOLONIAL DANCE

“When you’re invisible, every representation matters.”- Adrienne Keene

Esther Louise Georgette Deer, or Princess White Deer as she was known on stage, was a Kanien’kehá:ka dancer and performer whose career spanned from Wild West show acts in the 1900s with her family, to solo acts on the Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit in the 1910-20s, as well as featured roles in Broadway musical reviews from 1919 to the mid-1940s. This chapter focuses on White Deer’s performances between 1911 to 1925, a period of time where her celebrity positioned her in the nexus of politics and performance during the Indian Citizenship Act and the Pueblo dance controversy. Princess White Deer gained fame in the United States during World War I and the post-war rise of nativism that included the Immigration Act of 1924.<sup>22</sup> Racial stereotypes were rampant in the media and on-stage. Most Indigenous peoples lived either on

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<sup>22</sup> The Immigration Act set quotas for immigration based on percentages of the populations, see: “The Immigration Act of 1924 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives.” Accessed March 11, 2017. <http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail>.; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002), and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (Princeton University Press, 2014).



reservations or in states west of the Mississippi river during this period.<sup>23</sup> The small population of Indigenous peoples living in New York City, and other locations on the east coast, created audiences in these places that rarely had regular interactions with Indigenous peoples. Stereotypes, from history, the media, and popular culture permeated ideas of the Indigenous person as a colonial other. Princess White Deer's created an opportunity through her dances and interactions to challenge stereotypes and offer alternative narratives of Indigenous life.

Take for example this article that chronicles her encounter with a group of Camp Fire Girls after they saw her vaudeville act. Published on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1917 in an unnamed Connecticut newspaper, the article reads:

A real Indian pow-wow took place yesterday afternoon in the sun parlor of The Stratford when Princess Wilder, daughter of Chief Running Deer, the last hereditary chief of the Mohawk and the Iroquois tribes, was entertained at afternoon tea by the Stratford Camp Fire girls. Mrs. Richard Howell of Stratford chaperoned the party.

It all started because the princess said no pow-wow could be held unless everybody was seated on the ground in a circle. So the princess in Indian costume and the Camp Fire girls in their Indian dresses sat in a big circle and were christened with real Indian names by the daughter of a real Indian chief. her name by way is "Ken Toi Kwui Osta," meaning, "Fleet, the White Deer," but on the program at Poli's theatre, where she is appearing this week, she is announced as Princess Wilder.

Yesterday afternoon one of the boxes at Poli's looked like a peace meeting of Indian women, for the Camp Fire girls of Stratford, with their chaperon, were guests of the princess. After the performance, the girls became hostesses at The Stratfield for afternoon tea. Princess Wilder was very much pleased at the compliment paid to her race when the girls wore their Indian dress and the beads each had received for deeds of merit.

The princess told her hostesses that she had been brought up like all Indian babies, strapped on a board, hand carved by her devoted grandparents. She is

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<sup>23</sup> Gibson Campbell and Kay Jung. "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," (Population Division U.S. Census Bureau. Washington DC: September 2002).

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/twps0056.html>

especially fond of appearing in towns where Indian reservations lie in the suburbs and at Syracuse, N. Y., when she appears, the Onondaga Indians always prepare a real pow-wow for her. She was in London at the time of the first big Zeppelin raid and gave her impressions of it. She is quite a linguist, speaking Russian, French, Spanish, English, German, and of course, her native Indian Tongue.<sup>24</sup>

As evidenced in the interaction between the Connecticut Camp Fire Girls and Princess White Deer, the stereotypes presented in her marketing materials (i.e. the “real” Indian Princess angle) were often complicated by her layered performances and her life experiences. These interactions created an act of what Avery Gordon calls complex personhood, which Gordon defines as: “complex personhood means that those called ‘Other’ are never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward.”<sup>25</sup> For example, the article ends with praise of her ability to speak six languages, and her experiences in London during WWI. Although she utilized stereotypes to attract audiences, her interactions on stage and in person created a more nuanced version of her story and resisted reduction to the stereotype that drew the Camp Fire Girls to her performance.

Born on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1891 in New York City, White Deer grew up touring with her family’s stage and Wild West shows.<sup>26</sup> She was a third-generation performer, and her father, uncle, grandfather and mother all toured together under the name The Deer Family when she was

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<sup>24</sup>Newspaper Clippings Folder. Princess White Deer Papers. Kanien’kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, Kahnawake.

<sup>25</sup>Gordon quoted in Goeman. “Introduction to Indigenous Performances: Upsetting the Terrains of Settler Colonialism.” 5.

<sup>26</sup>Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. Location 508.

a child. Esther Louise Georgette Deer was a member of the Kanien'kehá:ka (also known as Mohawk) people, one of the seven tribes that make the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) Nation. The Kanien'keha:ka territory spans the border of the United States and Canada between Quebec, Ontario and Northern New York State. Her family was from the St. Regis reservation (near Hogansburg, NY on the Saint Lawrence River), although the family rarely spent time there. Instead they toured throughout the United States with P.T. Barnum's *Daniel Boone* show and *Texas Jack's Wild West*. In 1901, the family performed at the Pan American exposition in Buffalo, NY. From 1903 to 1915, the Deer family toured through Europe, South Africa, and Russia, until Princess White Deer became a solo act in 1911. When World War I broke out, she returned to the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Princess White Deer performed in a cultural borderland, and I mean that in two ways. First, as an Indigenous woman who grew up away from the reservation, she belonged neither fully to the reservation nor to the culture of New York and other cosmopolitan spaces. Her belonging was liminal, and as evidenced by the article I began this chapter with she attempted to claim belonging to both reservations (i.e. her references to visiting the Onondaga, and her infancy strapped to a board) and to the contemporary white American landscape (i.e. her interactions with young women, and her visit to European society). Other articles from 1917-1918 highlight the reason for White Deer's return to the United States as a desire to do her part in the war effort. She performed for the troops in several training camps, and her vaudeville act included a speech by one of the supporting members of her act that called to the audience to do

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<sup>27</sup> She briefly went back to Liverpool to marry Polish Count Alexis Krasicki in 1917. He died during the war, and she remained single for the rest of her long life. She died at the age of 100 in 1992.

their “duty to suppress German autocracy.”<sup>28</sup> Registered members of Indigenous nations in the United States in 1917-1918 were still considered wards of the state, that is to say children and not citizens. Princess White Deer was both a part of and apart from membership as citizen and an adult within the United States, and yet she vocally supported acts of citizenry during WWI. Her status was liminal, and her status within both reservation and nation were likewise liminal. She didn’t grow up on the reservation, and many “Show Indians”-- that is members of tribes who made their living on stage--were viewed suspiciously for sharing traditions outside their community.<sup>29</sup> While the reservation was often policed and regulated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Wild West shows provided employment and a chance to continue cultural practices (like certain dances) that the BIA legislated against. Wild West shows became spaces of cultural survivance, spaces in which Indigenous people could resist forced cultural assimilation through performance.<sup>30</sup>

I also mean cultural borderland in regards to the stage. Michael Kolbialka points out that the stage is always a borderland between the “real” and “illusionary,” between truth and lies, between everyday and the more-real-than-real of the stage.<sup>31</sup> The act of representing falls in the

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<sup>28</sup>Newspaper Clippings. Princess White Deer Papers. Kanien’kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, Kahnawake.

<sup>29</sup>This is mentioned in the Reginald Laubin and Gladys Laubin. *Indian Dances of North America: Their Importance to Indian Life*. (The Civilization of the American Indian Series. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976.); Galperin *In Search of Princess White Deer*. and McNenly. *Native Performers In The Wild West*.

<sup>30</sup>Gerald Vizenor defines this term in *Native Liberty : Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, ( Lincoln, US: Bison Books, 2009). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10340980>.

<sup>31</sup>Michael Andrzej Kolbialka. “Introduction” in *Of Borders And Thresholds: Theatre History, Practice, and Theory*. Michal Andrzej Kobialka, editor. (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1999) 4.

liminal space between the real and the spectacle, that is the difference between Esther Louise Deer and her stage persona of Princess White Deer. Standing in this chapter is theorized in the act of standing for, an act of representation. She also had the additional burden, because there were so few Indigenous performers on the vaudeville and Broadway stage, of representing both herself and all Indigenous women, which is an impossible task. The primary representation of Indigenous people on the stage from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century on was by white actors in redface performing racist stereotypes of Indigenous people. There was no nuance, no difference acknowledged between Lakota and Cherokee, between Cree and Pueblo.<sup>32</sup> Princess White Deer's task on stage was to represent herself and to represent Indigenous women in challenge to homogenizing stereotypes. Her act of representation has multiple layers of meaning: she represents both Esther Louise Georgette Deer and Princess White Deer, she represents a singular Kanien'kehá:ka woman, all Kanien'kehá:ka women, and all Indigenous women. Her representation, and the so-called authenticity of her dances and identity gained cultural weight that could affect the larger Indigenous population within the country.

In this chapter I argue that Princess White Deer's performances are a decolonial continuation of the complicit survivance of Indigenous culture in popular performance from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through her representation she offered alternative narratives of the history of Indigenous people and offered a different way for the audience to imagine Indigenous peoples within the world. Her challenge of stereotypes through acts of representation allowed her to navigate a society that, until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, treated all Indigenous peoples as wards of the state and not adults capable of negotiating their place within society. I also argue

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<sup>32</sup> See the film Diamond, Neil, and Catherine Bainbridge. *Reel Injun*. Documentary, for a discussion of how these stereotypes continued into film.

that Princess White Deer practiced performative historiography. Her historiography, performed in a cultural borderland, shows the lie of Western History that creates a narrative where Indigenous people are trapped in the past and going extinct. That narrative is based in the logic of colonialism, which denies Indigenous people access to modernity without first abandoning Indigenous cultures and epistemologies. Princess White Deer's performances enacted her relationship to modernity, but they did not embrace modernity. Her performances created a historiography that is born of a repertoire from Wild West Shows--acts of survivance-- that she was able to complicate and decolonize on the vaudeville and Broadway stage through.

This chapter is constructed in two sections. In the first section, I examine and theorize standing as representation within the context of Indigenous performance practices in the United States. I then put Indigenous dancing into the political context of the period through an examination of the Ghost Dance of 1890. This establishes the stakes and context of Princess White Deer's dance within her period. In the second section, I examine Princess White Deer's dancing as a performative decolonial historiographical act. I do this through a series of constellationally (to use Benjamin's term) related events and objects in Princess White Deer's life. First I examine the context of her history dancing in Wild West Show's with her family and acts of what I call complicit survivance. Second, I analyze her status as a Ward of the State through her mother's stamped Russian travel letter. Third, I then contextualize White Deer's vaudeville show "Indians of Past and Present" within coloniality/modernity/decoloniality and acts of survivance. Fourth, I examine Princess White Deer's dancing as part of the Broadway shows *Tip Top* and *Hitchy-Koo 1919*, both of which also involved stereotypical redface performances. Next, I consider the implications of the representation of a celebrity Indigenous dancer like Princess White Deer during the Pueblo Dance controversy and the passage of the

Indian Citizenship Act in 1924. Finally, I consider her final vaudeville act *From Wigwams to White Lights* that she performed as part of a tribute to General Pershing and its decolonial possibilities and complicitness with the state.

## 2.1 REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Why does representation matter? One of the central claims of this dissertation is that “representation matters.”<sup>33</sup> This claim is also a protest cry by current Native American thinkers like Dr. Adrienne Keene, whose work on the blog *Native Appropriations* is influential to my own thinking. Keene’s work lies at the intersection of politics and Indigenous culture, often examining the ways in which Indigenous culture is appropriated and performed in film and culture. Her quote at the beginning of this chapter (“when you’re invisible every representation matters”) was written in the context of the political positions of Indigenous peoples, citing that in 2015 the 115<sup>th</sup> congress had only two indigenous members. Keene expands on power of representation stating: “some of the ways this plays out are tangible—through laws and supreme court cases that systematically take power from our communities—but others are harder to pin down to one instance or person, like the societal-level obsession with outdated Hollywood stereotypes that place Native peoples as in the historic past (or extinct), as war-whooping

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<sup>33</sup> Adrienne Keene. “When you’re invisible, every representation matters: Political edition.”

*NativeAppropriations.com*. 5.17.15. <http://nativeappropriations.com/2015/05/when-youre-invisible-every-representation-matters-political-edition.html>

backward savages, or as imaginary creatures on the level of mermaids and fairies.”<sup>34</sup> While Keene’s assertions regard the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the stereotypes and colonial legacy she cites pre-date Hollywood and effected 20<sup>th</sup> century political positions as well.

Representation can mean a variety of things: it can mean an image that represents something real, it can mean representation in the legal sense that makes you visible in the eyes of the law, it can be standing in place of larger group. Representation is an act of imagination through which we understand the world. Representation matters because representation makes people who are not part of the majority visible to society as a whole. The United States legal and political structure is based on visibility- our house of representatives; our revolutionary war cry of “no taxation without representation”; and the aforementioned legal precedent of visibility in the eyes of the court. Representation is foundational to US society, and it matters because it shapes how we think about people who are different from each other and which voices are able to be heard.

A map is also a means of representation. It helps us to to hold a vast amount of space in our heads, to imagine the landscape that we cannot see all of with only our eyes while standing on the land. It’s helpful to think of a map, one that makes borders real, as an imaginative act because it puts representation as a tool for imagination into perspective. Representation allows us to imagine the world beyond what we personally know. If a map misrepresents the landscape, putting a lake or river where in reality there is no lake or river, it has consequences for the people using the map. If they were travelling and planned to refill their water supply at the non-existent lake, when confronted with a lack of water, this failed representation has the dire consequences of leaving people without a means to quench their thirst and potentially without a means to live.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



Misrepresentation can have equally dire consequences when the representation is not a faulty map, but rather a faulty image or stereotype performed for entertainment.

Visibility, and by extension representation, for Indigenous peoples in North America is deeply tied to colonial and imperial roots. Colonialism deeply impacted the ways in which Indigenous peoples are represented, recorded, and described in histories and popular culture. The power dynamics of colonialism in the Americas value Western (read, European) progress and cultural values (like whiteness, Christianity, and capitalism) over the Indigenous ways of life. The values and hierarchies of colonialism continue into the present moment- what Anibal Quijano calls the Coloniality of Power.<sup>35</sup> Histories and popular culture rely on the values of coloniality in their portrayal of Indigenous people; they are less than the white Christian heroes of history, novels, and stage shows. Coloniality holds up racist representations of people as truth, because they reinforce the dominant power structure. Coloniality is also a system that dictates a relationship between time and geography; coloniality is always already linked to modernity because the logic of colonialism dictates that people from Europe (the colonists) are inherently more advanced (modern). This is the same logic that creates a first-world and a third-world based on a relationship to modernity. This separating logic holds the third world and cultures that do not match the values of modernity in the past- collapsing time into geography. The settler colonialism that shapes the government of the Americas relies on access and claims to land to legitimate the government. This type of colonialism is particularly intended to undermine the land claims of Indigenous peoples.

Histories built on the episteme of coloniality utilize Indigenous people as props, setting them up as what José Rabasa refers to as a group “without history,” a group that is outside of and

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<sup>35</sup> Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America.” 533-580.

absent from official state narratives of history (or as I, following Rabasa, refer to it capital H History).<sup>36</sup> For Indigenous peoples like the Kanien'kehá:ka, their role in history written by the dominant culture is reduced to their interactions with western cultures. Their own past is treated at best as myth and at worst as non-existent. If modernity is derived from western epistemologies then those who do not adhere to that epistemology are not modern, and by extension stuck in the past unable to join society. This holds with how Western histories and popular culture frame Indigenous peoples who reject western epistemologies. The most prominent example is what I refer to as the “last of” narrative, made popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with works like James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *The Last of the Mohicans* and the Edwin Forrest vehicle *Metamora: or The Last of the Wampanoags*<sup>37</sup>. Both were widely popular and reinforced the narrative that the Indigenous people who were not assimilated into white/western/Christian culture could not survive the modern world. They spread the idea that these cultures were dead and gone, when in reality that was not the case. Princess White Deer was occasionally billed as the “last of the Mohawks,” which was a far cry from reality because the Kanien'kehá:ka population was far from decimated on the reservations in New York State and Québec, Canada.<sup>38</sup> This “last of” narrative continues the logic of coloniality and traps Indigenous people into a trope of non-existence, keeping them outside of and absent from history.

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<sup>36</sup> Rabasa. *Without History*.

<sup>37</sup> John Augustus Stone. *Metamora; or The Last of the Wampanoags* in *Metamora & Other Plays*. [America’s Lost Plays, vol. XIV]. Eugene Page, editor. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1941). James Fenimore Cooper, *Leatherstocking Tales: The Library of American Edition*, (New York: Library Of America, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Newspaper Clipping Folder. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

On stage, Indigenous peoples have traditionally been represented by two overarching gendered stereotypes- the Noble Savage and the Indian Princess. The Noble Savage is gendered male, although the stereotype's negative qualities seep into other genders as well. The Noble Savage stereotype has been widely applied to portrayals of Indigenous North Americans in literature, on stage, and on film for the last four hundred years.<sup>39</sup> The stereotype is explained in the name, and it applies to a primitive culture that is untainted or uncorrupted by civilization. For the Westerner, this stereotype exalts Native Americans for their pure inherent nobility (like a Stag or Lion), but simultaneously shuns their undesirable uncivilized nature. The Noble Savage stereotype allows Westerners to fetishize Indigenous religious and spiritual practices as examples of this purer yet undesirable uncivilized culture; it is pure but it should be left in the past. Ultimately this racially charged stereotype leads western cultures to imagine, through the

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<sup>39</sup> The noble savage stereotype exists in early colonial documents from European explorers, and travel documents (like John Smith's 1624 *Generall Historie Of Virginia*) and into political laws and poetry (Thomas Jefferson's policies on Indians, and epic poems honoring the death of the leader Logan, like William Dunlap's "Colooloo: An Indian Tale"(1794). The noble savage was a popular figure on stage, featured in works as early as John Dryden's 1665 *Indian Emperor*. On the North American stage Stone's 1829 *Metamora or The Last of the Wampanoags* began a craze for Indian plays. For a discursive history of the image of the Noble Savage, which is used outside of a U.S. Indigenous context as well, see: Ter. Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, (Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 2001). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10051548> For a discursive look at Indian plays see: Eugene H. Jones, *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage, 1753-1916*. (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1988).

representations of the Noble Savage, that Indigenous peoples are less than human- which is ironic since most Indigenous cultures words for themselves translate as “the human beings.”<sup>40</sup>

The Indian Princess stereotype comes from more specific roots that are tied to conquest and colonialism.<sup>41</sup> Pocahontas has certainly become the most frequently evoked version of the stereotype, though its roots probably predate her. Pocahontas bases us in factual history, however the mythos of Pocahontas is so tied to the ideology of contact and settler colonialism that the mythical Pocahontas rarely resembles the historic figure. Pocahontas is the welcoming figure, and also the permissive figure, of American settler colonialism. In the familiar legend, she risks her own life and betrays her father to save the life of Captain John Smith- the embodiment of colonialism. Pocahontas’s conversion to Christianity reaffirms the superiority of western values. For the settlers and then the reading public, Pocahontas’s friendship and welcome became proof that the colonization was wanted, needed, and superior to the values and ideologies of the

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<sup>40</sup> John Trudell qtd in. Neil Diamond, Christina Fon, Catherine Bainbridge, Jeremiah Hayes, Clint Eastwood, Jim Jarmusch, Graham Greene, et al. *Reel Injun*. Videorecording. National Film Board of Canada, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Many scholars have taken up the stereotype of the Indian Princess, which is best exemplified by the story of Pocahontas. See: Robert S. Tilton. *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative*. Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 83. Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Abrams, Ann Uhry Abrams. *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999. Elizabeth J. Thompson, “The Princess, the Convert, and the Schoolgirl: Indian Girls and Anglo Desire in American Literature, 1595--1934.” Ph.D., The University of Tulsa, 2008.

[http://search.proquest.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/pqdtft/docview/304436357/abstract/1DB3D9261FFB4521PQ/1?account\\_id=14709](http://search.proquest.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/pqdtft/docview/304436357/abstract/1DB3D9261FFB4521PQ/1?account_id=14709). Margaret E. Galloway, “Indian Princess or Indian Squaw: The Stereotype Lives On.” M.A., Texas Woman’s University, 1986.

[http://search.proquest.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/pqdtft/docview/303579392/citation/1DB3D9261FFB4521PQ/2?account\\_id=14709](http://search.proquest.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/pqdtft/docview/303579392/citation/1DB3D9261FFB4521PQ/2?account_id=14709).

Powhatan people. John Smith's travel accounts, and later popular stories, novels, paintings, plays, and movies reify the acceptance of colonial values as truth. Pocahontas's status as the chief's daughter, and then as Princess of the New World after the crowning ceremony that King James commissioned for her father Powhatan, makes her choices more valued in the eyes of the colonists. The audience of mostly white Americans imagines her embrace and salvation of John Smith standing in for the Powhatan people's embrace of colonization, and her permission dissuades guilt becomes permission for settler colonialism.

These two images, the Noble Savage and the Indian Princess, overwhelm any alternative portrayals of Indigenous characters and/or actual Indigenous people on stage. These stereotypes and the mythos of the "last of" trope are the images that the media used to frame Princess White Deer and her performances. A review of her act in a 1917 newspaper evokes these elements, stating: "An Indian princess she is, one of the few royal blood of the famous Mohawk clan... She is distinguished not only through her rare grace and beauty as a dance, but through her heritage of royal Indian blood, now so rare."<sup>42</sup> Since she functions within the popular entertainment industry, White Deer utilized the princess stereotype to gain notoriety. This strategy worked to her advantage, and lead to her status as a vaudeville headliner and an increase in her income. She was certainly not the only vaudeville performer claiming to be royalty.<sup>43</sup> Nor was she the only woman claiming to be an "Indian Princess"- a young woman taking the title Princess Wha-let-ka

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<sup>42</sup>Newspaper Clipping Folder. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center

<sup>43</sup>Frank Cullen. *vaudeville Old & New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performances in America*. Psychology Press, 2007.

performed with the Ziegfield follies in 1920.<sup>44</sup> However her dancing talent and the structure of her performances set her apart from these others acts.

Princess White Deer's vaudeville acts did more than reify the stereotypes that helped attract an audience. Through her danced historiography and humanizing interactions with her audience she challenges stereotypes and decolonizes her position in narratives of Western history. Her interaction with the Camp Fire girls is evidence of this. She was both carried on a board as a baby and she spoke multiple languages. She danced both modern and traditional dances. Her performances and interactions with the public exist in a "both/and" space and not limiting binary of existence, one that defied the logic of coloniality/modernity. She is not assimilated, but she is also not trapped in the past. Her resistance allows her to navigate and negotiate her identity, her complex personhood, within a society that tried to limit her existence as an Indigenous woman to popular stereotypes and reservations. Instead her skill in dance allowed her to negotiate how she performed Indigenous identity and culture on stage. Her status as a "Princess" was a tool that she deployed.

Like her identity, the dances occupied a both/and space as well. Traditional Indigenous dances were often restricted by Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations. Indigenous dancing was a major part of cultural and religious practices. The assimilationist philosophy that the federal government subscribed distinctly focused on stopping dance practices, especially the religious dance practices that were seen as uncivilized. On stage, however, Princess White Deer's immense skill made the traditional dances she performed a valuable commodity. On the reservation the stakes of dancing could be life and death. Esther Louise Georgette Deer, performing under the name and in the context of Princess White Deer, allowed her to continue

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<sup>44</sup> Cullen, *vaudeville Old and New*, 43

her cultural survivance through dancing on the popular stage. Dancing allowed her to negotiate her identity, and her representation of herself and Indigenous people on the stage.

## 2.2 THE STAKES OF INDIGENOUS DANCING

Indigenous dancing makes the white man nervous; the beats of the drum give rhythm to feet that move, where bodies collectively gesture and make meaning. Outside of the safety of theatrical surroundings, the dance of the colonized- a body in motion for its own sake, for religion, for joy, for being- creates an anxious tension that often results in a violent reaction by the colonizer. The colonizer, like an abusive partner, rationalizes the violence as for the good of the colonized, and in the case of the United States that violence is not only rationalized but also legislated. Take, for example, the Ghost Dance Religion. Begun in 1889, the Ghost Dance emerged as a prophecy for a future that would be Indigenous during the final battles over land and traditional ways of life during the last days of the Indian Wars.<sup>45</sup> This United States Government responded to this dance-based religion by first outlawing the dance, and then bringing military force to bear to enforce the illegality of dancing, eventually resulting in the massacre at Wounded Knee.

The Ghost Dance religion began with a vision. The prophet Wovoka, a leader of the Northern Paiute tribe in Nevada, saw their dead ancestors rising and creating a future in their homelands that no longer included the colonizer. The dance, called the Ghost Dance, was the action that would make the prophecy come to fruition. Word of Wovoka's prophecy and the instructions for the Ghost Dance spread quickly among the tribes still in conflict with the United

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<sup>45</sup> Maddra, *Hostiles?: The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 20-21.

States. The religion and Ghost Dance practice took particular hold among the Lakota Sioux tribes located in the Dakotas, with leaders like Sitting Bull and Kicking Bear leading dances. The dance comprised of a circle style dance, similar to many traditional dances that form a ring of dancers around a fire in Indigenous culture from the plains. There was no drum or bells; any clothing item or instrument that came from white culture, like bells, were not allowed to be worn in the dance. Everyone joined together for the dance which “was similar to a social Round, or Circle, Dance, the left foot leading, lifting higher than the right, but at the same time there was a plunge forward. The right foot then dragged to position, the left foot came to the rear, at the same time advancing again to the left, and against the right foot came to meet it. It was a grapevine step, but with much emphasis on the initial plunge left and forward. The left foot crossed the line of the circle forward and back. The right foot always remained on the line of the circle.”<sup>46</sup> Hundreds of dancers would dance this step together for hours, often causing a cloud of dust to rise. Dancers would fall to the ground in trances, and then report any visions they had during their trances to the spiritual leaders in the center of the circle. The dance lasted for five days.

The Ghost Dance was part of a legacy of revival religions that promised a return to traditional ways of life. This Ghost Dance spread quickly in part because of the death of the buffalo, a herd that was central to Plains ways of life for hunting and food, clothing, and religious purposes. The near extinction of the buffalo happened quickly. The United States Army encouraged, and sometimes placed bounties, on killing buffalo. President Ulysses Grant saw the death of the buffalo as a potential solution to the “Indian Problem,” and other generals took the approach of the scorched earth strategy that General Sherman used during the Civil War against

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<sup>46</sup> Laubin. *Indian Dances of North America*. 62.



the South.<sup>47</sup> In 1867, one colonel was quoted with saying “Kill every Buffalo you can! Every Buffalo dead is an Indian Gone.”<sup>48</sup> With the buffalo gone, Plains cultures like the Lakota lost the center of their tradition. Without buffalo they had no food, and the U.S. government was notoriously slow in delivering promised resources to the reservations. A religion that would bring back the buffalo, and with them traditional ways of life, was a beacon of hope for many.

This was a religion and a dance practice based around peace and the promise of a brighter future. Short Bull, an Oglala Lakota Sioux leader from Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, later recalled:

Who would have thought that dancing could make such trouble? We had no wish to make trouble, nor did we cause it of ourselves. There was trouble, but it was not of my making. We had no thought of fighting; if we had meant to fight, would we not have carried arms? We went unarmed to the dance. How could we have held weapons? For thus we danced, in a circle, hand in hand, each man’s fingers linked in those of his neighbor...For the message that I brought was peace.<sup>49</sup>

The Ghost Dance spread to many reservations including the Arapaho and the Shoshoni, but it was the Lakota embrace of the Ghost Dance that was specifically met military resistance. The Lakota version of the Ghost Dance differed somewhat from Wokovia’s initial vision, and added traditional Lakota practices like a sweat lodge before the dance and the wearing of eagle feathers.<sup>50</sup> The Lakota were the last holdouts against the United States army and many Bureau of

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<sup>47</sup> Phippen, J. Weston. ““Kill Every Buffalo You Can! Every Buffalo Dead Is an Indian Gone.”” *The Atlantic*, May 13, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2016/05/the-buffalo-killers/482349/>.

<sup>48</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction*. Columbia University Press, 2007. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Short Bull quoted in Maddra. *Hostiles? The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill*. 208.

<sup>50</sup> See Laubin for discussion of sweat lodge addition to the Ghost Dance Ritual.

Indian Affairs (or BIA) agency officials were suspicious of gatherings and new religious practices as outbreaks of resistance.

In 1890, the systems of power based on colonial hierarchies that controlled the relationship between the Lakota and the U.S. Government were more blatant. Coloniality, the hierarchal structures of power inherited from the era of colonialism and reinforced through the present Westernized governments, determines what knowledge is valued and which religions are real. The Lakota tribes were the last to hold out against the US Army in the Indian Wars, and the US Government consequently punished them and treated them as prisoners of war. They were both an Indigenous tribe to colonized and a defeated foe to be punished. While the United States is founded on the principle of freedom of religion, there is often resistance if the religion is not based on Christian practices. The push to evangelize Indigenous tribes was supported politically, and enacted through religious education in the Indian Boarding Schools.

Many Indigenous tribes utilize dance as part of their religious and spiritual traditions. The Ghost Dance Religion was not the first time the US Government sought to terminate an Indigenous religious dance practice. In 1883 the Indian Courts restricted the Sun Dance practice, a dance that many of Plains tribes held in common. The restriction was retribution; the Lakota danced the Sun Dance prior to the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876.<sup>51</sup> Dances for the Lakota were acts of community, and acts of power. A power that, if real, allowed them to defeat Custer in 1876. Outlawing dance was conceived as a way to undermine community, to assimilate the defeated tribes, and to prevent potential uprising. Christian missionaries and political groups like the Indian Rights Association supported this legislation. They saw the banning of traditional

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<sup>51</sup> This battle is known to the Lakota as the Battle of Greasy Grass, and is also referred to as Custer's Last Stand.

religious dance as a step towards “civilized” behavior for these “heathens”. This urge to civilize points towards the other side of coloniality: modernity, and the idea that the Lakota, and other tribes, were stuck in the past and needed to be brought into the future through education and other “civilizing” acts in order to join modern society.

The Ghost Dance Religion was a dance of peace. However, for the Lakota it was also a religious decolonial enactment that rejected the inevitability of Western culture. It was not a war dance, but it did resist and deny Western culture’s superiority which to a settler colonial culture could be understood as an act of aggression. Walter Mignolo writes about decolonial options as shift in the ways of thinking, or rather, “that it is not enough to change the content; the terms of the conversation must be changed.”<sup>52</sup> While he does not have a “blueprint”, Mignolo argues that changing the terms requires acts of imagination, of ideas, that offer a different way of being and relating to one another and to colonizing powers. These are acts that delink from western episteme of knowledge, or as Mignolo puts it acts of “epistemic disobedience”.<sup>53</sup> To put it another way, decolonial thinking and doing require acts of imagination that reject the assumptions that uphold the values of coloniality/modernity. While not all acts of cultural survivance are decolonial actions, the Ghost Dance was both. The Ghost Dance religion imagined a future beyond the United States enacted through dance Western epistemes do not value dance as a means of enacting change. Yet for the Lakota, it was dance, and not military action or words that would enact their imagined future.

In late 1890, the government reacted to the Ghost Dance with military force. Afraid of a potential uprising, a BIA official new to Lakota reservations was disturbed by the dancing

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<sup>52</sup> Mignolo. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*. 122

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 139.

practice and called in the cavalry to put down the religion. This reaction caused the murder of Sitting Bull, a perceived leader of the religion, and the massacre of Big Foot's tribe of Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota tribal members at Wounded Knee by the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. The stakes of Indigenous dance, and of decolonial action, were and continue to be life and death. While the open practice of the Ghost Dance religion ended at Wounded Knee, the Ghost Dance continued elsewhere. *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* show hired many Lakota members, and the practice of the dance continued in their community as they travelled around the country and through Europe. Sometimes they even performed the dance as part of the show, blurring the lines between practice and representation, but continuing to remember and pass on the dance. The decolonial action occurs in the way that dancers imagine their future, the cultural survivance happens in the doing.

When Princess White Deer danced traditional dances on stage, she continued the acts that helped these dances survive in the face of colonizing forces. The colonizer's desire to watch the spectacle of the other created an entry for White Deer into popular culture where she was able to perform a more complex Indigenous identity. Representing a complex Indigenous personhood for a primarily white Western audience can be understood as a decolonial act. Her knowledge and use of multiple languages, as well as her first hand knowledge of the world through travel, shows her relationship to the wider world and pushes her persona beyond the Indian Princess stereotype. Her acts of self-fashioning created a visible complex personhood, showing that she can contain multitudes beyond the image of the exotic other. To return to the newspaper article at the beginning of this chapter, she was strategic in what she shared with the Campfire girls and with the way she was framed. She used the stereotypes to gain her audience, but not to limit what she could do. Instead she shared stories about herself, about her experience of the bombings

during World War I, her knowledge of language, and her experience growing up in Kanien'kehá:ka culture, in order to paint a version of her life that did not fit the stereotype. Her identity was complex in the same way that Gordon defines a complex personhood, interwoven between her immediate life, her social worlds, and society's problems. Her dancing is both an act of survivance, and a complex part of her identity as Kanien'kehá:ka woman, a performer, and eventually an American citizen.

### 2.3 DANCING AND LIVING AS DECOLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

As Michel de Certeau points out in *On Writing History*: history is both a praxis and a text.<sup>54</sup> There is a document we call a history, a narrative that strings together facts, anecdotes, and analysis into single text. This act is guided by theoretical lenses and preoccupations, which de Certeau characterizes as “ideologies.”<sup>55</sup> The historian's act, or in other words their historiography (the process of making a history), is a praxis: a practical application of theory. Different theoretical lenses produce different versions of history; to put it another way, a collection of facts and evidence (archival or other) will produce a multiplicity of narratives about the same moment in time. The past is complex, with room for the multiple realities that history texts create for readers. My own ideologies are present in the praxis of this text, and my narratives are informed by decolonial thought and Indigenous epistemologies. De Certeau focuses on the text of history, but I think we, as human beings, also make history through

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<sup>54</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). 21

<sup>55</sup> de Certeau. *The Writing of History*, 30.

performance. Civil war re-enactments are a form of historiography, an embodied praxis. History, the action, is not limited to re-enactments. Dancers can dance history, artists can paint history, writers write history. I'd offer, then, that a history, as object, can be more than a text. It can be a performance, it can be a dance; history can be a work of art. The following history of Princess White Deer's life is my praxis, and this historiography is immersed in story, in survivance, and performance. Princess White Deer was a dancer, but she was also a historian- and her later dance performances are her historiographical acts, built to challenge western narratives through the platform that was accessible to her: the stage.

Dances are not kept in the archive, and to create this history she relies on what Diana Taylor refers to as the repertoire. Taylor defines the repertoire as an enaction of embodied memory: "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."<sup>56</sup> Taylor continues "repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being part of the transmission."<sup>57</sup> The repertoire then, these acts of transfer, is a means of both cultural survivance and of knowing the past. White Deer's performances both enact the past as a means of knowledge, and are an ephemeral link of the repertoire's passing from person to person outside of the archive. From this understanding of the repertoire and performance's ability to transfer knowledge, Taylor argues that performance functions as historical event and also as a means of historiography. History as a discipline, primarily based in evaluating archival evidence, in the Americas is bound by colonial and imperial epistemes. Performance through the

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<sup>56</sup> Diana Taylor. *Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Duke University Press, 2003) 20.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*. 20.

repertoire, Taylor argues, offers a disciplinary disobedience for historical evidence because “the bearers of performance, those who engage in it, are also the bearers of history who link the layers past-present future through practice.”<sup>58</sup> Performance as a method of historiography begins as a decolonial breaking from disciplinary methods.

This is also a constellational history, to use Walter Benjamin’s conception that ideas can be revealed by individual ideas grouped together, that there is simultaneous meaning in both the individual and the group.<sup>59</sup> I, too, select the moments to include in writing the history of Princess White Deer’s life and decolonial work. I argue that she enacted a representation that stands for the larger Indigenous population within the United States, and her utilization of performance, i.e. her acts of history, were a way for her to stand between the place where she came from and the environment where she worked. She worked across both the reservation powwows and the largely white commercial stages of American vaudeville halls and Broadway houses. Her life and career can tell the contemporary researcher a multitude of stories about New York in the 1920’s, about commercial Indigenous dance, and about solo women vaudeville acts. This constellation is about her performance, her historiography, and her relationship to the state, and the ways in which a Kanien'kehá:ka woman’s acts can change perceptions and create a new history through dance for a popular audience.

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<sup>58</sup> Taylor. *Performance as/and History*. 83.

<sup>59</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Rolf Tiedemann, ed., (New York: Belknap Press 2002) and Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, John Osborne Trans., (London: Verso, 1998)

### 2.3.1 Dancing The Past

Esther Georgette White Deer was born to Chief James Running Deer and Georgette Deer in 1891, a few months after the Ghost Dance rebellion ended at Wounded Knee. She was born into the Wild West Show business; both of her parents were show people and met on tour, and because of that her life was always different from that of other members of the Kanien'kehá:ka people who spent most of their time on one of several reservation in upstate New York (Akwasasne) and outside Montreal (Kanhawake). The Deer Family made their living performing in Wild West shows, first as the trick horse riding act and then as a small Wild West show of their own. The Deer Family, as they were billed, performed with the Colonel Cummins Wild West show at the Pan-American exposition in Buffalo in 1901, the Texas Jack Wild West show, and Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West Show among other exhibitions, circuses, and medicine shows.<sup>60</sup> Esther White Deer, first billed as Princess Esteeda before taking on the moniker of Princess White Deer, performed as the dance act in the show. Eventually she would become a solo act, but for her early life she was a part of The Deer Family and The Deer Family Wild West show. Their act was billed as "Indians of the Past."<sup>61</sup>

"Indians of the Past" followed the format pioneered by earlier Wild West shows like Buffalo Bill's Wild West. The show consisted of a series of re-enactments and tableaux that included fancy trick riding, some singing, and the occasional specialty dance. The Deer Family toured their show around the United States, but found it profitable to tour the Wild West Show

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<sup>60</sup> McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*. 107.

<sup>61</sup> Newspaper Clippings and Programs. Princess White Deer Collection. Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.



abroad in England, Scotland, Norway, South Africa, Poland, and Russia from 1904 to 1910.<sup>62</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West show toured a similar route from 1902 to 1906. In Edinburgh, Scotland in 1908 "Indians of the Past" performed the following program: "The Indian Campfire", "Princess White Deer in her famous Songs and Indian War Dance", "The Settler's Cabin", "The Indian Burning the Settler's Cabin", "Sensational Knife Duel", and "Settlers to the Rescue."<sup>63</sup> This series of vignettes is fairly similar to what is documented in other programs from this period, and it tells a familiar story of the taming of the American West.

As a spectacle and theatrical performance, the Wild West show lies somewhere between a circus, a pageant, and a melodrama incorporating elements of each, and the high emotion and clear morals of the last. Linda Scarangella McNenly calls Wild West shows historical pageants and "extravaganzas" that "blurred the line between education and entertainment in the display of Others."<sup>64</sup> McNenly outlines the types of acts in a Wild West show into the following seven categories: "The Grand Entry"; "Cowboy Pastimes"; "Indian vignettes"; "Historical reenactments"; "Military displays"; "Ethnic Others"; and "Circus Acts".<sup>65</sup> The Wild West show performed a version of the history of the west, and through the Indian vignettes and Historical reenactments (specifically of battles like Little Big Horn or attacks on settlers) their version showed the Indigenous people as both part of the past, and distinctly as enemies to be conquered. The Wild West show was a celebration of conquering the Indigenous peoples, and by employing

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<sup>62</sup> McNenly. *Native Performers in the Wild West* 107

<sup>63</sup> Programs. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>64</sup> McNenly. *Native Performers in the Wild West*. 21-22.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 23-24

Lakota, Kanien'kehá:ka, and other tribal members Wild West shows made the conquered complicit in authenticating that narrative. These were “real Indians” participating in re-enactments of their traditional ways of life, but they participated in re-enactments where they attacked settlers and lost major battles. Battles that were led by Buffalo Bill Cody, who had also fought in the Indian Wars and the battle of Little Big Horn and added legitimacy to the display. The line between fiction and reality was blurred and manipulated to serve a narrative of the west the upheld the logic of colonialism, that is that those people who are wild and do not adhere to the qualities of modernity are doomed to be overtaken by the forces of modernity. The Wild West Show created an easily consumable version of history, and its wide consumption by popular audiences from the 1880s through the 1920s widely influenced historical narratives.<sup>66</sup>

Although this blurred line reinforced a perspective that Indigenous peoples are doomed and dying off, the Wild West show circuits also provided these same Indigenous performers a livelihood and a space for them to continue traditional dancing and ways of life outside of the reservation. The format and historical perspective of the Wild West Show kept Indigenous peoples from joining in performances of modernity, and this is reflected in Chief Running Deer's

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<sup>66</sup> McNenly's account is one of the most comprehensive and relevant to this study. For other accounts of Wild West Shows see: Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933.*; Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show.* Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History.* Sandra Sagala, *Buffalo Bill on Stage.* (Albuquerque, US: University of New Mexico Press, 2010). and Maddra, *Hostiles?: The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West.*

show title: “Indians of the Past.”<sup>67</sup> While participation within the Wild West show can be seen as complicit assent of the dominant narrative and oppression, it can also be seen as an act of cultural survivance. If Indigenous performers had stayed on the reservation, their dances and cultural practices would be subject to assimilationist forces from both Christian missionaries and from governmental oversight. On stage their culture was lauded and could continue, albeit in service to the colonial narrative.

Survivance, as articulated by Ernest Stromberg in his collection on American Indian rhetoric, goes beyond survival “to acknowledge the dynamic and creative nature of Indigenous rhetoric.”<sup>68</sup> Stromberg defines rhetoric broadly, as “use of language or other forms of symbolic action to produce texts (in the broadest possible sense) that affect changes in the attitudes, beliefs, or actions of an audience. In this sense, rhetoric is both an art of persuasion and epistemic- epistemic inasmuch as Native Americans use language to alter our understanding of the world we inhabit.”<sup>69</sup> Harry Elam writes about the way Black Americans have performed complicated relationships to power that have been based in racist and imperial ideas of blackness.<sup>70</sup> Elam builds from the excess inherent in post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha’s idea

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<sup>67</sup> Racial lines were often blurred within Wild West Shows, so sometimes Indigenous people would perform displays that reflected ideas of modernity, but they would do so pretending to be Mexicans or other ethnicities.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Stromberg, “Rhetoric and American Indians : an introduction.” in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, edited by Ernest Stromberg. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).1.

<sup>69</sup> Stromberg. “Rhetoric and American Indians: an introduction.” 4-5

<sup>70</sup> Harry J. Elam and David Krasner. *African American Performance and Theater History :A Critical Reader*. (Cary, US: Oxford University Press (US), 2001)

of Colonial Mimicry, the colonial project that attempts to remake the colonized subject as “almost the same, but not quite”.<sup>71</sup> These excesses of identity produced by colonial projects produce what Elam calls productive ambivalences, which are spaces within the excess that allow room for alternative identities and meanings.<sup>72</sup> I argue that the Wild West show format is a space of both productive ambivalence and survivance, and that these two concepts have significant overlap and create decolonial possibilities. In the Deer Family production “Indians of the Past,” they were able to maintain a variety of traditional ways of life while portraying a narrative that their culture was dying off and had to be preserved in performance. The Wild West show performance was an act of survivance. It is not decolonial in itself, but acts of survivance can open up future decolonial acts: when the Deer Family performed they were creating acts of cultural survivance, of ways of being and living, within the logic and constraints of coloniality.

### 2.3.2 Wards of the State

The main repository of Princess White Deer’s files are collected at the Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center at the Kahnawake reservation outside of Montreal. Within the file labelled family records there is a photocopy of a letter from the American embassy. The letter reads as follows:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME; GREETING  
The bearer of this document is a North American Indian whose name is Georgia Deer,  
who is accompanied by her daughter. Georgia Deer is the wife of James D.Deer, a Mohawk Indian, and being a ward of the United States of America is entitled to the protection of its diplomatic and other officials. She is not, however entitled to a passport,

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<sup>71</sup> Homi Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994. 86.

<sup>72</sup> Elam. *African American Performance and Theatre History: A Critical Reader*.

as she is not a citizen of the United States. I have the honor to request the Russian authorities to grant to

-George Deer and daughter

all necessary protection during their stay in Russia and to grant them permission to depart when they require it.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Embassy of the United States at St. Petersburg, Russia, The 28<sup>th</sup> day of August (New Style) in the year 1911., and of the Independence of the United States the one (Garbled text) and thirty sixth<sup>73</sup>

This piece of paper documents the mobility of a Kanien'kehá:ka woman's body and kinship in relationship to citizenship of both a state and of the world. The piece of paper is covered with stamps that look similar to today's passport stamps, in Cyrillic and English text with dates ranging from 1911 to 1917.

First let's unpack the relationship of most Indigenous peoples to the U.S. government before the 1924 Citizenship act. Under the law until 1924, unless a treaty specifically stated otherwise, all Indigenous peoples were considered wards of the state within the United States. Today, when the term ward of the state is employed it refers to either minors entrusted to the state for care or to prisoners. Ward status means that you are unable to take care of yourself. U.S. Treaty Law considered an entire race of people unable to care for themselves, making them legal children in the eyes of the state. The position of prisoner is also relevant to the status of Indigenous peoples as wards. Many of these tribes lost major wars against the United States, and the reservation served as a way to contain the losers. Perhaps it is not a stretch to consider Indigenous peoples within the U.S. as prisoners of war; the bleak conditions on many reservations certainly match some prison descriptions.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Personal Correspondence. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>74</sup> The Merriam report of 1928 lays out the overarching inequities present in the living conditions on Reservations leading to extreme poverty and malnourishment.

James Deer was a ward of the state when he met wife, Georgette Osborne, in a production of *Daniel Boone*. Georgette Osborne was born in London in 1871 to Sir William Hudson Osborne and Lady Mary Osborne. From ages nine to thirteen Georgette, who later went by Georgia, performed multiple roles in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with the Fred R. Wren Dramatic Company, including Topsy, Eva, Emmeline, and Eliza.<sup>75</sup> She met James Deer in 1888 at the age of sixteen in Peck & Fursman's production of *Daniel Boone*, the production featured the whole Deer family troupe.<sup>76</sup> When she married James Deer on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1889, at the age of eighteen, she gave up her British identity and became a American Indian ward of the state under the Indian Acts that were then currently in effect in the United States and Canada.<sup>77</sup> The Kanien'kehá:ka are a traditionally matriarchal society, but the extralegal influences of the United States on the tribal nation dictated that Georgette follow her husband's status, and not vice-versa. Princess White Deer was sometimes written about as "a maiden of royal blood, who has neither the blood of the Anglo-Saxon, Slav, Teuton, or Ottoman in her veins," parsing that her heritage made her an authentic Indian and authentic princess; however, that wasn't strictly true.<sup>78</sup> What was true was that Georgia Deer's racial designation as a "North American Indian" was a legal fiction with real life implications. More than upholding racial categories as empirically true, Georgia Deer's conversion from British Citizen to North American Indian points to the fictive nature of all racial designations defined by law. While skin color and cultural community

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<sup>75</sup> Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. Location 465.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, Location 492

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., Location 492

<sup>78</sup> Newspaper clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center.

identity are very real, the legal ramifications of them are built on power structures and not based out of material realities.<sup>79</sup> This change of identity also worked in the other direction for Indigenous women: if they were to marry a white man they would lose their status as tribal member along with all rights and land claims associated with the tribe's status. Marriage was deployed as a tool of the state to further the erasure of Indigenous land claims.

What is the relationship of a sheet of paper decreeing ward status to citizenship and to tribal sovereignty? The Deer family were registered members of the St. Regis Reservation, and the Kanien'kehá:ka considered themselves part of the Haudenosaunee confederacy and a sovereign nation. Under the Jay Treaty of 1787 the Kanien'kehá:ka were allowed to travel freely without paying tariffs across the border between Canada and the United States because their land split the border. Citizenship within the United States was not necessarily desired, and for some it was directly rejected. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 unilaterally bestowed citizenship on all people designated as American Indians regardless of whether or not they wanted it. Many felt they were already citizens of their own tribe, and they worried that citizenship would threaten tribal sovereignty. Within the reservation tribal sovereignty was still assured, but their relationship to states and ability to travel outside of the reservation and the United States was constrained by their status as wards. This tension of citizenship and sovereignty still continues today in questions of travel. Since 1977 the Haudenosaunee have issued their own passports, and in July 2010 the Iroquois Lacrosse team was unable to enter the United Kingdom to compete in

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<sup>79</sup> Beth H. Piatote, *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*. (Yale University Press, 2013). This book delineates the way citizenship and marriage worked together in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century for Indigenous peoples.

the World Lacrosse Championships because the United Kingdom refused to recognize their passports, and by extension their sovereignty, as valid.<sup>80</sup>

What does it mean to be a citizen? Beth Paitote lays out the relationship of Native Americans in the United States to citizenship during the assimilationist period (roughly 1876 to 1934) in her book *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*. Indigenous peoples in this era are domestic subjects in that they are subject to the rules, laws, and policies of the United States Government, and they are also not able to negotiate any of those laws on their own behalf. They are unrepresented, and unable to vote. In this period in particular there are many policies set forth to transform, through discipline, assimilation, and education, Indigenous peoples into “good citizens,” but what does that mean? Citizenship is a relational identity granting rights, privileges, and duties on a person who has pledged allegiance to a nation. For most citizens of the United States this status is granted at birth, due to either the geography of where the child is born or who the child’s parents are. While Indigenous people were born within the borders of the United States and should be granted Native citizenship, prior to 1925 they were domestic subjects of a defeated foreign nation. It is strange to say foreign, as it implies a removed geography; Indigenous people were made foreign on their own land in relationship to the settler-colonial state.

Citizenship grants the rights (such as voting), and also duties to the state (such as serving in armed forces during times of war), through a pledge of allegiance to a nation. This pledge is the friction point for Indigenous peoples. If they pledge allegiance to their tribe they cannot also

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<sup>80</sup> Kaplan, Thomas. “Iroquois Lacrosse Players Lose Passport Dispute With the British.” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/17/sports/17lacrosse.html>.



be in allegiance to the United States because the two nations are at constant odds. Dual citizenship creates an internal conflict of allegiance. Ward status does not denote any pledge of allegiance, only that the United States is entrusted with the care of wards of the state as set forth in treaty laws. If all parties acted in good faith, perhaps there would be no need for a change in citizenship status. However, the United States time and again (and is further elaborated in the next chapter) breaks treaties and acts in bad faith towards the entrusted people and lands. In this situation, ward status prevents participation by voting and representation that would allow tribes to utilize the system of government to incite repercussions for acts of bad faith. In a representational government, like the United States, the rights of a citizen include representation in the government in the form of members of congress; and the US congress is the legislative body that negotiates with itself on behalf of all treaty rights. To gain citizenship that does not also deny tribal citizenship is to gain access to representation, but it is not a decolonial act. It can be a means of survivance.

Esther White Deer travelled on her mother's ward papers for many years. For several years leading up to the outbreak of World War I she would have travelled on her own letter as she toured as a solo act in Russia and Poland. She performed for royalty, and at the Zoological Gardens, and she socialized as she travelled. In Russia, she received a gold medal from the Dowager Czarina Maria Feodorovna.<sup>81</sup> Among the people she met was the Polish Count Alexis Krasicki, the man she would marry in 1915. She travelled to London from New York to marry him using her ward papers. Count Krasicki never joined Esther White Deer in the United States. Esther Deer stayed in London from June to September of 1915, returning after the zeppelin

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<sup>81</sup> Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. Location 856

raids.<sup>82</sup> In July of 1916 White Deer sent a postcard to her cousin in Montreal stating that her friend “has been killed at the front in Russia. Quite in shock.”<sup>83</sup> No wedding license or church certificate survived. Perhaps these papers did not accompany her so that she would not lose her status as member of the Kanien’kehá:ka, and become a citizen of somewhere else entirely. With the death of her husband after the war she would have been left the wife of a Polish Count in the new Soviet Russia. Instead she remained an “authentic Indian” woman allowing her to continue her cultural practices on stage within the United States. Her prospects were better as an Indigenous ward than they were as Polish citizen in 1916, and she negotiated her position in order to best suit her survival. Her personal and romantic life was not essential to the way she was framed on stage.

Princess White Deer returned to the stage not long after Krasicki’s death. The Haudenosaunee Nation declared war on Germany in 1917, and Kanien’kehá:ka citizens joined the army and went to fight in World War I. Princess White Deer was now a headlining act on the Keith-Albee Circuit, and between 1917 and 1918 part of her act was a patriotic call to duty. Chief Os-ko-mon, one of “her braves,” recited a speech that a reviewer framed thus: “The call of the original American to Americans of today to duty to suppress German autocracy was recited by a brave with all of the solemnity of his people.”<sup>84</sup> Supporting the war effort was an enactment of good citizenship for both Kanien’kehá:ka citizens and citizens of the United States. Her performance of good citizenship allied the goals of wards and citizens through a common enemy.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. location 937.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. location 951

<sup>84</sup>Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

Citizens of the United States often understood themselves as the inheritors of Indigenous values, this is the act of exchange from the “last of” trope. When the last Indigenous person is gone, not only is the land inherited by the colonists who are left, the positive cultural values are also inherited. As Jill Lepore writes without its Indigenous heritage, the United States “was only a more vulgar England, but with it, America was its own nation, with a unique culture and its own ancestral past.”<sup>85</sup> The reviewer’s phrase of “ the original Americans to the Americans of today” marks this connection of shared cultural values and shared ideas of good citizenship, but also positions Indigenous people as part of the past. Princess White Deer’s performance challenges the reviewers positioning of Indigenous people.

### **2.3.3 Dancing Indians of Past and Present**

Between 1917 and 1925, Princess White Deer performed as a headlining act with the Keith vaudeville Circuit; as a featured performer in the Ziegfield Follies; as a specialty act in the Broadway and tour production’s of Raymond Hitchcock’s *Hitchy-Koo 1919* and Charles Dillingham’s *Tip Top*; as a Charleston specialty dancer in the Atlantic City Ballrooms with Argentine heartthrob Pepys DeAlbrow; and in her own full length dance production at the Hippodrome titled *From Wigwams to White Lights*. She was also named one of the most beautiful women in the world and photographed by E.O. Hoppé. While using the tropes of authenticity (like the title of Princess and stereotypical costuming), White Deer positions her body and the virtuoso nature of her dancing to destabilize and decolonize narratives about Indigenous people. Due to the variety act nature of theatre performances in this period her

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<sup>85</sup> Lepore, Jill; *The Name of War: King Philip’s war and the origins of American Identity*; Knopf, NY. 1998. 200

performance is not always able to decolonize an entire evening's performance. However, her performance is always representing an alternative idea of what Indigenous identity looks like for audiences accustomed to racist redface performances that showed Indigenous people as noble savages with a hokey grasp on English language in comedy routines where the audience was asked to laugh at the strange and uncivilized other. In her own act, she is performing historiography through dance, remaking the positionality of Indigenous peoples through her heightened visibility on stage.

Princess White Deer's headlining vaudeville act was titled *Indians of the Past and Present*, adding present in both word and concept to the performance tradition of the Deer Family show she grew up with. While there are performance traditions that overlap between the vaudeville halls and the Wild West shows, the major difference between the two is the length of the performance. A Wild West show, like *Indians of the Past*, was a longer production featuring multiple acts and scenes. *Indians of Past and Present* featuring Princess White Deer and her Indian Braves was a single act comprised of a few scenes, part of a larger bill of variety entertainments. While *Indians of the Past* involved historical re-enactments selected to highlight the savagery of the Indian wars and settlement of the west, *Indians of the Past and Present* excises all mention of the settlement of the west, focusing instead on traditional dance, popular dance, and song.

Reconstructing precisely what happened on stage is difficult from the accounts that survive. The act seems to have several scenes, first an opening vignette with a tee-pee where the "two braves" stand around a dying campfire wearing war bonnets and beaded buckskin costume as the sun sets. From the tee-pee Princess White Deer's voice could be heard singing in "silvery tones," and then she would emerge to dance a traditional dance described as "graceful and

weird.”<sup>86</sup> The photographs that remain from her performances show a variety of different traditional tribal nation’s costumes that she may have worn. She likely would have worn a feathered headband and beaded buckskin outfit. While there are many production and publicity photographs of Princess White Deer in a war bonnet, that headdress was probably utilized in the war dance performed later in the act. Following Princess White Deer’s initial dance, Chief Os-ko-mon (one of the two braves) would perform a speech.

In 1917, Chief Os-Ko-Mon’s speech was nationalistic and designed to call audience members to support the troops and to display their outrage at the Germans. When World War I concluded, Chief Os-ko-mon’s speech changed to include more poetic subject matter. After the speech came the aforementioned war dance, which likely included the two braves, and then a tap dance, jazz dance, or Charleston number. This final dance seems to have the most inconsistency in the act, although it was always distinctly different from the traditional “Indian” dances that preceded it. One reviewer called the act “unusual, far better than average, and worth going far to see.”<sup>87</sup> Princess White Deer toured *Indians of the Past and Present* on both the Keith-Albee and Orpheum vaudeville circuits from 1917 to sometime in late 1918, when she began performing in the Ziegfeld’s *Midnight Frolics* at the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York City.

Historiographically, Princess White Deer challenges through dance the narrative that Indigenous people are incapable of being a part of modernity. Her performance of contemporary styles, like the Charleston, jazz, and tap, is a novel change to the expectations for an Indigenous act laid out from the entertainment of Wild West shows. She exists in a both/and space where she

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<sup>86</sup> Variety Article. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

is an expert in the traditions of her people but has also “mastered all of the modern dances.”<sup>88</sup> Some reviewers saw her as an exemplar of the “social elevation that is possible for the redskin.”<sup>89</sup> However, this social elevation did not exclude her traditional culture. It is an addition to her identity and presentation, a both/and and not an either/or situation of cultural exchange and as survivance. So on one hand, her vaudeville act is a means for Princess White Deer to preserve and continue traditional culture in a society that wants to assimilate Indigenous peoples and erase their culture. On the other hand, it is a means for Princess White Deer to create her own narrative of Indigenous people’s lives through dance and popular entertainment.

José Rabasa writes about Indigenous peoples as without history, outside and absent from the project of the state. Wild West shows can be read as the state project of history, a project that mirrors Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous Frontier Thesis. In the Wild West’s historiography the Indians are perpetually othered; the narrative represents Indigenous dance as exotic and savage, affirming the Indigenous “other” as less than human. The narrative re-affirmed this representation in the historical re-enactments that frame Indians as villains, and the white settlers and the U.S. Cavalry as heroes. the good guys. The end of the narrative is the victory of white civilization over the west, which inversely also means the defeat and disappearance of Indians. While the Ghost Dance was occasionally performed as part of the show, within the context of the Wild West show narrative it is sanitized for the audience even though for the performers its value is still decolonial. While the historiography of the Wild West show features Indians, they are

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<sup>88</sup> Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>89</sup> Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center.

props for a story about the dominance of white culture. For Princess White Deer to excise white people from her act re-centers the narrative around Indigenous lives and culture. This is not an absent or outside moment. This is a decolonial history that frames the Indigenous woman at its center.

Dance is also a way to frame Indigenous peoples past without being bound to the archival sources that historians rely upon. Princess White Deer performed Taylor's concept of the repertoire, the dances she learned from her family, from the reservation, and from other people on the Wild West show circuit. This type of dance alone could continue to exoticize her performances as cultural oddities. However, Princess White Deer was a vaudeville headliner, and her performances were meant to be big draws and not simply cultural oddities featured at the beginning or end of a bill.<sup>90</sup> The decision to add contemporary dance styles at the end of the program challenges the exoticization. While she did not perform the Ghost Dance, like that enactment of decolonial imagining Princess White Deer's version of history imagines her history without white characters. She did dance a "blood curdling war dance," but it was not viewed as an act of aggression.<sup>91</sup> The location of the performance on the stage changed the context of the performance. The cultural survivance inherent in the continuance of a repertoire passed from year to year continued, but the outsider audience did not react with the same violence as the Ghost Dance. In *Indians of Past and Present* White Deer performed both survivance and decolonial action. She is not just an Indian Princess performing the dances of her dying people for a modern audience. Her contemporary dances transform her into a modern royal. The

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<sup>90</sup> In vaudeville, the weakest acts were generally put at either the beginning or the end of a playbill.

<sup>91</sup> Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

contemporary dances move her performance into the contemporary moment, and create a narrative that shows an Indigenous woman thriving in cultural modernity without help from white performers. Princess White Deer's "present" changes the narrative she dances, and challenges an audience. Her virtuosity made her marketable and made her danced historiography more palatable to audiences.

Princess White Deer was one of very few, if not the only, Indigenous woman headlining on vaudeville at this time. As the quote that begins this chapter states "when you're invisible, every representation matters." Due to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' control of where wards of the state could work, and the majority of Indigenous people's choice to remain on reservations, Indigenous peoples were fairly invisible in popular culture in 1917.<sup>92</sup> When they were represented it was often as redface stereotypes performed by white people (which I will discuss in the next section) or in Wild West style shows and vignettes (like the Deer Family's performances). An Indigenous woman performing her own version of Indigenous identity on the popular stage was a rare opportunity and a representation that mattered. Princess White Deer becomes an ambassador of sorts, representing herself, her people, and by extension all Indigenous people. To the campfire girls that she visited with, detailed at the beginning of the chapter, she becomes their frame of reference for what Indigenous people can be like.

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<sup>92</sup> Maddra discusses the BIA's interference in hiring practices in *Hostiles? The Lakota Ghost Dance*. 70-73. A General Discussion of Indigenous population patterns can be found in: James Stuart Olson and Raymond Wilson. *Native Americans in the Twentieth Century*. VNR AG, 1984. For specifics: United States. Office of Indian Affairs / *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the years 1915-1917* <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.AnnRep1517>



That being said, *Indians of Past and Present* also appropriated the accessories of stereotypes of Indian-ness, like war bonnets, to sell tickets. War bonnets, the long feathered headdresses appearing in nearly every Hollywood western including Disney's *Peter Pan*, are typically worn by tribes from the Plains like the Sioux, Blackfeet, Crow and Cheyenne. The Kanien'kehá:ka did not wear war bonnets, and women also didn't wear war bonnets; so when Princess White Deer dances in a war bonnet she is altering the narrative about traditional Indigenous cultures that are not her own. Her act of representation through dance encompasses more than the cultural specificity of her own cultural background. This cultural sliding sustains the monolithic idea of "Indian" that is supported by the logic of coloniality. However, by encompassing multiple Indigenous identities into her performance she's performing a claim that they are all capable of participating within modernity and within their traditional culture. Her performance then becomes a tool for her primarily white audiences to imagine Indigenous people outside of the western historical narrative that devalues their culture and places Indigenous people as absent. It is an act of cultural survivance, resisting absence, decolonizing a western claim about modernity, and it begins to be decolonial action. However, it is tainted by the monolithic nature of her representation that prevents cultural specificity.

#### **2.3.4 *Tip Top and Hitchy-Koo 1919- Authenticity and Redface***

From vaudeville, Esther Deer moved to bigger venues and bigger name producers, like Florence Ziegfeld, Raymond Hitchcock, A.L Erlanger, and Charles Dillingham. Broadway was heavily controlled by theatre managers during this period. The Theatrical Syndicate altered the way theatre toured the United States from 1898 to 1911, creating monopolized touring circuits. While Deer's tenure on the Great White Way came after the fall of the Theatrical Syndicate, the

Syndicate's policies and way of doing business deeply affected how Broadway shows would make money for years after the Syndicate was broken. A.L Erlanger, one of the booking managers of the Theatrical Syndicate, continued to exert influence on booking schedules and theatrical management, including ownership of the New Amsterdam Theatre where the Ziegfeld Follies performed. Deer performed for Erlanger and Ziegfeld, however, the primary producer she worked with was Charles Dillingham. Dillingham previously worked for Theatrical Syndicate founding member Charles Frohman.<sup>93</sup> From the existing records it does not appear that she had an agent, but instead negotiated with these producers directly. In correspondence with Dillingham she referred to him as "Big Chief," and he referred to her as "Whitey," an affectionate shortening of White Deer.<sup>94</sup> For the tour of *Hitchy-Koo 1919*, which Dillingham produced, she was paid \$100 a week, which is the 2017 equivalent of \$1,413.<sup>95</sup> Her salary was the seventh highest in the production and significantly higher than the majority of the cast.<sup>96</sup>

From 1917 to 1920, Raymond Hitchcock produced and starred in theatrical musical revues that would tour and play Broadway. *Hitchy-Koo 1919* was that year's musical revue, and

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<sup>93</sup>"Autobiography" Box 32. Charles Bancroft Dillingham Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

<sup>94</sup>"Folder W" Box 29. Charles Bancroft Dillingham Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations..

<sup>95</sup>"Calculate the Value of \$100 in 1919." Accessed January 30, 2017.  
<http://www.dollartimes.com/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1919>.

<sup>96</sup>"Hitchy-Koo 1919" Box 31. Charles Bancroft Dillingham Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Most of the cast was paid between \$35-50 a week, with Raymond Hitchcock's salary at \$1500/week, and the other featured performers taking a salary between \$300-75.

it has survived the ravages of time in part because an early-career Cole Porter wrote the music. Each musical revue featured a loose plot or framing device. *Hitchy-Koo 1919* framed the music as an “educational entertainment”, or at least that’s what Raymond Hitchcock told the audience in his pre-curtain speech.<sup>97</sup> The revue featured several different scenes, including a “garden of roses;” a Hollywood studio; an Indian palace called “A Jade Phantasy;” A glade in Virginia “in those days;” A Barber Shop; The telephone room of the Ritz hotel; a prohibitionist’s lecture; and an “old-fashioned garden,” as well as a few nondescript locations for specialty acts.<sup>98</sup> Princess White Deer was featured in two sections: first in the Pocahontas burlesque set in the glade in Virginia that closed the first act, and then in a “buck dance” after the Prohibitionist’s scene.<sup>99</sup> The Pocahontas scene is referenced in reviews as one of the stronger and more memorable aspects of the revue.

You might expect that Princess White Deer would have been cast to play Princess Pocahontas, but that was not the case. *Hitchy-Koo 1919* featured several women as leads in either singing, dancing, or comedy parts,. The role of Pocahontas was cast out of this pool of talent utilizing the singing and acting talents of Ruth Mitchell. In fact, while the specialty acts performed by Princess White Deer, Os-Ko-Mon, and Chief Eagle Horse were all part of this Pocahontas scene, the roles of Powhatan, Pocahontas and the other “Indians” were played by white actors in redface, a practice that was prevalent on the 19<sup>th</sup> century stage and continues to

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<sup>97</sup> Variety Article. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer. Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>98</sup> Program from Utah event center featuring Hitchy Koo 1919- “Page 59 ::” Accessed January 31, 2017. [https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=549164#t\\_549164](https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=549164#t_549164).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

our current moment. Princess White Deer performed an “Indian Dance” and then an “Indian Jazz.”<sup>100</sup> A script of the burlesque is lost to time, however from the program we know it ended with a chorus of Pirates and Indians singing “Peter Piper” and “The Sea is Calling.”<sup>101</sup>

There is a dissonance between the redface burlesque performance of the common stereotype of American “Indian” womanhood, i.e. Pocahontas, and an Indigenous woman performing in the same scene. Princess White Deer and a redface Pocahontas do not create a simple comparison, because of the complexities and ambiguities of stereotypes and claims of authenticity. Homi Bhabha points out that stereotypes carry multiple interpretations, and that they are an “ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of ‘official’ and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse.”<sup>102</sup> On stage in *Hitchy-Koo 1919* there are two performances, or texts in Bhabha’s parlance, that together read more ambiguously than either on their own; Ruth Mitchell’s redface Pocahontas and Princess White Deer’s Indian Dance and Indian Jazz Dance. The Pocahontas scene is a burlesque, i.e. a joke-filled satire, of the John Smith story of meeting Pocahontas.<sup>103</sup> While the script no longer exists, from the pun-filled names of the other characters in the scene it is clear that this burlesque does not treat its subject matter seriously. One of the characters is

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<sup>100</sup> Program from Utah event center featuring Hitchy Koo 1919- “Page 59 ::” Accessed January 31, 2017. [https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=549164#t\\_549164](https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=549164#t_549164).

<sup>101</sup> *ibid*

<sup>102</sup> Bhabha. *Location of Culture*. 82.

<sup>103</sup> Pocahontas Burlesques have been popular since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with John Brougham’s popular burlesque *Po-Co-Hant-As; Or The Gentle Savage* in 1855.

named “Kod, Liv-Royl- a medicine man,” a pun on cod liver oil. This type of word play was typical of burlesque jokes. While we are not meant to take the history of Pocahontas seriously through this burlesque scene, the scene is juxtaposed with the authentic Indian dancing of Princess White Deer- a “real” royal Mohawk Princess. Princess White Deer traded on the presumed stereotypes of Pocahontas in building her reputation as an Indian Princess, this authenticity is, as E.Patrick Johnson writes, a kind of cultural capital.<sup>104</sup>

Much like John Smith’s original narrative of Pocahontas in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Pocahontas Burlesques often focused more on John Smith than Pocahontas. This is another example of the historiographical approach of colonial history that utilizes Indigenous peoples as props in the inevitability of settler colonialism. The popular narrative of Pocahontas involves Pocahontas falling in love with John Smith and saving him from her father, Chief Powhatan. There are many ways in which this history is nothing more than a romance loosely based on the archival narrative of Captain John Smith’s *Histories of Virginia*, a travelogue that is primarily a self-aggrandizement designed to raise Smith’s standing in England. Pocahontas died from smallpox in England before she could refute any of his claims, and so Smith’s narrative and the popular entertainments that use it as source material are the primary version of this history. Indigenous people’s perspectives and voices are not weighted equally, and the authority of the colonial government is taken for granted. These power dynamics do not shift in the parody version, because the parody is not critiquing history. It is using this power dynamic to critique some other popular past-time contemporary to the production. There is power for humor to be used to deconstruct and decolonize history, however it is incredibly unlikely that this Pocahontas

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<sup>104</sup> E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003).

burlesque is doing that. Instead it was a star vehicle for Raymond Hitchcock to perform Captain John Smith.

What might it mean for an audience's interpretation of Indian Princess stereotypes to have competing Indian princesses performing on-stage concurrently? Does the Pocahontas stereotype, however it was played, become more of a joke when placed next to Princess White Deer's dancing? Does the redface performance reinforce the authenticity of Princess White Deer? The accounts are incomplete, and the best I can offer is that these competing performances of Indigenous womanhood complicate narratives of Indigenous personhood. Pocahontas is a joke from the 1600s, but Princess White Deer was on stage and performing both an authentic Indian Dance, i.e. her cultural knowledge, and also an Indian Jazz Dance, i.e. her participation and fluency in contemporary culture. Her performance is more than an act of survivance, it challenges the truth of stereotypes that limit the narrative of Indigenous women to a secondary character in the story of the conqueror (i.e. John Smith). In this way, it can be read as a decolonial act.

An "Indian Jazz Dance" is a complicated cultural amalgamation, and in 1919 it was performed at the beginning of the Jazz age. Defining what Jazz Dance might have looked like in this period is a difficult task, as the form is very improvisational. Scholars agree that Jazz dancing in this period would have involved steps from the following styles: buck, wing, shimmy, cakewalk, black bottom, among others. All of these dance styles, much like the music that the dance is named for, come from African-American communities in the South. Jazz dance was performed to Jazz music, featuring complicated rhythms. Princess White Deer frequently performed the early tap dance forms of buck dance and buck and wing dances, so it is probable that her Indian Jazz Dance, that critics loved but did not describe, involved these types of steps

as well as steps from her cultural tradition. 1919 is very early in the history of Broadway Jazz Dance, likely not incorporating a lot of the ideas of jazz that are now part of the definition of what jazz dancing looks like; most of those moves and styles were established between the mid-1920s and the 1950s.<sup>105</sup>

Princess White Deer's performance changed her danced historiography from a narrative trapped in the past to a narrative that is connected to the past and thriving in the present. However, Jazz dance's roots in African and East Indian rhythms and movements challenge the idea that modernity that is tied to whiteness. Jazz music and then dance defined the 1920's, leading to naming it the Jazz Age. Jazz music came out of New Orleans developed and played by African-American musicians, and its popularity travelled north and abroad, gaining particular notoriety and accolades in Paris. As Jazz came to define the age, white musicians adopted the style and techniques white-washing and made making it more palatable to white audiences. Princess White Deer was performing Indian Jazz dances beginning in her vaudeville act in 1917, many years before Jazz was widely accepted.<sup>106</sup> As an Indigenous woman, who is othered, but also royalty, and neither white nor black, her performance speaks to cosmopolitanism and the modern age that Jazz came to represent. Her movement choreographed a non-white relationship to time, the rhythms that make up contemporary culture. In 1919 Jazz- both music and dance-

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<sup>105</sup> Marshall Winslow Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*. (Da Capo Press, 1968). and, Lindsay Guarin and Wendy Oliver. *Jazz Dance : A History of the Roots and Branches*.(Gainesville, US: University Press of Florida, 2014.)

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10837498>.

<sup>106</sup> Most scholars agree that Jazz hits its stride in the mid-1920's. See also: Malign, Julie. *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*. (University of Illinois Press, 2009.)

was not yet fully appropriated into white culture. White Deer's Indian Jazz showed her ability to be at the forefront of cultural shifts, a testament to her ability (and by extension the people she represented on stage) to participate within modernity. That participation in itself is a cultural hybridity, through dance showing the similarities between the black and Indigenous dance practices.

In the 1920's her stage work continued to function as a juxtaposition to the imperialism inherent in the redface performances on stage. From 1920-1921 Princess White Deer was a featured performer in another Charles Dillingham production, *Tip Top*. *Tip Top* was a scripted musical comedy featuring the talents of comic singer and dancer Fred Stone. Its loose plot follows the misadventures of Tipton Topping, or Tip Top, as he travels the world to try to give his best friend a letter that carries a large inheritance and the solution to all their problems. All of this happens while Tip Top is trying to evade discovery by the villains, lawyers who are trying to trick his friend out of his inheritance. The plot is very little more than a device for Fred Stone to show off the myriad skills he performed as Tip Top, including a minstrel song in blackface, western rope tricks, a pirouette number, comic songs, and several other vaudeville-style acts.<sup>107</sup> As the show changes location, it incorporated other vaudeville acts to support Stone's performance, including Princess White Deer in the role of Wetonah. In *Tip Top* White Deer performs a "Dance of the Young Warrior" alone before the final scene of the first act. It is set in a "Red Canyon," and her dance is followed by a scene where Tip Top is dressed in redface to

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<sup>107</sup> This show also featured live cats held by people in full mascot-style cat costumes. It was not a serious piece.



avoid capture by the local sheriff. After Tip Top tricks the sheriff he performs a song with the whole of female chorus (listed as the “Palace Girls”) who are also dressed in redface.<sup>108</sup>

Like *Hitchy-Koo 1919*, in a scene set in the American landscape (first Virginia Woodlands, and next a “Red Canyon” of the American southwest) there is a performed dissonance of what being and playing “Indian” mean. Unlike *Hitchy-Koo 1919*, in *Tip-Top* Princess White Deer performs “The Dance of the Young Warrior;” likely a plains-style war dance. Photos from *Tip Top* show Princess White Deer in a full war bonnet in the tradition of Lakota Sioux and other Plains tribes.<sup>109</sup> In *Tip Top* everyone performs a heightened version of identity, and for most of the performers this is a kind of camp version of themselves. The constant jokes and songs maintain a humorous tone that lets the audience know that all of this identity-play is only play. It is a joke, and not a joke of survivance or a political use of humor to point out oppression. Rather, this is humor that maintains a status quo, laughing at stereotypes. Princess White Deer’s performance veered away from camp and towards colonial mimicry, a performance that was more-than-authentic. She is not a Lakota woman, but the image of the war bonnet so permeates ideas of what an Indian is supposed to look like that she adopts that stereotype to perform her dance in earnest, adding a “real Indian” to the show.

vaudeville and the popular variety musical revues that Princess White Deer performed with relied on gimmicks and notoriety to attract audiences. Princess White Deer’s authenticity as

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<sup>108</sup> *Tip Top* (Script and Programs), Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. Fred Andrew Stone. *Rolling Stone*. (New York, London: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Company, inc, 1945). and Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer*.

<sup>109</sup> Princess White Deer Photos and Clippings, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

a real member of the Mohawk tribe often expanded to represent all Indigenous tribes in marketing material. On a stage where many things were explicitly false, like Fred Stone's redface costume (that is meant to be a disguise), Princess White Deer traded on her real ancestry to bring in audiences. It was a technique that worked, garnering acclaim and earning her a high income for the period. The branding of her performance trades on the same allure of the Wild West shows, and can be understood as an act of survivance. However, the juxtaposition of audience expectations with her earnest and often contemporary performance styles are potential decolonizations of the stereotypes that drew the audiences inside the theatre.

### **2.3.5 An “Aztec Ball”, the Pueblo Dance Controversy, and The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924**

Amongst Princess White Deer's papers is an invitation from the American Indian Defense Association (AIDA) to perform at their Aztec Ball fundraiser at the Ambassador Hotel in New York City.<sup>110</sup> The invitation mentions Princess White Deer's participation in the previous year's entertainment, noting her continued participation with this policy and lobbying group. John Collier, who would be appointed as head of the BIA by Roosevelt in the 1930s, founded the American Indian Defense Association in 1923. The AIDA was instrumental in pushing against assimilationist policies in Congress. The early 20s were a loaded time for women, radical intellectuals, minorities, and immigrants. In 1921 women gained the right to vote, and Princess White Deer came out vocally stating that Indigenous women should also be granted this right in

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<sup>110</sup> It is unclear precisely what was meant by “Aztec” at this society fundraiser and performance in New York City.

several newspaper articles.<sup>111</sup> A fear of immigrants and communism became pronounced in the early 20's with events like the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1921, and the Immigration Act of 1924 which set nationality quotas for potential immigrants.

AIDA's object, succinctly written on their stationery, was to "Secure for all Indians, the right to land, to legal protection, health protection, modern education and liberty of conscience."<sup>112</sup> Collier, a trained sociologist, was struck by a need for this type of organization after a stay in Taos, New Mexico. He was struck by the damage that assimilationist policies had on the Taos Pueblo tribe, and the difficulties they had maintaining religious freedom and access to their water rights. AIDA policies were in direct opposition to the other major lobbyist group on Indian Rights at the time, the Indian Rights Association (IRA). Founded in Philadelphia by Herbert Welsh in 1882, the IRA focused on assimilationist policies through Christian education. Between their founding and the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, the IRA maintained a great amount of influence in Washington, D.C and throughout the BIA branches. They conducted observational research on reservations, created and funded Christian Indian schools, and published a wide range of pamphlets to sway public opinion towards assimilation as the solution to the quote "Indian problem."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Newspaper Clippings, Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>112</sup>Personal Collections. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center.

<sup>113</sup> "The Indian Problem," Reel 125. Indian Rights Association records (Collection 1523), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

The AIDA came into existence in part as a resistance to the Bursum Bill. First introduced by New Mexico Senator Holf Olaf Bursum, the bill sought to grant Pueblo land to non-Pueblo claimants who had good-faith and valid land claims. The Pueblo Nation came under the jurisdiction of the BIA with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which made few provisions for BIA oversight on Pueblo territories. In 1912 New Mexico gained statehood, and the subject of Pueblo territories and land claims became a contested. In 1913 the U.S. Court of Appeals sided with the Pueblo's land claims in the case U.S. vs Sandoval. Nine years later, Bursum introduced his bill to continue the legislative onslaught of settler colonialism. Since the Pueblo people living within the confines of New Mexico were not granted citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and were therefore unable to vote, Senator Bursum was uninterested in listening to their opinion despite their position as constituents within the state. At first, the IRA and AIDA were in agreement over the negative impact of the Bursum bill on the Pueblo people.

In the midst of the Bursum Bill opposition, in 1923 BIA Commissioner Charles Burke published a circular on the dangers of the Pueblo Dancing. Dancing is a large part of the practice of the Pueblo traditional religion, and Burke's circular called the dancing immoral, and that poverty among the Pueblos was not due to their land loss but rather to their "overindulgence in dancing."<sup>114</sup> Burke was committed to curbing and stopping dancing practices, for example in the 1923 circular he wrote that "Indian dances be limited to one day in the midweek and at one center of each district; the months of March, April, June, July and August being exempted (no dances in these months). That none take part in the dances or be present who are under 50 years of age. That a careful propaganda be undertaken to educate public opinion against the (Indian

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<sup>114</sup> Charles Burke, Circular No 1665. Bureau of Indian Affairs. 1921 and 1923

religious) dance."<sup>115</sup> These restrictions on dance were part of a cultural assimilation project led by the BIA towards the Pueblos and other tribal nations. The BIA had supported the Bursum Bill because they saw it as a way to gain a foothold into the governmental control of the Pueblos nation.

Burke's vendetta against dance caused an instant controversy and backlash with many organizations and tribal nations. The outrage was swift and public, with many letters published in newspapers across the country. Public support of the religious dance practice by artists and writers affiliated with AIDA created a wedge between the IRA and the AIDA. The IRA were suspicious of AIDA support and were particularly at odds with John Collier. The IRA was founded on Christian assimilationist policies and agreed with Burke's circular on Indigenous dancing. Like the Ghost Dance thirty years' prior, the Pueblo dancing controversy sparked unrest and litigious action. However, unlike thirty years prior, public opinion was no longer united in the threat Indigenous peoples and their cultures held towards the United States. John Collier's decisively anti-assimilationist policies would become de rigeur when he assumed the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the 1930's during Roosevelt's presidency.

Indian Citizenship Act passed through congress and was signed into law by Calvin Coolidge on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924. The law stated:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United*

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<sup>115</sup>Charles Burke, Circular No 1665. Bureau of Indian Affairs. 1921 and 1923

States: *Provided*, That the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.<sup>116</sup>

This act created a dual-citizenship for all Indigenous peoples active or enrolled within their tribal nation. Prior to the act it was possible for an Indigenous person to become a U.S. citizen through application process, but this act took away both the choice of becoming a citizen and the effort to gain citizenship. The act had a mixed reception, and did not immediately bestow voting rights to all Indigenous peoples since states determined voting rights. Ultimately, this act altered Indigenous people's ability to negotiate for themselves their representation with and within the U.S. government.

Princess White Deer life's work was performance, but she consistently engaged in political action. Indigenous Dance, while celebrated on the vaudeville and Broadway stage, was under attack on the reservation. The stakes of Indigenous dance perhaps were no longer the life and death of a group of human beings as it was during the Ghost Dance period, now the stakes were the life and death of an entire cultural practice. Her presence and performance at two AIDA fundraiser balls in New York show her alliance, at least in this moment, with the artists, writers, society women, lobbyists, and politicians who sought to end assimilationist policy in Indian Affairs. White Deer consistently participated and negotiated within United States culture beyond and through her dancing virtuosity. Celebrity gave her access that allowed her to influence popular opinion for additional rights. As a ward, she and other Indigenous people, were governed by a system that they were unable to negotiate against. With access to the rights of a citizen there was now an access to representation, through voting and civic engagement and within the court

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<sup>116</sup> HR6355. 68<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1924 reported April 21, 1924. Reel 108. Indian Rights Association records (Collection 1523), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

system, that was previously denied them. Like acts of survivance could build towards decolonial performance, citizenship was a step that could allow a future decolonial Indigenous state because the rights of the citizen gave Indigenous people a point of access and a voice that was previously denied them. As complex as citizenship was, and is, ward status was arguably worse. If status as a citizen was given to the Ghost Dancer they could have sued the state on a basis of freedom of religion, from the position of a ward that was never a possibility. The Pueblo Dancers, after the citizenship act, had greater access to the legal system and were able to better negotiate their rights and lands. As I will outline in the next chapter, full access to the legal system--which citizenship granted—changed the position of Indigenous people in a way that would later allow activist to create decolonial protests.

### **2.3.6 *From Wigwams to White Lights* and honoring General Pershing**

While the Pueblo's dancing practices were under scrutiny in the public eye, Princess White Deer's dancing practices were praised on New York city stages. Esther White Deer's final variety act was a full length number produced at the Hippodrome in 1925. The show was called *From Wigwams to White Lights*, and like *Indians of Past and Present* is was a historiographical performance. Where *Indians of the Past and Present* was a short three number act, *From Wigwams to White Lights* was a longer performance featuring the Hippodrome dance troupe. It was aptly named as well, because the performance told the history of Indigenous and Settler Colonial dance in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> century. White Deer's relationship with Charles Dillingham helped cement her as a headliner for the vaudeville circuit, and this production was slated to headline around New York and then across the United States. Princess White Deer was accompanied again by Chief Eagle Horse, whose oration began the show. In addition to the

Hippodrome dancers, Princess White Deer was also partnered by ballroom dancer Peppy De Albrew, a playboy known as the “Sheik of Brazil.”<sup>117</sup> This production was larger, more complicated with costume changes and large staged choral dance numbers, and Princess White Deer was the star.

The *New York Variety* reviewed the production on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1925, describing the production in detail: “The act is prologues by a brave who eloquates in “one” about the “Daughter of the Mohawks.” The act is based upon dances of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which serves as a skeleton for double dances of the Princess and a male dancing partner.”<sup>118</sup> Princess White Deer’s dancing partner was the so-called “Sheik of Brazil,” Peppy de Albrew. Prior to their turn together on the Hippodrome stage, White Deer and de Albrew spent the summer of 1924 dancing the Charleston, the Tango, and a new ballroom dance that White Deer created called “The Deer Stalk” at the Ambassador Hotel for the pleasure of guests in Atlantic City.<sup>119</sup> In the newspapers the two dancers were linked romantically, although there is no evidence that their relationship was anything other than professional. They made a sensation in Atlantic City, and continued to please the crowds at the Hippodrome. Peppy de Albrew didn’t begin the act; the role of orator was given to Princess White Deer’s longtime collaborator Chief Eagle Horse.

The *Variety* description continues: “Following the chief’s address, the act goes to full stage. A cyclorama parts, disclosing White Deer in native costume. She solos a symbolic dance,

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<sup>117</sup> Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. location 1109.

<sup>118</sup> Variety. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na

Raotitíohkwa Language and Cultural Center

<sup>119</sup> Galperin. *In Search of Princess White Deer*. Location 1120.



interpreting it gracefully.”<sup>120</sup> This initial dance represents Indigenous history pre-contact and pre-colonization. From a later performance’s program, it’s likely that this dance was titled “Dance of the Great Spirit” and was similar if not identical to the dance by the same name she performed as part of the Ziegfeld Follies Midnight Frolic several years earlier.<sup>121</sup> This would be her traditional dance, the piece that she was known for and what the audience would expect to see when they came to see her perform. She placed this dance first to assert her cultural identity and heritage, and to place this cultural act of survivance at the beginning of her history. In doing this she was not just creating a spectacle of Indigenous culture, she was also asserting that her cultural heritage is at the beginning of this narrative. It is a decolonial assertion to place Indigenous culture as the origin, and not the western cultural influences that would come after, quite literally. The next dance, which brought the performance into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was “the Hip’s chorus of 18 girls... in ante-bellum costume for a well-executed minuet.”<sup>122</sup>

Following the minuet, “White Deer and her partner, both in cowboy and girl costume, double a one-step and semi-jazz dance, and fox-trot.”<sup>123</sup> Princess White Deer chooses in this act to place the ideas of western expansion onto her own Indigenous body and the Brazilian/Latin body of Pepy de Albrew. The trope of cowboys versus Indians was popularized in Wild West shows in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but historically cowboys were often Mexican and/or Indigenous.

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<sup>120</sup> Variety. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center

<sup>121</sup> Programs. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center

<sup>122</sup> Variety. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien’kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center

<sup>123</sup> Ibid,

Costuming an Indigenous woman as a cow-girl and costuming a Brazilian dancer as a cow-boy complicates the lie of whiteness portrayed in popular culture about the ethnicity and cultural heritage of the cowboy. Their dances- the one-step/semi-jazz dance and the fox-trot- were anachronistic to the 18<sup>th</sup> century; both dances originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The act moved chronologically forward: “The 19<sup>th</sup> century brings on the chorus in Union Army costumes for a Virginia reel, also well done. The double of White Deer and her partner following has the pair in evening clothes for a novelty waltz.”<sup>124</sup> Neither of these dances are strictly 19<sup>th</sup> century creations. The Virginia reel, a partnered line dance, dates as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the dance reached the height of it’s popularity in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making the use of Civil War era Union Army costumes a historically accurate reference. The dancing chorus was all female, so this likely was a sensationalized choice for costuming since the women would all be wearing pants. An army of women in Union uniforms plays on gender in the role of the army as well.

The Waltz originated in Austria in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and, variations on the Waltz became popular throughout European society and the rest of the world during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Waltz danced by Princess White Deer and Peppy de Albrew is described as a “novelty,” which could mean a wide range of things. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the Waltz travelled to different nations and regions, those regions altered the basic steps. Additionally, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century popular dance performers would create their own versions of the Waltz step. The most famous of this second type was the Castle Waltz created by the dancing couple Vernon and Irene Castle who created many dances between 1912 and 1918. Princess White Deer and Peppy de Albrew’s evening gown attire likely means that this Waltz was closer to the ballroom dance

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid

style, and to the type of waltz that they danced together in Atlantic City the previous summer. Their attire of fine evening clothes again complicates the stereotypes of the Indian Princess, showing her beauty and access to modern clothing. The Indian Princess, like the myth of Pocahontas, is either saving the white man in her savage state, or converting to Christianity and assimilating to western culture. Princess White Deer's version of history shows that while she can dress in western culture she has not assimilated. Her danced historiography has layered meanings.

This layering continues into the final part of the act: "The 20<sup>th</sup> century dance introduces the chorus in West Point uniforms and dresses for a corking kicking dance and drill. The Princess in a short-skirted costume solos a buck and slide routine, which registers as her best effort. At the finish she is jazzing with all working in an ensemble finale."<sup>125</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> century section continued the dynamic that was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century section and pushes it further, showing the colonial aspects of dance history as militarized, and complicating her identity through a contemporary jazz dance. This end repeated the narrative of the finale in *Indians of Past and Present*. Her dancing resisted othering and it rejected a narrative that traps her and her culture as products of a past that can never be part of modernity. Ending with a jazz ensemble, the features her virtuosity amidst the dancing chorus girls, was a fitting conclusion for this decolonial history that so firmly reasserts the importance, value, and place of Indigenous Americans.

*Wigwams to White Lights* was taxing, and although Princess White Deer had a six-month tour of the act booked through the Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit for 1925, she had to cancel the

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<sup>125</sup> Variety. Newspaper Clippings. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na

tour due to exhaustion. Her doctors ordered her to rest in Florida for several months. While in Florida, she received a telegram from Mark Leuscher (who was managing the Hippodrome at the time) asking if she'd be interested and up for a repeat performance of her act as part of a tribute to General John Pershing organized by the American Legion in April of that year. The next day, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1925, a formal request for her performance arrived by mail from the American Legion's committee headquarters<sup>126</sup>. Other acts in the tribute performance included: Will Rogers, World's Lightweight Boxing Champion Benny Leonard, John Philip Sousa and the Army and Navy band, the vaudeville comedy duo Weber and Fields, and Edie Cantor among others. Princess White Deer's act was the only dancing included, and was featured prominently at the beginning of the Tribute's bill.

General John "Black Jack" Pershing served the United States bravely during World War I, leading the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). This tribute performance was timed to honor General Pershing's retirement from the army in 1924. Pershing served his entire career in the Army after graduating from West Point in 1886. He began his time in the Army during the Indian Wars in the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry unit, primarily fighting against the Apache tribes in the New Mexico territory, although the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was active in the final stages putting down the Ghost Dance religion during the Lakota wars in 1891. Later in 1895, he was given command of a troop of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry regiment and one of the original Buffalo Soldier units comprised of all African-American soldiers. His nickname "Black Jack" was initially a derogatory slur meant to insult him because of his time spent leading the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry unit. Between the Indian wars and World War I, Pershing fought in the Spanish-American wars, in the Philippine-American war,

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<sup>126</sup> Black Vuolong. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Language and Cultural Center

and lead the push to capture Pancho Villa . He also served as a military observer during Russo-Japanese war, and in the Balkans. While Pershing adhered to a “separate but equal” philosophy in the configuration of different races within the army, he was adamant about the value of Black and Indigenous soldiers.<sup>127</sup>

What does it mean for Princess White Deer to dance her decolonial history for General Pershing? Pershing, like White Deer, was well-travelled and likely had a more cosmopolitan view of the world, however, he also began his career (the year that Esther White Deer was born) by killing Indians. Is this an act of complicity? Princess White Deer actively supported and performed for the troops, and the Haudenosaunee Nation declared war separately but as an ally of the United States. Was her performance requested because of the military costumes and dances that the Hippodrome chorus wore, or was there something more? In a discussion of African American performance and complicitness with imperial discourses, Stephanie Batiste offers that “such consent provided a space for the articulation of more complicated formations of identity, including equality, resistance, superiority, black particularity, and diaspora.”<sup>128</sup> Without access it is difficult to articulate and perform alternative ideas. Esther Deer’s performance for Pershing’s Tribute is part of her own articulation of complex personhood, it is bound up in the social contexts of power that allow her access to the popular stage. Her agency as an artist on the popular stage is limited by what producers would book. Pershing’s military legacy is not

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<sup>127</sup> See Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At Home and at War*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), and Herman J. Viola, *Warriors in Uniform: The Legacy of American Indian Heroism*. (Washington, D.C: National Geographic, 2008.)

<sup>128</sup> Stephanie Leigh Batiste. *Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression-era African American Performance*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011). 4.

encompassed by his creation and leadership of the AEF, nor can it be judged entirely by his participation in putting down the Ghost Dance religion at the beginning of his career. Pershing was however a proponent of assimilation policies, and saw participation within the military as a route to assimilate Indigenous tribes.

Princess White Deer's performance was the fourth act of the tribute bill, following Cherokee humorist Will Rogers, likely performing his classic rope act during which he performed tricks with a lasso while uttering observational humor. While Pershing began his career by putting down Indigenous dancing, his tribute celebrated the value of Indigenous dance and culture. Her representation here, may not have changed minds, but it was offering an alternative way of understanding the value of Indigenous culture and of Indigenous dance.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

Esther Louise Georgette Deer's performances negotiated primarily within the cultural border between the Kanien'kehá:ka nation and the United States. Her participation in the Aztec Ball, an appropriative problematic event that shows the ways that allies of traditional Indigenous cultures were still complicit in the coloniality of power that turns Indigenous culture into a party, points towards the hemispheric possibilities of decolonial performance that I'll discuss in more detail in the fourth chapter. In 1927, Princess White Deer performed in Dillingham's production of *Lucky* where she played a princess from India. While her performances offered ways forward, and a performative historiography that challenged Wild West show narratives, her agency within the popular stage was limited.

Princess White Deer's career on-stage continued in a few other vehicles through the 1930s, and she continued to travel. She never married, and several articles mention that she was working on writing a history, but no manuscripts evidence exists in her archived papers. White Deer lived to be one hundred years old, and during that time she continued to use her position and celebrity to speak to politicians on behalf of her people. She continued to seek recognition for her people. After she wrote to New York Governor Herbert Lehman in 1942, he declared September 26<sup>th</sup> as "American Indian" day<sup>129</sup>. In 1971, after years of work and correspondence, she saw her father's Wampum Belt returned to her family from the University of the State of New York and State Museum. The Museum received the Wampum Belt in "guardianship" in 1898. Representation can change minds, and recognition can give a larger platform to enact change.

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<sup>129</sup> Personal Collection. Papers of Princess White Deer, Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa

### **3.0 ANNA MAE PICTOU AQUASH AND THE STAKES OF PROTEST FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

“I Learned a Safety Rule  
I Don’t know who to thank  
Don’t stand between the reservation and the Corporate Bank  
They’ll Send in Federal Tanks  
It isn’t nice, but it’s reality  
Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee.”  
- Buffy Ste. Marie, “Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee”

Anna Mae Pictou Aquash stood up for her belief in the humanity and value of Indigenous people and culture. Standing made her visible, and increased her vulnerability in society because she was both Indigenous and a woman who was an active member and leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the late 1960s to mid-1970s. Aquash’s work within AIM led to a position of prominence and status as one of the highest-ranking and most visible women within the movement. Aquash stood for the value of Indigenous lives, Indigenous cultures and languages, and Indigenous sovereignty. Standing up for these values was a radical act because federal policies of the United States were often designed to assimilate and/or terminate Indigenous cultures.

This chapter has two subjects. First, I examine the act of standing as an act of protest by Indigenous peoples against a government. Secondly, I examine the intersections of identity that



play out in the life and death of an Indigenous woman made visible by standing. This chapter's argument is, similarly, twofold. First I argue that AIM's protests, including those in which Aquash was involved, were decolonial actions (successful or otherwise) articulated through strategic engagements with historical narratives and places that expose the borders between cultures and nations. Second, I contend that failure to decolonize patriarchy in decolonial actions leaves women who stand in these actions, like Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, extremely vulnerable. AIM's decolonial actions were seen as direct threats to the United States by the FBI and earned AIM the demarcation of a domestic terrorist group. Decolonial acts marked as acts of terror affirms the western grip on colonial values that underlies the United States government. Without settler colonialism that claims the land, and the coloniality of power that structures the government, the United States as it is now would not exist. Decolonial acts challenge and threaten the rhetoric of freedom and democracy that are central to the founding of the United States, the values stated in the Declaration of Independence; i.e. "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Decolonial acts reveal that under the constraints of coloniality, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are restricted by race, gender, and sexuality.

Aquash's visibility within and outside of the movement made her uniquely vulnerable. AIM membership consisted primarily of tribal nations from the plains, like the Lakota. Aquash was a member of the Mi'kmaq tribe from Nova Scotia, a tribe not well represented in AIM membership. To the Lakota AIM members, Aquash was an outsider. In-fighting within AIM leadership, suspicion of FBI informants within the movement, and on-going legal pressure created an environment where fear and mistrust made a woman who was vocal, visible, and an outsider an easy target. Suspicion led AIM members from the Dakotas to order Aquash's interrogation in December 1975. After interrogation, a small group of AIM members declared

her guilt, and then several of them drove her to the edge of Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Then they shot her in the back of the head execution style, and pushed her body over the side of a cliff left to the ravages of nature. The small tribunal did not broadcast what they had done to the wider AIM membership. Aquash's body was found in late January 1976. The FBI claimed they could not identify her, although she was a wanted fugitive and the FBI were actively looking for her. The FBI's autopsy declared her a "Jane Doe" that died of "exposure," and then cut off her hands to send to Washington D.C. before burying her body in an unmarked grave in South Dakota.<sup>130</sup> Aquash received the second autopsy thanks to her family's intervention, and that autopsy disclosed the bullet hole in the back of her head. Initially many members of the movement suspected the FBI of committing this crime. It was not until 2003, that Arlo Looking Cloud and John Graham (both AIM officers) were indicted for her murder, and Looking Cloud was convicted in 2004. In 2010, Thelma Rios, another AIM member, took a plea bargain that admitted her guilt in the conspiracy. Graham still hasn't gone to trial. Justice for Aquash has taken over thirty years.

Anna Mae Pictou Aquash has become a touchstone for understanding AIM. I suggest she is also a touchstone for understanding the intersections of gender and power in decolonial actions. The first priority of a decolonial action is often to disentangle and end unequal power dynamics in the relationship between colonizer and colonized. Linda Tuhiwai Smith articulates the need to first unpack imperialist oppression in trauma when decolonizing methodologies.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Steve Hendricks. *The Unquiet Grave: The FBI and the Struggle for the Soul of Indian Country*. (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006). 4-5.

<sup>131</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (London ; New York: Zed Books : Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). 2-3.

The trauma of oppression, current and historical, from colonial and imperial forces can be overwhelming. However until decolonial action also overturns the fraught colonial hauntings of gender dynamics the action will never be fully decolonial. The ways in which coloniality impacts daily decisions are many, and often internalized. Unstated in Quijano's understanding of Coloniality, as articulated by María Lugones, is the patriarchal understanding of gender dynamics. Lugones frames Quijano's understanding of gender as "too narrow," because he assumes that the definition of gender and gender relationships is confined by patriarchal value systems, and it leaves no room for matriarchal and/or queer relationships, that have existed outside of the historical confines of western patriarchy.<sup>132</sup> As Paula Gunn Allen asserts "traditional tribal lifestyles were more often gynocratic than not, and never patriarchal."<sup>133</sup> To decolonize, to reject and reassert a different way of living outside of colonial values, means confronting the often internalized gender dynamics inherent in patriarchy. Patriarchal values undermine the value of women as people in insidious ways, and they are linked perpetually with the hierarchies that reinforces coloniality/modernity. This chapter extends a critique of gender within the decolonial actions of AIM's protests, as evidenced by the visibility and vulnerability of Anna Mae Aquash. Her death made her a symbol for the movement but also shows the gap in the decolonization of gender within these protests.

In this chapter, I explain the backgrounds of both the American Indian Movement and Anna Mae Pictou Aquash. I then explicate their connections in the Red Power Movement, and the ideals they stood for. Next, I analyze protest as a decolonial performance that excavates

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<sup>132</sup> Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 189.

<sup>133</sup> Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).2.

space and history through an exploration of the values of gender and coloniality/modernity. Following this theoretical model, I then consider three protests and their consequences: the Thanksgiving Protest at Plymouth in 1970; The Trail of Broken Treaties and the BIA occupation in 1972; and the Wounded Knee occupation in 1973. Finally, I conclude with Anna Mae Aquash's death, and an analysis of the ways in which decolonial protest must include decolonization of gender relations or risk the consequence of death for Indigenous women.

### **3.2 A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT**

The seeds of the American Indian Movement were born in an Indian Folklore education group in Minnesota's Stillwater Prison. Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, George Mitchell and Eddie Benton-Benai, who were all in Stillwater Prison together, are often cited as the founders of AIM.<sup>134</sup> Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt, two of the future chairmen of AIM, were both serving time for robbery. After serving time in the army during the Korean war, Banks became unmoored when he returned to Minneapolis. Out of work, he robbed a grocery store. The folklore group provided a space for these Indigenous men to re-learn, or learn for the first time, the stories, songs, and music of their people. The absence of their cultural practice was due, in

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<sup>134</sup> See: Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1996); and Christine Birong, "The Influence of Police Brutality on the American Indian Movement's Establishment in Minneapolis, 1968—1969," (M.A Thesis., The University of Arizona, 2009).

<http://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/304842961/abstract/934A1F71BD944A13PQ/1>

part, to governmental programs. For example, The government removed Banks from his family on Leech Lake Reservation and sent him to an Indian Boarding School at the age of four.<sup>135</sup> The boarding school separated Banks from his family and the culture of the Anishinaabe of Leech Lake for most of his young life, with the exception of several school holidays and when he ran away from school. At boarding school students were only allowed to speak English, which was part of a federal policy that hoped to achieve assimilation of Indigenous peoples into U.S. culture by eliminating their languages. The prison group taught culture as a survival measure, a way to revive cultures and languages, and it was instrumental in establishing the underlying values of AIM.

The official formation of AIM occurred at a July 1968 community meeting in Minneapolis.<sup>136</sup> When Bellencourt, Banks, Benton-Benai, Mitchell and others began meeting in 1968, they agreed to address the issues of police brutality in the "red ghettos" in Minneapolis. Poverty, high drop-out rates, and a general lack of education were common among the Indigenous population of Minneapolis. In schools, Indigenous children faced racism- both overt and implied- within the curriculum. The community suffered from the negative effects of decades of federal assimilationist policies.<sup>137</sup> Banks' upbringing was a product of this traumatizing assimilationist policy that separated him from his family and culture, and his story

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<sup>135</sup> "Native American Leader Dennis Banks on the Overlooked Tragedy of Nation's Indian Boarding Schools." *Democracy Now!* Accessed November 23, 2015.

[http://www.democracynow.org/2012/10/8/native\\_american\\_leader\\_dennis\\_banks\\_on](http://www.democracynow.org/2012/10/8/native_american_leader_dennis_banks_on).

<sup>136</sup> Birong, "The Influence of Police Brutality"

<sup>137</sup> The assimilation programs, including the boarding school movement, were designed to convert Native Americans into good Christian citizens by denying them their language, religion, cultural practices, and their names.

was in no way unique to the many families across different tribes throughout the United States. The prison program that initially brought these men together was a recovery process to heal the gaps in knowledge created by traumatic federal policies.

AIM initially agreed to organize to prevent police brutality towards their community in Minneapolis; however, as the movement grew so did their platform. Their focus grew beyond the urban Indigenous population of Minneapolis to include many tribal affiliations across other urban areas and reservations. As they grew in number, the complaints the different groups had in common gave AIM focus, particularly by addressing the poor treatment by and broken treaties with the U.S. federal government. The organization was not strictly structured. Clyde Bellecourt served as chairman, and Dennis Banks served as Spokesman, but beyond that the organization did not maintain a hierarchical structure. While AIM began with only the Minneapolis chapter, other chapters of AIM grew in cities across the country with significant Indigenous populations creating a nationwide network. At first, AIM did not have the organizational support for consistent messaging across a nationwide network. In 1970 Russell Means was appointed the first National Director. The open structure of membership and leadership made AIM easily infiltrated by FBI informants, a technique the FBI developed during earlier civil rights movements.

AIM was only one organization that made up the Red Power movement that arose in the late 1960s. Perhaps the first nationally-recognized action of the Red Power movement was the Indian of All Tribes (IOAT) occupation of Alcatraz Island from November 20, 1969, to June 11, 1971. A group of students from a wide-range of tribal affiliations organized a long-term occupation of Alcatraz. They saw the unoccupied island in San Francisco Bay as a potential land reclamation project for Indigenous groups under a clause from the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

Over the nineteen months that the group occupied the island they were joined by many people, including AIM members Russell Means and Dennis Banks. Many Indigenous activists cite Alcatraz as the moment they were radicalized.<sup>138</sup> That first action opened the imagination of what Indigenous people could do in the face of a government that from the 1950's on had pursued a "Termination Policy" towards reservations. This policy was designed to terminate reservations (and also federal funding of reservations) by paying for residents of reservations to move to urban areas with better job prospects. Ironically, the Red Power resistance to the termination policy grew out of the newly displaced urban Indigenous populations: the end of the policy came from its results.

Despite maintaining a membership that welcomed and encouraged all genders the American Indian Movement was distinctly male in image and leadership. The founders of the movement were also the most vocal figureheads. While Anna Mae Pictou Aquash was a high-ranking member before her death, she was never a spokesperson for the group-- in fact, no woman held that position during the early protest years (1968-1973). Women made up more than half of AIM's membership, but they were invisible in the media. As Margo Thunderbird, who worked with Aquash in Minneapolis, told reporter Eric Konigsberg: AIM "wanted to present an image, and the angry Indian man was better than the angry Indian women."<sup>139</sup> The images associated with AIM were often distinctly masculine. Pictures of Russell Means and Dennis Banks speaking to crowds were used in newspaper clippings, and unnamed Indigenous men with

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<sup>138</sup> Donna Hightower Langston, "American Indian Women's Activism in the 1960s and 1970s," *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 114–32.

<sup>139</sup> Eric Konigsberg. "Who Killed Anna Mae?" *The New York Times*, April 25, 2014.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/magazine/who-killed-anna-mae.html>.

their hair in braids or wearing a headband and holding a rifle represent the idea of this group's mission: warriors fighting for a way of life. As AIM became more legible to outside viewers, they also upheld patriarchal masculine values.

While the American Indian Movement was at the forefront, there were many regional and nationally oriented Indigenous activist groups associated with the Red Power movement; these groups included the Boston Indian Council, The National Indian Youth Council (formed in 1961), the Native American Brotherhood, and The Indians of All Tribes, among others. The American Indian Movement grew increasingly militarized over the years, drawing comparisons to the Black Panther Party. The American Indian Movement initially captured the nation's attention through protests organized in strategic places and times, strategic because they invoked events of the past in situ that state-sanctioned histories overlooked and willfully forgot. The movement did not begin with violence but became more militarized in response to the increased pressure from the US Government.

Displacement and assimilation were a collective trauma for AIM members, and their response was to organize and demand that the US Government honor treaty rights that were consistently denied. AIM's protests positioned the group in the intersections of citizenship and sovereignty, nations and reservations. AIM members sought to reclaim land *and* culture because land alone is not enough to make a nation. *Stories* make a nation, they allow a group to imagine and understand their world collectively. Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca) argues that Indigenous communities make their identity through personal and communal stories that map their relationship to the land.<sup>140</sup> It is the stories that connect them and create a group identity and

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<sup>140</sup> Mishuana Goeman. "From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the discussion of Indigenous Nation-building," *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 1, Number



understanding. First displaced from their land and then denied teaching their stories and language to the next generation, AIM's work (and other groups like AIM) was an attempt to regain what was lost; to make visible the borders (both real and imagined) that settler colonialism created; to recreate stories and relationships to the land that would give new meaning and recover identity. Their acts of recovery are an excavation, digging beneath borders-- borders of reservations and borders of colonial history. To excavate a past that is lost due to colonial and imperial encroachment is an inherently decolonial act because it rejects Western discourse as truth, in favor of knowledge that comes from the land. This is what Goeman refers to as a situated knowledge, and it is a decolonial alternative to Western epistemologies.

### **3.3 ON EXCAVATING BORDERS**

AIM's protests sometimes occurred within and sometimes outside the borders of a reservation. Yet, due to the patterns of colonization and conquest in North America, any land that an Indigenous person stages protest upon was at one-point Indigenous land. Activists must excavate Indigenous history, claim, and relationship to the land because narratives of national history layer new meanings for the land on top of old until the older narratives are forgotten. Indigenous protest changes the meaning of space in which it occurs. The protest begins to do the work of excavating the border, a border that crosses both space and time; and in the process turns that space into a cultural and physical borderland.

I take the concept of borderlands from Gloria Anzaldúa, who writes that “the borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.”<sup>141</sup> Borderlands, and borders, for Anzaldúa, are not only national boundaries (she writes explicitly about the border between Mexico and the United States) but are also the cultural borders of our embodied experience. The borders between black (or red) and white, rich and poor, healthy and sick, straight and queer, are multiple and often intersectional. Anzaldúa grounds her understanding of the world through lived experience which takes place in the body and in space, thereby making the intersectionality of space and embodied experience a constant and continual process. Borders require negotiation, and performances across and in the borders require a willingness on the part of the performer to make their work understood (or simply confronted) by the audience on both sides of the border. Rivera-Servera and Young examine borders in terms on being on a specific side, and how that being on a particular side performs belonging or trespass.<sup>142</sup> However, their conception of border performance only takes into account the contemporary border agreement, it does not deal in the past understandings and belongings in the space.

Excavating history through protest involves an intricate relationship to space, and space as an intersection of time and geography. I borrow here from Doreen Massey's conceptualization of Space when she says that "space is the simultaneity of stories so far."<sup>143</sup> That is to say that we understand a location in terms of all of the things that have previously happened or are thought to

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<sup>141</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza / La Frontera*, Unpaginated preface to the first edition.

<sup>142</sup> Riveras-Servera and Young. "Introduction". 1-2

<sup>143</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9

have happened there. Space is place mythologized and historied. Mishuana Goeman articulates that for Indigenous peoples and epistemologies “the land acts as mnemonic device in many ways, by being the site of stories, which create cohesive understandings of longing and belonging... Land in this moment is living and layered memory.”<sup>144</sup> Goeman's understanding of land is other than the capitalist idea of land, something that is dead and commodified. Goeman's understanding offers more than an alternative, it rejects a binary. AIM's protests strategically reintroduce stories within the geographies where colonial structures have forced their absence. The protesters add a story of the past while creating a new story of their protest in the present, creating a simultaneity of narratives in the place. This addition fundamentally changes what the space means. Their protest creates a borderland of history in space by making a stand in a particular time and place. Space conflates place and time to make cultural meaning and identities. AIM's protests reintroduce the simultaneity of historical narratives in places where official histories have privileged and absented colonial history over Indigenous stories. AIM protesters created a borderland of history in space by standing in it, decolonizing access to knowledge.

A borderland of history in space is a complicated idea. Space is particular. It is local. Space in the Americas is storied and complicated by contact, conquest, and colonization by Europe. The borderlands that I'm referring to in the Americas are tied inherently to the colonial past. Colonial history, from contact on, is a traumatic past that colors our understanding of the present. The ongoing relationships and structures of power and control that stem from colonialism are referred to by scholars Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo as Coloniality. Quijano and Mignolo argue that the distinction of modernity arises out of the colonial moment

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<sup>144</sup> Goeman. “From Place to Territories” 24-25

and that coloniality and modernity are intrinsically linked. Coloniality includes the structures of colonialism that linger past the colonial moment and support the power structures of modern society. The lens of coloniality makes evident the interwoven aspects of race, gender, class, religion, and sexuality that are bound in colonial power structures. Coloniality creates a multiplicity of binaries; i.e. Male and Female, White and Other, Christian and Other, Heterosexual or Homosexual. The power structures left in society help to privilege the white heterosexual Christian man. By othering that which is not the favored gender, race, religion, and sexuality colonialism creates a power structure that is inherently unequal and that can value some lives more than others.<sup>145</sup>

For Quijano, the moment of contact creates a break in space and time for European colonizers and Western descendants. Quijano argues that the colonizers create modernity in the act of colonization, and the narrative of forward progress, as a means of separating themselves from the colonized. This break creates western modernity, and in creating modernity it also creates a binary with those who are not considered part of modernity, the people and locations that are trapped in the past. This binary geographically maps people into the present and people who are not a part of the present. For example, Europe is modern, but Africa is not. Europe and European colonies are modern, but the people who originally occupied the colonized land- like the Wampanoags, are not modern and by extension their way of life and ways of knowing are not wanted or valued in the present. It is a border of time that can only be bridged through assimilation, and even then the racial implications that separate the modern from the not modern

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<sup>145</sup> See: Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." 533-580, and Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being."

continue beyond assimilation into western culture. Quijano calls this process Coloniality/Modernity, and the logic that upholds Coloniality/Modernity creates a world where skin color can delineate the difference between who can and cannot be treated as property, who can be treated as a human being. The logic of coloniality is the logic that allows for slavery, and that creates the borders of reservations. It is the logic that supports assimilationist policies. Coloniality denies a multiplicity of human experience as valid and worthwhile. Mignolo picks up Quijano's theorization of Coloniality/Modernity and refers to coloniality as "the darker side of western modernity," i.e. that the oppressive power structures that guide contemporary government are the ugly underbelly of the narrative of the progress of western civilization. Mignolo pushes past identifying the structures of coloniality towards identifying decolonial options.<sup>146</sup> He identifies that it is not enough to change the content of the conversation, to decolonize "the terms of the conversation must change."<sup>147</sup> Changing the terms involves "disobedience and delinking" from disciplinary conversations that do not upend control of knowledge. To decolonize knowledge, and in this case I am considering history as a means of knowledge that is both controlled and controlling, requires different ideologies that change the terms of how we know information, and it means moving forward past ideologies that deny knowledge and humanity to cultures that fall outside of modernity. Mignolo and Quijano both include an analysis of gender within colonial ideologies, however as I will point out later they fail to fully engage with Lugones critique.

Coloniality is intrinsically linked to capitalism. Greed and a desire to control resources motivated the colonization of this continent. By creating an official history, the nation creates its

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<sup>146</sup> Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 122

without. The inherent capitalism of coloniality sustains the status of those who are without history, continuing to make them absent and outside of the official record. Rabasa writes "If the utterance "There is no longer an outside to capital" rings true, it calls for the qualification: *except for all life forms that are constituted as backward, hence condemned to disappear*. In this regard, Capitalism always constitutes its *withouts*."<sup>148</sup> Capitalism through Coloniality aids in logic that makes people less human, and aids in logic that leads to those who are within history destroying those without history. This is seen in the constant breaking of treaties to take resources by the United States Congress. What was once Indian Territory is now wholly populated states, created in part by breaking treaties.

Coloniality also articulates how Europe came to claim an occupied continent and create new borders in it. When Europeans, be they English, French, Spanish, or Dutch, traveled to the New World they were coming to a world they imagined was uninhabited and was full of resources. A desire to claim land, and the resources that came with it, is a colonial desire that is also a capitalist desire. The age of discovery saw a quest for each nation to claim as much land as they could under the Doctrine of Discovery. The roots of this doctrine came from justifications from the Crusades and the Papal decrees in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>149</sup> The Discovery Doctrine stated that whichever Christian European nation first discovered a land had pre-emptive rights to the land. As Robert J. Miller explains, the Discovery Doctrine lent moral and legal authority to

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<sup>148</sup> Rabasa, *Without History*, 145.

<sup>149</sup> See Robert J. Miller, Jacinta Ruru, Larissa Behrendt, and Tracey Lindberg, *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies*, OUP Oxford, 2010. Also Robert Stam and Ella Shohat. *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Chapter 1.

colonizing European countries upon their arrival in the Americas (and other regions). Effectively, this meant that whichever European nation first stepped foot on (previously undiscovered by Europe soil) was given sovereign claim over that area. This is the legal history of flag-planting. Elizabeth I added that a country could only claim the full land title if they also settled there. The Discovery Doctrine did allow Indigenous peoples to continue to live in that land until they decided to sell it, but the sale of the land could only be made to the European nation that first received the land title. Effectively this put the European nations who first settled an area into a proprietary position that limited Indigenous tribal sovereignty and their ability to sell land, if they wanted, to whoever could give them the best price.

Additionally, the residents who were settled in those lands before contact were subject to the Discovery Doctrine without their full knowledge or consent, and the Doctrine allowed that should those Indigenous peoples be non-Christian and therefore uncivilized the colonizers were in their right to take by sale or by conquest. It became a doctrine of might-makes-right, and from the moment of contact served to undermine tribal sovereignty. Miller writes "after first discovery, Indigenous nations and peoples were also considered to have lost some of their inherent sovereign powers and their rights to free trade and diplomatic relations on an international scale. Thereafter, they were only supposed to deal with the European government that first discovered them."<sup>150</sup>

The first discovery claims during colonization was supported by an idea that those governments and peoples who behaved in a way that was not recognized by European government and religion existed outside civilization and therefore did not count towards land claims in a Christian Worldview built on laws that dated from the crusades. Heathens simply did

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<sup>150</sup> Miller, et al, *Discovering Indigenous Lands*, 7

not count. A concept of Terra Nullius, or empty land, justified this European land claim, and it extended not only to the physical boundaries of the colonial settlements but also to the contiguous “unoccupied” land. The border of the colony stretched beyond as far as the eye could see. The colonizer need not fully touch or travel through the land to lay claim through the Discovery Doctrine. This doctrine created new borders in North America, borders that divided the continents (both North and South) in terms of European nationhood without concern for the Indigenous people's already established borders. Borders are also integral to understanding a borderland of history in space.

Borderlands, by their nature, are a product of the borders of nation-states. The border begins as an agreed upon aspect of geography that sets the limits of two (or more) group's space; it is also a boundary that divides, that confines, and that defines a group's sense of belonging. A border says "this is our space, not yours." Borders are one aspect of the social construction of a nation. Benedict Anderson refers to the constructions of nations and states as "Imagined Communities," and the border is what contains them. Anderson's work explains that it is no longer familial relations that connect the multitude of people who make a nation to each other in the modern age. Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." He unpacks the imagined nature of this relationship through the collective relationships, the members of the nation will never know the majority of their fellow-members, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."<sup>151</sup> Imagination creates the connection that creates a nation, and imagination also makes the cultural borders of state real when there is no wall or marker. Border, as an idea, is inextricably tied to

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<sup>151</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1991. 6



projects of state and nation building. As Ramon Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young write in their introduction to *Performance in the Borderlands* the border “not only makes cultural production-- literally the production of culture-- possible, but also provides a mechanism for distinguishing and differentiating cultures.”<sup>152</sup> The border is a physical boundary of the imagined nation, and it is the boundary that allows for and supports cultural difference. Anderson articulates the imagined community from within coloniality/modernity. What does a decolonial imagined community look like? Decolonial imaginings must change the terms of where community comes from. Within coloniality/modernity the border defines the relationship of those inside from those outside, this to a certain extent is also what Rivera-Servera and Young argue as well. The border creates a binary: an imagined us and an imagined them. Standing and unearthing the simultaneity of relationships- the multiplicities of borders and peoples who have occupied a space- allows for a change in terms, and change in the way we imagine our relationship to the past, present, and community.

Borders are also agreements. They delineate the history of the state's violent construction. Nations fight wars, and people die, to push borders backward or forwards by miles or inches. At the end of the war, the two or more representatives sit down and with a map reconstruct the border and space that was once someplace else. A part of Mexico becomes Texas, in turn, Texas becomes a part of the United States. The people who lived there will either change allegiance or move. Over the course of centuries, the markings of borders will ebb and flow, changing course based on violence and the desire for the resources of land.

Borders often produce physical demarcations, but they are rarely impassable. Instead the border is a porous boundary, allowing different people, cultures, animals, food, diseases to pass

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<sup>152</sup> Rivera-Servera and Young, “Introduction” in *Performance in the Borderlands*, 1

through it. It is a false binary that the border cleanly separates cultures and nations. Borders mark the space, but they do not, in fact, separate. It is a desperate act of greed and containment that seeks to create a permanent barrier between us and them. The border between the United States and Mexico is a particularly fraught space, and as people become nervous about the contamination of cultural identity through immigration the desire to make the boundary permanent and solid increases. Post 9/11 the United States began to increase security at the Mexican and Canadian borders. In the lead up to the 2016 presidential primary election, Republican candidate Donald Trump promoted an anti-immigration policy that relied on building a wall to separate the United States and Mexico, effectively creating a permanent and insurmountable barrier between cultures and peoples.<sup>153</sup> Borders are never as real or as permanent as people imagine them to be, creating a "material and rhetorical failure" that political policies cannot fix through the creation of a wall.<sup>154</sup> The reality of confining nation and bounding space is a far more complex social and federal project.

The porous nature of borders, in turn, creates borderlands. Gloria Anzaldúa writes “the U.S.- Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.”<sup>155</sup> The border is an open wound, made from the encounters between two cultures. Encounters that are implicitly violent. Anzaldúa points to the power imbalances inherent in the

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<sup>153</sup> Jordan Weissmann, “Donald Trump Explains His Ridiculous Plan to Make Mexico Pay for a Border Fence.” *Slate*, August 16, 2015.

[http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2015/08/16/donald\\_trump\\_on\\_immigration\\_build\\_border\\_fence\\_make\\_mexico\\_pay\\_for\\_it.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2015/08/16/donald_trump_on_immigration_build_border_fence_make_mexico_pay_for_it.html). Trump also suggested that Mexico should pay for the construction of the wall.

<sup>154</sup> Rivera-Servera and Young. *Performance in the Borderlands*. 1

<sup>155</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25.

creation of many borders. We do not live in a communal utopia where all resources are shared equally with those who need them. Instead, capitalism is driven by consumption and resources. When the border divides the haves and the have-nots, the border is a tool of capitalism that drives the market. Migolo's conception of (/) between Coloniality and Modernity is inspired by Anzaldúa's "epistemic construction" of the border as a colonial wound.<sup>156</sup> Coloniality/Modernity/Decoloniality is self-perpetuating because the border continues to produce divisions that support the coloniality of power.

The legacy of coloniality complicates border theory, especially when considering the time and space of borders for Indigenous peoples. To illustrate this point, let's examine the legacy of borders for the Wampanoags, the once thriving tribe that occupied what is now Rhode Island, Southeastern Massachusetts, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. The Wampanoag population was first decimated by disease from 1615-1617, leaving formerly occupied land vacant when the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth in 1620. The settlers began to build permanent structures over the seasonally occupied lands of different bands of Wampanoag, under the doctrine of discovery when they saw the land they could claim it without acknowledging prior claims of non-European nations. Fifty years after the settlement of Plymouth Colony, King Philip's War broke out between the Wampanoag (and other New England area tribes) and the colonists. To this day, per capita, it is one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in North America. The Wampanoag, and Metacomet (King Philip), ultimately lost the battle and as the losers of the battle, the English colonists created the first Reservation for the Wampanoag that were left. Their borders continually shrunk. The arrival of colonists in the Americas makes this continent a continual borderland, and a borderland that bleeds. Three hundred years later, in 1972, the

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<sup>156</sup> Migolo. *Darker Side of Western Modernity*. xxi

Wampanoag of Gay Head Island began to seek government approval for status as a federally recognized tribe in order to begin to gain sovereignty as well as legislate the return of their lands.<sup>157</sup>

The Wampanoags, like many northeastern American tribes, thought of land as being held by the community for the community.<sup>158</sup> The early capitalist understandings of land as an element for the marketplace were foreign. Certainly the *Terra Nullius* (i.e. empty land is unoccupied land and free for claiming) was a foreign concept for the tribe that traditionally moved from location to location, seasonally leaving former areas unoccupied only to return later in the year. When the pilgrims arrived, they claimed the Wampanoag's unoccupied land as their own, thereby laying the borders of ownership on top of earlier claims that went unacknowledged or understood by the settlers. This fundamental difference in cultural understanding of how occupying land works created an overlapping reality in space. The border was real and not real. The colonist's action solidified the border before the Wampanoag understood the concept. *Terra Nullius* justified their invisibility in the eyes of the law. The U.S. Government, and prior to that the colonial government, builds on the ideas that justified *Terra Nullius*, further negating the long history of occupied land on this continent.

In 1677 the General Court of the colony of Massachusetts confined the Wampanoag people to four plantations, and further legislated that if the Wampanoags left those spaces, they

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<sup>157</sup> "Wampanoag Tribe - History & Culture." Accessed December 17, 2016.

[http://www.wampanoagtribe.net/Pages/Wampanoag\\_WebDocs/history\\_culture](http://www.wampanoagtribe.net/Pages/Wampanoag_WebDocs/history_culture).

<sup>158</sup> The culture around property and possessions was not the same for all Indigenous North American tribes.

would be imprisoned.<sup>159</sup> This is arguably the beginning of the reservation system. The borders served to contain the Wampanoags and make criminal the traditional way of living in their space. Communal stewardship of the land, a stewardship that left the land mostly wild, marked the land as untamed and therefore un-owned and uninhabited in the eyes of the colonists. They needed to contain and tame and ultimately own the land. The establishment of these borders between colonized and native space denies the existence of the people who occupied the land prior to its containment. They are no longer visible, let alone agentic, in the historical narrative. The colonial logic follows that if the land is empty, then it contains no prior history, and that act of logic erases the prior Indigenous history of that space. For Indigenous protesters to stand in a space in which colonial logic has erased their history and claims from the simultaneity of stories, is to make visible their story again, to perform their space in history.

Goeman connects Indigenous epistemologies to stories and mapping of land.<sup>160</sup> She explicates that it is through the stories that explain a culture's history in relationship to the landscape around them that land becomes a place. She utilizes the word place in the same way that Massey refers to space. Space has meaning because of the stories. Their stories are situated, just as their communities and identities are located and created through the relationship to their space. Cultural identity, while not specifically bordered, is explicitly spatially oriented and imagined. Settler colonialism in North America creates a series of displacements for Indigenous cultures that are both disruptions to ways of life and cultural traumas. The first displacement is physical, through policies of removals and creations of reservations far away from ancestral

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<sup>159</sup> Joan Tavares Avant, "Introduction" in *Dawnland Voices : An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, Siobhan Senier, ed, Lincoln, US: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. 431.

<sup>160</sup> Goeman, "From Place to Territories and Back Again."30-32

homes. Each removal and there were many, spatially removes a culture from their storied land. The second set of displacements is the willful displacing of the Indigenous stories within a space in favor of new colonizer stories. This displacement of Indigenous stories, which is a political move, leads to Indigenous peoples status as without history. They are absent and outside because the power structures of colonialism displaced them from the official record, not because their stories do not exist.

The ultimate failure of all of the tribes to win the war against the colonizers is part of what keeps Indigenous peoples outside of the official State history projects. Since those state projects build a narrative of forward progress from colonization onward, it is in their favor to pretend that when Metacomet died that he was the “last of the Wampanoags.”<sup>161</sup> This narrative, regardless of the facts, makes it impossible for the Wampanoag culture and people to exist in the present, or be an active part of the state history projects. To absent Indigenous peoples from control of their historical narrative is a tandem project with the coloniality of being.<sup>162</sup> Within the United States, Indigenous religious practices were legislated and criminalized, despite the "Freedom of religion" clause in the first amendment. Until 1924, most Indigenous people within the United States were wards of the state- i.e. children in the eyes of the law, regardless of age, education, and that meant they were unable to vote on legislature that deeply impacted them. This is especially important because it undermined any possibility of the Indigenous governments negotiating on their behalf through voting for their representatives. Indigenous

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<sup>161</sup> This phrasing matches the title of *Metamora; or The Last of the Wampanoags*, a popular 19<sup>th</sup> century play about King Philip’s War. The phrase “Last of” is also used in the perennially popular James Fennimore Cooper novel *The Last of the Mohicans*.

<sup>162</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “On The Coloniality of Being”

children were taken from their families and sent to boarding schools to assimilate them and change their language. These native cultures are outside of and absent from history, what scholar José Rabasa calls “without history.”<sup>163</sup>

Rabasa understands history as a political project, a capital-H history that is official and state sanctioned. All histories edit events, choosing some, leaving out others. This is how coloniality controls the means of knowledge production, it dictates methodologies. Which allows those, like the State, with access and control to choose the evidence that supports the State’s narrative. Part of the logic of coloniality states that if you are not modern, then you are trapped in pre-history. Many Indigenous cultures in North America did not have a written language before contact, and since Western knowledge privileges archival written records over oral histories, colonists and their descendants dismissed Indigenous stories as myth rather than history. Rabasa’s claim that Indigenous peoples are without history is not a claim that they do not have their own stories of the past, but rather that they are not included within the State’s history as a political project.<sup>164</sup> The narrative of Indigenous peoples in the US State project builds on that “last of the Wampanoags” narrative form. It states that they no longer exist in the present; they are nothing but remnants of the past that cannot survive modernity. Adding to that “last of” narrative is the narrative of assimilation. Assimilation erases difference, and in so doing erases the need for the multiplicity of narratives about the past.

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<sup>163</sup> Rabasa, *Without History*.

<sup>164</sup> Rabasa “On the History of The History of a People *Without History*,” in *Without History Subaltern Studies, the Zapatista Insurgency, and the Specter of History*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 138-147.

The racial structure that makes all white people the same, also groups all natives together absencing the distinctness of different tribes experience into an "Indian" other. According to the State, Native Americans are not allowed to have distinct tribal histories that complicate the simple narratives of the United States/Colonial past. The Cherokee, The Wampanoag, the Haudenosaunee, the Chickasaw (the list goes on) are absent from narratives of history. History does not teach the reader about their version of the past. History (again with a capital H) acknowledges their existence and then leaves them out of the narrative. This is important because it relates back to the way that space is bordered and bounded. Since these Indigenous people have no part in History, in the eyes of the government it is easy to not acknowledge the claims of pre-contact tribal government and tribal sovereignty. Congress negotiates reservation borders and land claims on tribes behalf, often without consulting tribal leadership. The history of Indigenous tribes' interactions with the U.S., Mexico, and Canada is a history of borderlands built on broken treaties, and like Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands it is "*un herida abierta, an open wound.*"<sup>165</sup>

While Quijano and Mignolo begin to articulate the implications of gender within Coloniality, María Lugones argues that they do not push this critique far enough. Lugones argues that while Quijano and Mignolo include gender in the matrix of the Coloniality of Power, their articulation relies on Western heteronormative definitions of gender and gender relations. Lugones furthers decolonial possibilities by interrogating gender within coloniality. Imagining and then performing decolonial possibilities for gender includes rejecting patriarchal values that undermine the worth of women and non-binary lives. For a woman to perform a decolonial act it

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<sup>165</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25



cannot just be an act, that rejects governmental oppression but also rejects constraints on the roles prescribed for her within a patriarchal society.

Taking the complex history of sovereignty, colonialization, modernity/coloniality, (H)istory, and treaties into account, I suggest that the Americas are a collective borderland between the decedents of colonization (across Canada, the United States, and Mexico) and the Indigenous peoples. Within the current borders of the United States, every inch of land betrays a history of moved borders. Understanding Space as simultaneity, as a potential for many stories, opens the possibility for many pasts and understandings of place to exist at the same time. This way of understanding the world is a condensation of histories. Allowing for a multitude of meaning undermines a singular narrative of progress in history. The progressive version of history establishes some cultures as first world, and others as third world—i.e. those who are behind the times. Massey points to this narrative as turning “geography into history, space into time.”<sup>166</sup> Collapsing geography into time creates in terms of coloniality/modernity equates the trajectory of Western civilization as the universal ideal, so that looking at the third-world is somehow the same as examining an earlier period in a first-world country. Understanding the simultaneity of space undermines that link because it allows for multiple conceptions of the past that do not fit the linear trajectory of one kind of progress. Simultaneity is a means of changing the terms of the conversation, and one that the American Indian Movement performed through protest in strategic sites.

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<sup>166</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 5

### 3.3.1 Excavating Borders through Decolonial Performance

Performance utilizes both time and space to make meaning. Performance in my study is the action that unveils and excavates the border. Excavating the border is revealed through performance, an enactment of histories. Since excavating the border fundamentally troubles the capitalist colonial narrative of history, this is a decolonial act. I read performance broadly, not constrained to only performances that occur on the stage. In this chapter, I read protest as a type of performance. Protests are strategic, staged events, which requires a performer (the protesters) and an audience (the bystanders, tourists, museum employees, and the media). What is essential to making meaning in this performance is the strategic use of identity, time, and space. AIM's protests were strategic interventions that could and would provoke political change.

Susan Leigh Foster, building on Gene Sharp, posits that protest is a physical and symbolic intervention.<sup>167</sup> Foster, a choreographer, approaches the body in the protest as a rich site of meaning-making both for the protester individually and collectively and for those who engage with the protester's intervention. The protestor's physical presence (embodiment) and possibility of movement become a complex improvisational performance. Protests are intended to confront an audience, although they don't necessarily follow a script or a rehearsed action or take place on traditional stage. Instead, the protests of AIM, specifically the Thanksgiving protest in Plymouth, MA, The Trail of Broken Treaties, and Wounded Knee II, were protests staged in specific places to make visible the injustices done by the US government to the various Indigenous tribes who originally held the land. They were designed to make bodies and histories

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<sup>167</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 395–412.

visible, and the complicated symbolic nature of racial and cultural difference that those bodies carried visible as well. Foster also writes of the protester's body and the "violent encounters of those defending the status quo."<sup>168</sup> Maintaining non-violence is one of the lauded aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. The Red Power Movement, begun with non-violence, quickly escalated to more militant styles of protests after aggressive encounters with the FBI.

AIM Protesters are performing within borderlands, even when the physical locations that AIM protesters occupied were far from an official contemporary physical border. The protest is an excavation of the border in space, a protest against a history that begins with the doctrine of discovery. It is a protest that remakes history by standing up. That standing is what opens the simultaneity of space and reveals layers of borders, while also adding a new narrative to the space. From Alcatraz through Wounded Knee, the protests of the Red Power Movement were strategic interventions into the storied history between the Indigenous populations and the US government over land and ways of being within the land. These are decolonial actions. Simultaneity is a decolonial concept allows those who stand as an act of protest to access knowledge that is otherwise displaced and controlled; it changes the terms of the conversation.

Decolonial Performance is embodiment and action that performs alternative epistemologies as valuable and that works outside of, in ways other than, capitalist/western structures. Decolonial performance is simultaneously a disavowal of colonial power structures and a celebration of living. There must be joy and utopias in it. Decolonial performance is about possibility. It is about freedom. It does not deny the past, but it uses the past differently than capitalism and State history uses the past. For the protests, which I am reading as performances, of AIM, their decolonial performance inherently values their lives, past, and traditions as still

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<sup>168</sup> Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," 396.

living connective tissues between the past and the present. Their performances deny the progressive agenda of capitalism. They cry out for more while celebrating their existence, their presence, when they are told to be absent. The role of women within these decolonial performances are critical because, as Lugones argues, decolonizing gender is an integral part of the decolonial process.

### **3.4 EXCAVATING BORDERS/ MOURNING THE PAST: THANKSGIVING AT PLYMOUTH 1970**

The first major protest that Aquash and AIM members organized was the Thanksgiving protest at Plymouth Harbor in 1970. The Boston Indian Council (BIC), a group that Aquash helped found, conceived of the protest as a call to change the federally recognized holiday of Thanksgiving to a National Day of Mourning. As BIC began to organize, AIM leadership was made aware of the protest and made plans to join BIC protesters in Plymouth. AIM sent Russell Means and Dennis Banks to Boston, and the two AIM spokesmen were added to the speaker list for the event. In November 1970, the American Indian Movement was just beginning to make plans towards a national platform. AIM leadership named Russell Means as the first national director of AIM in 1970, after he founded a branch of AIM in Cleveland, Ohio. The Red Power movement was growing steadily; the Alcatraz occupation continued throughout 1970, and the Thanksgiving Protest became a model for AIM's strategic use of history and geography to stage their protests.

Aquash and her first husband, James Maloney, moved to Boston from the Mi'kmaq reservation in Nova Scotia in 1962 to try to make a better life for their family. Aquash spent her time in Boston working with the community center to make life better for other Indigenous

people in Boston, while Maloney assimilated into society and took up Karate. Aquash and Maloney divorced in mid-1970. Aquash, known as only Anna Mae Pictou at the time, became an organizer and activist in Boston and helped to found the Boston Indian Council that began as an alcoholics anonymous group. Her initial community organizing centered on sobriety efforts, as well as day care and better jobs for community members. From its inception the Boston Indian Council primary focus was to create a community center for the Indigenous population. However, in November 1970 their organizing efforts turned to protest.<sup>169</sup>

Wamsutta Frank James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag founding member of the Council, proposed that the Boston Indian Council should organize a protest to take place on Thanksgiving day, 1970 at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts. This demonstration would be explicitly connected to James's Wampanoag tribal history, since Plymouth Rock is located in the former Wampanoag lands. The Pilgrim's arrival on the Wampanoag lands that they called Plymouth in 1620 marks the beginning of settler colonialism in this region, and Plymouth Rock located in the Plymouth harbor is memorialized as the precise point where the Pilgrims landed. Plymouth Rock as a protest site was also meaningful because it is close to where Plymouth Colony officials hung several Wampanoag men in 1675; an event that sparked King Philip's War, the brutal and bloody conflict which ultimately decimated the Wampanoag population.<sup>170</sup> The event planners of Plymouth's Annual Thanksgiving parade and banquet instigated the protest when they disinvited James to speak at the event. Initially, the planners invited James to give a speech as the

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<sup>169</sup> For an account of Aquash's early life and time in Boston see: Johanna Brand, *The Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash*, James Lorimer & Company, 1993.

<sup>170</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, New York: Vintage Books, 1999. Xi.

Wampanoag member of the 350th reenactment of the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving sponsored by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The planners of the event asked to read his speech, and then rejected the speech and disinvited him before the event.

The speech, now known as “Wamsutta’s Suppressed Speech”, began the call for Thanksgiving as a National Day of Mourning.<sup>171</sup> His speech delineated the atrocities done to Indigenous peoples, beginning with the Pilgrims’ act of stealing the winter provisions of the Wampanoag 350 years prior, an alternative narrative of the Thanksgiving meal. Speech rejected and disinvited to speak, James turned to the Boston Indian Council to make his message heard. The BIC protest would be staged simultaneously with the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration in Plymouth. The official Plymouth celebration included a Thanksgiving dinner performed by costumed re-enactors and a parade from the Pilgrims’ church to Plymouth Rock where the replica ship the Mayflower II would be open for tours. The protest was planned as an all-day affair designed to disrupt the official celebration organized by the Plymouth History Museum (located in the Pilgrims’ Church building) and the Massachusetts’s governmental officials.

James’s speech set the tone for the demands of the protest. The final clause of James’s speech reads “We are determined, and our presence here this evening is living testimony that this is only the beginning of the American Indian, particularly the Wampanoag, to regain the position in this country that is rightfully ours.”<sup>172</sup> For James and the protesters to be present, active, alive, and oppose a positivist history that denied them their humanity was the goal of this protest: to change the day of giving thanks for perceived abundance to a day of mourning for the mass

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<sup>171</sup>Wamsutta Frank James, “Suppressed Speech,” *United American Indians of New England*.

[http://www.uaine.org/suppressed\\_speech.htm](http://www.uaine.org/suppressed_speech.htm)

<sup>172</sup> James, “Suppressed Speech”

genocide of Indigenous peoples. Denied a position within a recreation of history (i.e. the Plymouth planned celebration), James and by extension, the BIC, AIM, and other protesters were placed yet again in a position without history. On the other side of the country, the Alcatraz occupation called for the United States to honor their treaties, and for unused federal land to be remanded to Native populations according to a clause in the 1868 Fort Laramie treaty. While the claim to the land was certainly a part of the Plymouth protest, James's speech called for an even more basic acknowledgement Indigenous people's humanity and existence. Geographies become a storied space, and the protest becomes an opportunity to challenge absence and offer alternative narratives within that space. The Thanksgiving Protest was a strategic use of space and time; a nascent decolonial process enacted through the performance of standing, covering Plymouth Rock, boarding the Mayflower II, and disrupting the re-enactment of a fictional Thanksgiving feast.

### 3.4.1 STANDING

Thanksgiving Day (November 26<sup>th</sup>) 1970 was a cold, clear, nearing winter day.<sup>173</sup> Anna Mae Pictou arrived in Plymouth with her two daughters that morning.<sup>174</sup> Over a hundred protesters turned out for the day.<sup>175</sup> They collected on Plymouth Hill around the statue of Massasoit, looking out over Plymouth Rock and Plymouth Harbor. The plan for the day included occupying

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<sup>173</sup>Almanac.com, "Weather History for Plymouth, MA,"

<http://www.almanac.com/weather/history/MA/Plymouth/1970-11-26>. accessed 10/31/16.

<sup>174</sup>Martin, Catherine Anne. *The Spirit of Annie Mae*. National Film Board of Canada, 2002.

<sup>175</sup> Robert Carr and Andrew Blake, "Stage Plymouth Protest: Indians Take Over Mayflower II". Boston Globe (1960-1983); Nov 27, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The *Boston Globe*.

the space around Plymouth Rock, and holding signs calling for a National Day of Mourning. This action was designed to disrupt the scheduled Thanksgiving re-enactment events and change the narrative of the fourth Thursday in November. The site of Plymouth is a foundational geography, a site of the origins of settler colonialism and by extension national identity for the United States. Plymouth is memorialized for the landing place of the Pilgrims and settlement in 1620, and the site of the "first Thanksgiving" meal in 1621. Prior to the Pilgrims landing that space was part of the communal land holdings of the Wampanoag, and in 1621 the land was ceded to the Pilgrims by treaty.

The history of the Thanksgiving holiday begins with the Pilgrims, but what we now understand as Thanksgiving stems from events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Pilgrim's documents record three initial Thanksgivings. The first, and the one memorialized and re-enacted in Plymouth in 1970 was the 1621 harvest Thanksgiving that was also in part a celebration of the peace treaty between the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims.<sup>176</sup> The second, also in Plymouth, occurred in 1623 as a traditional Christian Thanksgiving ceremony, a practice of fasting and then feasting after significant events.<sup>177</sup> The third recorded Thanksgiving came as an official proclamation after the Massachusetts Bay Colony's victory in King Philip's War on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1676.<sup>178</sup> Massasoit, the Wampanoag Sachem who was immortalized as a statue on Cole Hill,

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<sup>176</sup> See William Bradford. *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. Modern Library College Editions: New York, 1981. 100.

<sup>177</sup> See *Mourt's relation or journal of the plantation at Plymouth*. Boston, 1865. 221pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Pittsburgh University Library System. 17 December 2016 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/pitt.idm.oclc.org/servlet/Sabin?af=RN&ae=CY3800943134&srchtp=a&ste=14>>

<sup>178</sup> "76. First Thanksgiving Proclamation, June 20, 1676." In *The Encyclopedia of North American Colonial Conflicts to 1775: A Political, Social, and Military History*, edited by Spencer C. Tucker, James Arnold, and Roberta



was primarily responsible for creating and maintaining peace with the Pilgrims from 1621 to his death in 1661. Relations between the groups steadily decreased after his death, eventually leading to the 1675 murder of John Sassamon, a converted “praying Indian” and interpreter for the colonists. The colonists tried and hung three Wampanoag men for his death; the hanging site was nearby the current site of Plymouth Rock.

From the early days of the United States, officials began to tie the story of the First Thanksgiving into official national history. In 1777 the first continental congress called for a national Thanksgiving celebration, and President George Washington repeated this decree in 1789. The holiday became an annual national tradition in 1863, during the Civil War, when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the holiday to be celebrated on the last Thursday of November. The holiday became federally recognized and codified as the fourth Thursday in November by an act of Congress in 1941. Ann Uhry Abrams argues in *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas* that New England’s colonial traditions, like Thanksgiving, became a rallying cry first during the revolutionary war, and then during the Civil War Northern states privileged the Massachusetts Bay Colony history the Pilgrim’s history over the Southern Virginia colonies in terms of national origin stories.<sup>179</sup> National identities, especially for colonial states, require origin stories to differentiate themselves from their country of origin. The narrative of peace and feasting between English settlers and the Wampanoag people during the First Thanksgiving creates a narrative where the white colonists were welcome and accepted to this land. It is a

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Wiener, 1029. Vol. 3. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* (accessed December 5, 2016).

<sup>179</sup> This was particularly the focus of a propaganda campaign by John Adam’s Great grandson Henry Adams, see Abrams, *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin*.

seductive narrative that paints the colonists as non-violent good Christians who only needed a little aid from the Wampanoags to thrive in New England. Focusing on the 1621 Thanksgiving ignores the violence that followed. Wamustta Frank James's National Day of Mourning would remember the long history of violence and genocide between the settlers and the Indigenous peoples who previously occupied the land.

When Dennis Banks, Russell Means, and Wamsutta Frank James stood in front of Massasoit addressing the protesters on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1970, they were standing in a storied space. Their voices, calling out for acknowledgment of the violence of colonialism, ran counter to the narrative of peaceful colonial settlement and celebratory harvest that were the dominant narrative. The Massasoit statue links this place into the moment that the Wampanoag, and by extension Indigenous peoples, are included in History texts. The plaque on the statue frames Massasoit as the "Great Sachem of the Wampanoags Protector and Preserver of the Pilgrims."<sup>180</sup> His hand holds a long pipe, symbolic of the peace that he brokered with the colonists. The plaque and the statue were commissioned in 1921, in honor of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrims landing in Plymouth by the Improved Order of the Red Men, or IORM. A fraternal organization founded in 1834, the IORM was open to only White men til 1974. Their gift of the Massasoit statue is an extension of their membership structure that appropriates and stereotypes Indigenous cultural practices as acts of citizenship. This gift of public art and history exalts Massasoit's status primarily in his relationship to the colonists, his role in Wampanoag history, in

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<sup>180</sup> "Day Trip to Plymouth Rock at Pilgrim Memorial State Park." *Masslive.com*. Accessed October 31, 2016.  
[http://photos.masslive.com/republican/2012/07/day\\_trip\\_to\\_plymouth\\_rock\\_at\\_pilgrim\\_memorial\\_state\\_park\\_13.html](http://photos.masslive.com/republican/2012/07/day_trip_to_plymouth_rock_at_pilgrim_memorial_state_park_13.html).

relationship to his people, to other tribes, is not relevant. The statue is a cultural artifact that reinforces the role of Indigenous peoples in western state histories, they exist only in their relationship to western civilization.

The protest made use of the state officials, tourists, and re-enactors as a targeted audience. Banks recalls James shouting “We want people to know that the Pilgrims stole our corn and that all that love and brotherhood stuff between Indians and white settlers is a lie.”<sup>181</sup> Banks called the landing of the Pilgrims the “greatest land grab in history.”<sup>182</sup> There were hundreds of tourists in Plymouth, MA for the annual celebration and re-enactment of Thanksgiving who heard their words. Likely, the reporter from the *Boston Globe*- the one paper to carry any coverage of this protest- was already in Plymouth to cover the unique way that people in Plymouth re-enacted the mythos of Thanksgiving on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Means spoke passionately to the tourists and the protesters waiting for the Pilgrim's feast re-enactment. He spoke about the state of Native affairs while standing on the platform of the Massasoit statue. Means brought up the then-current war in Vietnam stating "The United States is locked in a war with Vietnam because of a treaty, the nation's leaders tell us. But the people of the United States fail to realize that this nation broke 389 treaties with American Indian tribes during the past century."<sup>183</sup>

Banks, Means, and James voiced their protest of the peaceful narrative of Thanksgiving by re-introducing Indigenous stories and alternative perspectives on events into the space. James

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<sup>181</sup> Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior*, 112. There are a lot of factual inaccuracies in his recollection of the Plymouth Rock protest. For example, he states it was in 1976, and not 1971.

<sup>182</sup> Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior*, 112.

<sup>183</sup> Car and Blake, “Stage Plymouth Protest,” 28.

explicitly mentioned King Philip's war and the massacre of the Wampanoag in his speech, standing next to a statue that both remembered Indigenous people's existence, but simultaneously denied Indigenous people their continued culture, and existence. The statue of Massasoit is a touchstone of how white Americans, and by extension western progressive narratives of history remember Indigenous people's role in the past. The addition of Indigenous protesters to the statue of Massasoit challenges that version of the imagined past and what Massasoit's role in the past was. Means, Banks, and James standing on the platform of Massasoit's statue physically raises them above the ground, and begins to collapse time into space by voicing alternative versions of history into the space. Through standing they announce their presence and create a new moment of contact and a new opportunity to imagine and create a different relationship.

Referencing the My Lai massacre of March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1968, Means used his speech to remind listeners of the many forgotten massacres and wars between the Indigenous peoples of North America and the United States Government.<sup>184</sup> These three angry men stood together in front of the statue, rallying the protesters and presenting an image that reminds the tourist that Indigenous people are still present and have been present since before the first Thanksgiving in 1621. This type of protest connects and collapses historical moments, making the past tangible. Re-enactment, like the Thanksgiving parade and feast, are another, if nostalgic, means to understand the past in the space of the present; but the protesters acts of standing connect the past to the present as an act of resistance, continuance, and survivance. The re-enactment is an act of mimesis, an image of the event but not the event itself. The AIM and BIC protest group's act of

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<sup>184</sup>Ibid. 28.

standing is a direct performance, it is the thing itself and it is made more powerful by the storied space that it occupies.

### **3.4.2 Re-covering the Rock**

Means finished his speech by yelling “Plymouth Rock is covered with blood” before leading the protesters down the hill to the Plymouth Rock pavilion to cover the rock with sand.<sup>185</sup> Organizers planned for this aspect of the protest, driving in a truck of sand earlier that morning. Plymouth Rock is a physical reminder of the land claim of the colonists, a symbol of American colonialism enshrined and venerated. This granite boulder is cited as the place where the Pilgrims landed in 1620. The 1970 Thanksgiving celebration in Plymouth was not only a re-enactment of the first Thanksgiving but also a celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrim’s arrival in Plymouth.

Plymouth Rock is a site of nationalist mythology, if not factual history. The story of landing on Plymouth Rock is a fairly well documented myth tied to a physical symbol and geography. The Mayflower first landed on Cape Cod in November 1620, and did not move to Plymouth Harbor until December of that year. The rock itself is not mentioned in the two contemporaneous accounts of the landing: Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* or Edward Winslow’s *Mourt’s Relation*. In 1741, 121 years after the landing, the 94-year-old church Elder Thomas Fraunce claimed that his father had told him that this rock marked the spot where the Mayflower landed. Fraunce’s father did not arrive on the Mayflower, but on the Anne in 1623, which further muddles the veracity of his claim. Regardless of fact, the rock became a symbol of land claim for the American colonies. In 1774 the townspeople of Plymouth split the rock, and

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<sup>185</sup> Carr and Blake, “Stage Plymouth Protest,” 28

took the top half into the town's meeting house. In 1880, after the civil war the two halves of the rock were rejoined and the date 1620 was etched onto the top. The Roman Temple-like structure that currently surrounds the rock was erected in 1920 to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Rather than the rock itself, it is the story of the rock as symbol and icon of the United States that holds power in the space.

In 1970 the place of Plymouth Rock was firmly entrenched as a site of public history. Tourists visited the Rock, as well as the living history museum Plimoth Plantation and the replica boat museum the *Mayflower II*, permanently docked in Plymouth Harbor and managed by Plimoth Plantation. The remaining pieces of the famous rock were enshrined and fenced, an effort to make the rock sacred and to keep tourists from chipping away parts of the rock to take home as souvenirs. Plymouth Rock was and is a testament to the mythology of colonization as forward progress, and a symbol of white claim to the land. It is the landmark that maps the journey forward from the old country to the new country. For the United States Plymouth Rock is a foundational geography, a physical reality that maps the foundational stories that support the progressive narrative of History. Plymouth Rock is a physically reminder of that maps the progress of the Pilgrims to North America. When a U.S. Citizen steps near its shrine they can trace their steps over their Puritan fore founders, and imagine their connection to the past. The space allows people to perform a collapsing of history by walking where The Pilgrims walked. It also allows people to connect the progress of democracy and the United States to the Puritans and back to England. The space of Plymouth Rock maps colonization. When Indigenous protesters stand in this space they are disrupting the narrative of progress, when they cover the symbol of this progress in sand, they erase- if only temporarily- the image of an immovable stone.

Their performance would literally bury the foundational myth of New England, and by extension the United States. What does it mean for Wampanoag people and their Indigenous tribal allies to re-cover Plymouth Rock? I've been arguing for an excavation of history, which implies uncovering. Yet, here it is an act of covering that makes room for another narrative of the space. Covering the icon of the mythos of progressive northern settlement creates an opportunity to imagine what an absence of Plymouth Rock can mean. Without this rock, without landmarks the map of western progress begins to be lost. This is an act of historical recovery. It is also a decolonial action for those without history to stand in a pavilion of historical remembrance and take action to make space for themselves. With their signs calling for a day of mourning and the rock covered with sand, there is room to remember the Wampanoag peoples' stories. Indigenous protesters standing in the temple, replace Plymouth Rock, if temporarily, becoming a landmark for a different kind of map of history.

### **3.4.3 Throwing History Overboard**

After they covered the rock with sand, AIM leaders Russell Means and Dennis Banks led a group of around twenty-five protesters to the Mayflower II which was easily seen from the top of Plymouth Hill. The Plimoth Plantation official who was working at the Mayflower II invited the protesters on to the ship without admission. According to the Boston Herald "about 25 Indians took over the Mayflower II, threw a small cannon over-board, climbed the rigging to throw down a 17<sup>th</sup> century British flag, threw a mannequin representing Christopher Jones, the Mayflower's original captain, over-board and then threatened to cut the mooring lines and set the ship

adrift.”<sup>186</sup> Certainly Indians throwing objects overboard recalls images of a different moment in a different Massachusetts harbor 200 years earlier: the Boston Tea Party. In Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* he points to the many ways colonists and nationalists performed the "Indian Other" that allowed them to create a revolutionary identity separate from their former place as British colonists.<sup>187</sup> Dressing up as Indians and throwing tea into the Boston Harbor is one of the stories that is taught and told about the lead up to the Revolutionary war. What might it mean on a day that is a nationalist celebration to perform an act that inverts the Boston Tea Party?

The twenty-five protesters who boarded the ship performed themselves, an authentic and complex identity, rejecting the Mayflower II, the British Empire and its flag, the Captain who brought the Pilgrims here, the violent technology of cannons that helped to cement the British colonies permanence on this land, and the ship that brought the colonists over. This is both figurative and metaphoric decolonial action. It allows for a decolonial imagining of what ifs: What if the Wampanoags did not welcome these pilgrims, what if instead they overwhelmed them and sent them back? What sort of history would we have? This type of imagining, which this aspect of the performance opens the way towards, puts a question to the inevitability of progress and of colonization. If it could be other than we remember it, what else could be other than it is now? This opening of the imagination and making room for alternative narratives is in many the ways the power behind a protest that excavates space. Their protest opens up a moment of “what if,” and this changes the terms of the conversation.

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<sup>186</sup> Carr and Blake, “Stage Plymouth Protest,” 1.

<sup>187</sup> Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Yale Historical Publications, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.



The protestor's time on the ship did not last long, and not long after they began to damage ship the Museum employees called the police. The protesters peacefully exited the boat, and rejoined the rest of the protest group. No one was arrested. Perhaps it was the presence of tourists who were committed to the nostalgia of remembering the only the positive narrative of The First Thanksgiving, and not the 1675 post-war Thanksgiving. In later protests, as I will examine later in the chapter, a violent reaction by the state was the norm. The lack of arrests and peaceful interactions with law enforcement are an anomaly. When the protesters left the ship (including Russell Means and Dennis Banks), they were able to resume their protest on Plymouth Hill without interference.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Despite the disruptive tactics, it was a peaceful day. The state of Massachusetts was a sponsor of the event, yet it was not seen as a crime to disrupt the Thanksgiving and Plymouth Rock Pilgrim narrative, or to destroy private property on the boat. Certainly at Vietnam protests, and Civil Rights Protests, police officers did not pause to use force to put an end to voices of dissent. On the other side of the country in San Francisco Bay another group of protesters Indigenous protesters organized as the Indians of All Tribes (IoAT) were one year in to an occupation of Alcatraz Island. The Coast Guard and the Nixon Administration were called in to dispute their occupation. In May of 1970 electricity and water were cut off from the island. Yet here, in Plymouth these Native American men and women boarded the Mayflower II by invitation. Perhaps it was the presence of so many on-lookers, or perhaps it was the way in which the Plimoth Plantation officials spoke to the Police about the damage of property that meant this encounter in Massachusetts didn't escalate. Or, I'd offer, the inherent message of peace in the Thanksgiving story- the coming together of people with food for survival and to solidify a peace treaty- was too important to the way the government constituted its identity to treat the descendants of the first Thanksgiving violently.

### 3.4.4 Consuming History: The Meal

Precisely what happened after the protesters left the Mayflower II is not clear from the few accounts of the day. Sometime between the takeover of the ship and the re-enactment of the Thanksgiving meal, the celebration organizers attempted to co-opt the protesters into partaking in the re-enactment. Plimoth Plantation spokesperson Lawrence Couter told the *Boston Globe* “we invited them to eat with us, just as the Pilgrims and Indians ate together at the first Thanksgiving, and we invited them again but twice they accepted and then changed their minds.”<sup>189</sup> The traditional Thanksgiving meal is a time of breaking bread together (a symbol of peace), a day to celebrate and raise thanks to God for the good things bestowed upon the descendants, real and metaphorical, of the Pilgrims.

During the meal one protestor overturned a dining table while stating “We don’t want white men’s food.”<sup>190</sup> Thanksgiving co-opts Indigenous food. Within the United States families gather around tables filled with pumpkin pie, turkey, cranberry relish, corn, squash, and sweet potatoes covered in marshmallow. On their plates is a consumable history of colonization, food that was cultivated by tribes like the Wampanoag and then given to colonists to help them survive. Squash, corn, cranberries, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes are all crops that originated in North America and the Caribbean. Turkey is native primarily to the areas that are now the United States and Mexico, and there is archeological evidence that Indigenous tribes were domesticating

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<sup>189</sup> Carr and Blake, “Stage Plymouth Protest,” 28

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 128

turkeys long before contact.<sup>191</sup> Europeans would have already encountered turkey as domestic poultry because Spanish ships brought them back to Europe nearly a century before the Pilgrims landed. While the gift giving of Indigenous crops is part of the first Thanksgiving story, it divorces the labor and culture that is inherent in the agricultural tradition of raising crops that is part of this meal. The food becomes part of the colonized history, it is a consumable gift that marks the rise of capitalism over communal good. The meal is now “white man’s food.” Turning over the table rejects the meal, and is a rejection of complicity in consuming this version of history.

These people, the Indigenous protesters, are neither gone nor leaving. They are not part of the forward progress, although they can be mistaken as being a part of it. Instead they stand, in opposition to a narrative of the forward march of progress. The act of standing is a lynch-pin in the borders of time. It is a reminder that this land was not always just the space of colonialism, nor should it be remembered as such. The Indigenous protestors stand to make themselves visible in a space where their culture and history have been absented. Their borders, which can constitute cultural difference, have been erased by a state history drenched in colonialism. The act of standing opposes the western ideal of progress that is tied to modernity, that ultimately pushes Indigenous histories and actual Indigenous bodies out the narrative, out of government, out of the land, and out of a conception of humanity.

The primary goal of these activists was to stand up for Indigenous rights by standing in opposition to history. What does it mean to stand? The historical society organizes a

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<sup>191</sup> “Native Americans Raised Classic Holiday Bird Centuries before Thanksgiving.” *Popular Archeology*. Accessed December 9, 2016. <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/june-2013/article/native-americans-raised-classic-holiday-bird-centuries-before-thanksgiving>.

parade, and parades are a large part of the cultural Thanksgiving celebration even today. There is a forward progress in the mapping of a parade. A beginning space and an ending space, the performance maps motions and the steady, inevitable, course (in this case) of the arrival of the Pilgrims. There is effort and doing, and a kind of western historical progressivism that is inherent in the parade, especially the parade of historical figures marching from the historical society to the dining area in Plymouth harbor. The anachronism of history occurs between the parading costumed descendants and inheritors of colonial power and the standing Indigenous person, dressed in traditional clothing. There is no march towards a new land; progress is not linked to forward motion in this episteme. They stand to oppose this western ideal of progress that is tied to modernity, which ultimately pushes Indigenous histories and actual Indigenous bodies out the narrative, out of government, out of the land, and out of a conception of humanity. Their act of standing disrupts the unceasing progress of modernity.

The *Boston Globe's* reporter ended their coverage of the day the sentiment that the protesters wanted broadcast to a wider audience: "The Indians said that while this day as a joyous feast for the descendants of Pilgrims who landed here, it was a day of fast and mourning for the Indians who have suffered ever since the settlement of the Pilgrims."<sup>192</sup> The protesters, throughout the day, stayed on message- that instead of the nation celebrating a day of thanks, people should instead participate in a day of mourning. Their actions made space for their message to be heard and to change the narrative of the space. Since 1970, a day of mourning protest is staged every year in Plymouth on Thanksgiving day. The protest changed the terms of

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<sup>192</sup> Carr and Blake, "Stage Plymouth Protest," 28

the conversation that day in Plymouth, but it did not last. The protest continues annually in to change the narrative of Plymouth, but it has not managed to change the terms of the national conversation on Thanksgiving. The protest did nothing to change the terms of the conversation around gender. The speeches and actions were distinctly driven around the concerns of their male leadership.

### **3.5 THE TRAIL OF BROKEN TREATIES: MARKING SOVEREIGNTY/ BECOMING DOMESTIC TERRORISTS**

Following the National Day of Mourning protest in 1970, both AIM and Anna Mae Aquash (working with the Boston Indian Council, or BIC) continued to work on larger issues facing Indigenous communities, although the types of projects they worked on differed. The two groups would join their efforts again two years later in November of 1972 in Washington D.C. for the Trail of Broken Treaties. Between the protests in Plymouth 1970 and Washington in 1972, AIM grew their presence nationally which drew the attention of the FBI. Aquash used her time to learn Mi'kmaq history and language and to teach Indigenous children the values of their culture and language at a Teaching and Research in Bicultural Education (or TRIBE) School in Maine.<sup>193</sup>

At the school, accompanied by her daughters Denise and Deborah, Aquash taught students to value their worth as human beings while learning the language and culture of their

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<sup>193</sup> Brand, *Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash*, 43-44

ancestors for perhaps the first time. During Aquash's days as a student she was treated poorly by white classmates, and they shamed her for being Mi'kmaq. She performed poorly in school and eventually dropped out.<sup>194</sup> As a teacher in the TRIBE school, her job was to instill pride in these children's Indigenous heritage, where before there was shame. The U.S. and Canadian governments funded the TRIBE program with the aid of private donors. In the Spring of 1971 governmental oversight declared the TRIBE program a failure and overturned the entire staff. Aquash returned to Boston with her daughters where she enrolled and completed her education at Wheelock College's mature students program while working in a day-care for primarily black children.<sup>195</sup> At the day-care, Aquash incorporated Indigenous stories, histories, and language into the educational aspects of her work, continuing the work she began at TRIBE. When she finished her program at Wheelock, she was offered a scholarship to continue her studies at Brandies University but turned it down to continue her community work in Dorchester, MA with the Boston Indian Council (BIC).

Aquash's choices during this period illustrate the values she prioritized as she became increasingly politicized. Creating a community that valued Indigenous knowledge, culture, language, and lives became her calling, and she worked continually to create better job and living situations for the Indigenous community in the Boston area. BIC began as an alcoholic recovery group, and their organizing often focused on taking care of the heavy drinking problems that plagued displaced Indigenous community members. Aquash also worked to improve the kinds of jobs that members of the community could find. For example, she lobbied General Motors to hire more Indigenous workers; a change from back-breaking farm labor, that

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<sup>194</sup> Brand, *Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash*, 53

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 44

while monotonous, came with a paycheck that brought many Indigenous employees out of poverty. Aquash's consistent choices to help her community cemented her commitment to the Red Power movement.

While Aquash focused primarily on her local community, AIM continued to conduct attention-grabbing protests at other highly-visible symbolic spaces, like Mount Rushmore. AIM also began to be heavily involved in legal proceedings in high profile cases where they perceived a racial bias. AIM gained national attention in Nebraska surrounding the suspicious death of Raymond Yellow Thunder in February 1972.<sup>196</sup> Yellow Thunder, a 51-year-old Oglala Lakota man from the Pine Ridge Reservation, was found dead from a beating in Gordon, Nebraska. The case, close to the homelands of AIM founder Russell Means, hit at the intersection of alcohol abuse, racist violence, and police mishandling of Indigenous lives. AIM made Raymond Yellow Thunder's death a point of protest and assisted in the legal proceedings and in focusing press attention on the case.

Yellow Thunder had been drinking heavily in Gordon, Nebraska when four young white men (Melvin and Leslie Hare, Bernard Ludder, and Robert Bayless) decided that they were going to make a "drunken Indian dance."<sup>197</sup> The young men forced Yellow Thunder to strip in the cold Nebraska February night and then kidnapped him, shoving him into the trunk of their car to take him to the local American Legion post where they taunted him to dance naked in front of the crowd before letting him go. Yellow Thunder walked out of the American Legion alive, and the group of men ran into him alive again later in the evening. Yellow Thunder suffered

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<sup>196</sup> Smith and Warrior. *Like a Hurricane*. See Chapter 6: Yellow Thunder.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 114.

blows to the head and body. A week later when he hadn't gone back to work, a search began for him. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1972, his family found his body dead in a car in the used car lot.<sup>198</sup>

AIM seized on the case to make a point about racial violence and police negligence. There were rumors that defendants castrated Yellow Thunder. When the Police would not release his body to the family, AIM members seized on the possibility that Gordon police mishandled a case involving a brutalized Indigenous person. Gordon, Nebraska was known for incidents of racial violence, and Raymond Yellow Thunder was just the latest victim. AIM protesters arrived in Gordon to highlight the injustice of his death and make him a martyr for the national police mishandling of Indigenous peoples. AIM's protests drew media attention, and they made the national news and created a racially charged stir in Nebraska. When the case went to trial only brothers Leslie and Marvin Hare were convicted for manslaughter and false imprisonment, with meager sentences and fines of 6 years' imprisonment and \$500, and two years' imprisonment and \$500, respectively. AIM's organizational roots were in cultural heritage and in defending communities against police brutality, as they grew to the national prominence they continued to focus on the mishandling of justice for Indigenous peoples by government agencies like the police, the courts, and the federal government.

In September 1972, Richard Oaks (Mohawk), a leader of the IOAT and Alcatraz Occupation, was murdered by a YMCA camp leader in California. His death was a catalyst for the other Red Power leaders to ban together in a "pan-Indian" movement.<sup>199</sup> The group came together, merging the goals of organizers on the west coast, the mid-west, and the east coast to

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<sup>198</sup> Smith and Warrior, *Like A Hurricane*, 113.

<sup>199</sup> "Pan-Indian" is the language that the movement used to describe themselves. See: Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*. 233-235 for a discussion of the groups involved in the planning of the Trail of Broken Treaties.



create a national platform going into the 1972 Presidential election year. Inspired by Civil Rights era marches, they decided to bring their concerns and voices en masse to Washington, DC that November. They would collect people into a caravan as they traveled across the country. The caravan would stop in Minneapolis in October to discuss their demands. Many of the organizers came from urban areas, and they planned the caravan to travel through reservations to build support and membership. They called the caravan the Trail of Broken Treaties. In October, leadership determined that protest would be organized specifically to demand that sovereignty be restored to tribal nations; which would change tribal nations legal rights and ability to negotiate with the U.S. Government. Due to the political climate within the FBI at the time, the planned peaceful protest in November turned into an armed occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs that lasted six days. The FBI marked AIM as a domestic terrorist group because of the occupation and because their demands were seen as a threat to the United States.

Legality, sovereignty, citizenship, and criminality are intrinsically knotted together in the relationship between tribal nations, the so-called conquered people, and the treaties they made with the United States, the conquerors/colonizers. Demanding sovereignty from within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the agency that should be the equivalent of a consulate within the U.S. Capitol, becomes an excavation of the broken treaties and failures for diplomacy and justice to carry the day.<sup>200</sup> The FBI understood demands for sovereignty as a direct threat to the United States. Since the Civil Rights movement, a decade before, the FBI was inherently

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<sup>200</sup> For further discussion about sovereignty within the reservation system see also Terry L Anderson, *Sovereign Nations or Reservations?: An Economic History of American Indians*. (San Francisco, CA : Lanham, MD., 1995). and Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*. Indigenous Americas. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

suspicious of protest movements. When the Red Power movement gained a wider support base and national attention, they also gained the attention of the FBI. For the FBI in this period, dissent was the equivalent of an act against the state. Combined with a threat of militarization, the FBI could mark protesters as terrorists. During the organization and implementation of the Trail of Broken Treaties the FBI opened their file on AIM.<sup>201</sup> The FBI division that took care of Extremist Matters was particularly concerned with AIM. They began to build a case and watch the groups movements as they organized and crossed the country.

In Minneapolis, AIM and other organizers including scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. created a document that delineated their demands to present to the government. They called the document “The Twenty Points”, and it detailed an action plan for rectifying the many specific and general ways that the US government had ignored or broken treaty agreements. Points one through eight covered the restoration and implementation of treaty rights. Points nine, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen explicated the organizations and organizational relationships that should exist between tribal authorities and the US Government. Points ten and eleven outlined the restoration of land, and of membership in a tribe for people who were denied membership by the US government. Points twelve and thirteen focused on the law's impact on sovereignty and on an individual's protection within the federal court system. Points seventeen through twenty dealt with Tribal governmental right support systems including tax status, cultural integrity, health, housing, and education, and their ability to organize politically. Altogether the Twenty Points outlined significant changes to the relationship between the US government and the many disparate tribal

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<sup>201</sup> University Publications of America, and United States. *The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee*. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1986. Microfilm.

nations and governments within the boundaries of the United States. In other words, the Twenty Points was a demand for sovereignty with an actionable plan. The government, through the BIA and the FBI, perceived this protest for sovereignty as a threat to the United States and they worked to undermine the movement.<sup>202</sup>

To unpack what sovereignty would mean for tribal nations as outlined by the twenty points, and why it could be a threat to the United States, let's examine the document and the complex political institutions that would be dismantled by the Twenty Points. The case for sovereignty begins with the first point, which reads as follows:

1. RESTORATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL TREATY-MAKING AUTHORITY: The U.S. President should propose by executive message, and the Congress should consider and enact legislation, to repeal the provision in the 1871 Indian Appropriations Act which withdrew federal recognition from Indian Tribes and Nations as political entities, which could be contracted by treaties with the United States, in order that the President may resume the exercise of his full constitutional authority for acting in the matters of Indian Affairs - and in order that Indian Nations may represent their interests in the manner and method envisioned and provided in the Federal Constitution.<sup>203</sup>

The structures of modernity/coloniality utilize legal structures to complicate the position of Indigenous peoples within the United States. As addressed in this first point, the governing bodies of the United States have legally, if not justly, and consistently stripped Indigenous people of their ability to self-govern. Since the early 1600's different colonial governments would treat with the local tribes. The earliest treaties involved the Haudenosaunee (Two Row Wampum Treaty of 1613), the Wampanoag (the Plymouth- Wampanoag Treaty of 1621), and

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<sup>202</sup> See also: Vine Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties; an Indian Declaration of Independence*, (New York: Delacorte Press, 1974)

<sup>203</sup> AIM, "Trail of Broken Treaties 20-Point Position Paper - An Indian Manifesto," Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.aimovement.org/archives/>.

the Powhatan (Treaty of 1646 between the English and the Powhatan). Each of these treaties acknowledges that the Haudenosaunee, Wampanoag, and Powhatan are political entities capable of treating with foreign powers. Sovereignty, at its core, is a recognition of another nation's internal ability to govern itself, which in the context of colonization acknowledges that a Tribal Nation, like the Haudenosaunee, may, in fact, have a civilization, culture, and borders of their own, independent of those of the United States. The Indian Appropriation Act of 1871 robbed all tribal governments of their sovereignty. Passed by Congress as part of the yearly appropriations bills, this act fundamentally changed the relationship between tribal leadership and the US Government by deciding that in the eyes of the state and the law these groups were no longer sovereign, nor citizens, and could not treat with the US Government on their own behalf. After 1871, Congress treated with itself on behalf of tribal governments, like the Lakota, Haudenosaunee, Cherokee, etc., because these groups had become wards of the state, effectively eternal children in the eyes of the government and the law. US citizenship was given, wanted or not, as a blanket right to Indigenous peoples in 1924. This act restored the rights of Indigenous people to be treated as adults in the eyes of the court, but it did not restore sovereignty for tribal nations, nor did it affirm the legality of internal justice systems on reservation land. The 1933 Indian New Deal established limited tribal governance but only for the tribes that were federally recognized, and only with the support of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Congress was still (and is still today) codifying relations with tribal governments and peoples through policy changes and not through treaties.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> US Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. "Indian Affairs | FAQs." Accessed December 19, 2016. <https://www.bia.gov/FAQs/>.

The first point's demand for treaty making ability is a demand for full tribal sovereignty, and by extension, it is also a demand for acknowledgment by the U.S. Government that tribal lands belong to tribal nations, separate from the United States. In 1972, over a hundred years since the gutting of tribal sovereignty and treaty making, the United States policies were steadily attempting to erase and assimilate Indigenous peoples into the United States while reducing land claims and tribal monetary support guaranteed by earlier treaties. The Boarding School movement robbed Indigenous peoples of their language and cultures, leading to children who did not learn their culture's language despite growing up on a Reservation (like Anna Mae Aquash and Dennis Banks). These children, if they did learn the language, learned it as a second language later in life. By 2010, according to UNESCO, most Indigenous American languages were critically endangered.<sup>205</sup> The Allotment Act (also known as the Dawes Act) of 1887 also began the process of shifting tribal land ownership from communal land conservancy to individual ownership. The Allotment Act changed the dynamics of Tribal governance and eroded the boundaries of tribal treaty-bound land because individuals could sell their acres to non-tribal members eventually resulting in smaller to non-existent treaty-reserved lands.

Without land, on what basis would sovereignty serve? The legal concept of sovereignty comes from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that ended the thirty-years war in Europe. Its concept of sovereignty is tied intimately to the possession of bordered land. Westphalian Sovereignty outlines that each state is in charge of justice and law within its own borders and can broker peace with other nations. Indian Reservations in the United States are not land that belongs distinctly to the tribes that live on them. Instead, those lands are held in trust by the US

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<sup>205</sup> UNESCO. "UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger." Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>.

Government on behalf of the tribes who occupy them. Until the 1930's all tribal governance was managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and even after the Bureau of Indian Affairs was deeply involved in the limited sovereignty of tribal governments and the disbursement of treaty-mandated funding.

The relationship between the US Government and Indigenous nations has implicit racial biases because of the way government operates ---this is the extended coloniality of power. The lands of these nations are sometimes separated out, for example, the Lakota Sioux own land in trust over four separate reservations within North and South Dakota. These reservations could be enclave nations surrounded on all sides by another country, like the Vatican City or the Kingdom of Lesotho. However, the nature of trust lands and the parceled boundaries of reservations shift the idea of the border within these nations from one that contains a culture and legal system of justice, to a container that often leaves those within the boundaries without access to justice or political agency. Without the ability to maintain status as sovereign nations that can treat with foreign governments and support a system of governance and justice, there is little legal redress for Indigenous peoples.

The tenth point outlined the necessity of a border to define and maintain sovereignty. It stated that the US Government should restore a "permanent non-diminishing Native American land base of not less than 110-million acres... This land base and its separate parts, should be vested with the recognized rights and conditions of being perpetually non-taxable except by autonomous and sovereign Indian authority, and should never again be permitted to be alienated from Native American or Indian ownership and control."<sup>206</sup> A permanent land base would fundamentally and radically change the relationship between the US Government and tribal

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<sup>206</sup> AIM, "Trail of Broke Treaties- 20 Point Position Paper"

nations. Establishing permanent Indigenous spaces could and would return cultures back into a direct connection to the land, which would reaffirm and strengthen cultural narratives and identity.

The thirteenth point moved the Twenty Points from the legal position of tribal nations to the rights of the individual, stating that the US Government "Resume Federal Protective Jurisdiction for Offenses Against Indians." In a truly sovereign nation, the judicial system within the boundaries of that state would be the highest law of the land. However, that was not the case between Tribal courts and the courts of the United States. Point thirteen laid out both an overarching change in judicial matters and a three sub-point detailed plan to achieve that goal. The plan necessitated that the United States extend protective jurisdiction to "Indian persons wherever situated in its territory and the territory of the several States, outside of Indian Reservations or Country, and provide the prescribed offenses of violence against Indian persons shall be federal crimes."<sup>207</sup> Point thirteen highlights the miscarriage of justice within the U.S. defined border of the reservation. The reservation border contains, but it does not protect, and sometimes it allows harm to occur without repercussions. Prosecuting violence against "Indian persons" as a federal crime is important because of cases like Raymond Yellow Thunder and Richard Oakes, both of whom died by violent means. Their trials exposed a judicial system that treated Indigenous peoples as less than human, and less deserving of justice.<sup>208</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>207</sup> AIM "Trail of Broken Treaties- 20Point Position Paper"

<sup>208</sup> AIM's protests and publicity surrounding the trial for Raymond Yellow Thunder's death, outlined earlier in this chapter, significantly rose the profile of both Raymond Yellow Thunder, Judicial miscarriages, and AIM in the national news. The charges against Michael Morgan, the man who fatally shot Oakes, were dropped because Oakes was perceived to be acting aggressively towards Morgan.

crimes committed against Indigenous people by non-Indigenous people on the reservation often went untried due to federal judicial process not affecting non-tribal citizens on tribal land. Point 13.B calls to revoke the immunity of “non-Indians... with Reservation boundaries”.<sup>209</sup> These two sets of laws, the tribal and the federal, often left the citizen of both the United States and of a federally recognized tribal nation without legal protection.

The Twenty Points also critiqued and called for the dismantling of U.S. Government Institutions, namely The Bureau of Indian Affairs, or BIA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the agency that governs all Indigenous peoples on behalf of the United States, and it is uniquely situated both in its responsibilities and in its location within the federal agencies administration. It is also historically an ineffectual and at times harmful organization. Beyond sovereignty, The Trail of Broken treaties set a policy goal to dismantle the BIA and to establish a new organization in its place. Point fourteen articulated this by demanding the "abolishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs by 1976."

In 1972, the BIA no longer served the function it was created for. Founded in 1824, the Department of War initially housed the BIA. However, in 1849 the BIA was transferred to the Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Indian Affairs began as a way to manage hostile relationships between the United States and many tribal nations, but after 1849 its role functioned as the management of resources for subdued tribal nations according to treaty rights. They were not, and are not, an agency with authority to make treaties or exert justice, but rather a mediator of money and other resources promised in treaties. According to a 2003 investigative piece in the *New York Times*, the BIA has mismanaged and cheated reservations out of as much

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<sup>209</sup> AIM, “Trail of Broken Treaties- 20 Point Position Paper”



as "137.2 billion dollars over the last 115 years."<sup>210</sup> Considering the extreme levels of poverty, as well as the lack of access to affordable, and safe housing and food on reservations, this mismanagement of funds is criminal and has impacted the quality of health and life of generations of Indigenous peoples.

It is also problematic that Department of the Interior --the same government umbrella agency that also handles eight other bureaus including the National Park Service, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and the U.S. Geological Survey--houses the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Department of the Interior also deals with the Office of Insular Affairs, a department that carries out and "coordinates federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."<sup>211</sup> What you may notice, is that the Department of the Interior is primarily responsible for managing resources--mineral rights, land rights, and the use of wildlife. The Bureau of Indian Affairs through the fulfillment of treaty promises is the organization that is responsible for keeping Indian Reservation land and resources in trust for the people who live there.

The Department of the Interior has an internal conflict in mission between utilizing resources and keeping lands in trust. For example, Pine Ridge Reservation sits on top of land that is rich in uranium. During the 1970s, that land belonged to the Lakota who lived there, and their

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<sup>210</sup> Brinkley, Joel. "American Indians Say Documents Show Government Has Cheated Them Out of Billions." *New York Times*. January 7, 2003, sec. National.

<sup>211</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, "Office of Insular Affairs," June 11, 2015. <https://www.doi.gov/oia>.

tribal government. However, that land is ultimately in trust with the federal government under the Department of the Interior; the same department that is searching for uranium deposits to mine and extract for nuclear power. Ultimately, the quest to mine resources over-reaches their trust duties and through loop-holes and exploitation mining of uranium began in Pine Ridge by non-Lakota companies. As early as 1958, the US Geological Survey discovered uranium deposits in the Black Hills.<sup>212</sup> They were able to survey the lands without real interference from tribal authorities because the land was in trust to the Department of the Interior, the same organization that manages the US Geological Survey. The Department of the Interior is also responsible for the sale of mineral rights. In the late 1950's the Department of the Interior decided that there could be open pit uranium mining throughout the badlands- eventually leading to "2,885 abandoned, open-pit uranium mines in the states of North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming."<sup>213</sup> The radioactive run-off from these mines led to a variety of ill-health effects on the tribes throughout this area. What this illustrates is that the Department of the Interior's priority was to manage and utilize resources, rather than uphold the trust of Indigenous peoples as dictated by treaties. Governmental bureaucracy ultimately protects the Department of the Interior from repercussions for breaking treaties, and the lack of recognized tribal sovereignty prevented justice from being served.

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<sup>212</sup>C. S. Robinson and G. B. Gott. *UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY URANIUM DEPOSITS OF THE BLACK HILLS SOUTH DAKOTA AND WYOMING\**, May 1958.

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/tei/723/report.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> Zevon, Crystal. 2013. "ABANDONED URANIUM MINES IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS." *Peace and Freedom* 73 (2): 11-12.

<http://pitt.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1790927889?accountid=14709>

By dismantling the BIA by 1976 and restructuring a new organization, the Twenty Points created a plan for the creation of an agency that could put treaty-defined tribal nations needs first. Point fifteen articulated the way this new organization could serve Indigenous communities and be a productive conduit between these communities and the United States. This point also delineated in six subsections the foundational changes in the creation of this new organization that the document named as the “Office of Federal Indian Relations and Community Reconstruction.”<sup>214</sup> The new organization would be outside of the Department of the Interior and would report directly to the President. A tri-partite commission consisting of a presidential appointee, a senate appointee, and an elected official from a national election of Indigenous people would direct the agency. A council of twenty Indigenous members would advise the tri-partite commission. Under this governance, the new organization would cut much of the bureaucracy of the BIA, and directly administer budgets as well as the trust of treaty lands with a goal of eventually turning land trust over to individual tribal governments. The Office of Federal Indian Relations mission would be to “remedy the break-down in constitutionally-prescribed relationships between the United States and Indian Nations and people and to alleviate the destructive impact that distortion in those relationships has rendered upon the lives of Indian people.”<sup>215</sup> Instead of prioritizing assimilation and the so-called civilization of the Indigenous people, as the BIA had for over a century, the new organization would work towards nurturing, supporting, and growing Indigenous cultural life and populations.

All together the Twenty Points systematically critiques the US Government’s policies and actions towards Indigenous peoples, while explicating specific actions that would change the

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<sup>214</sup> AIM, “Trail of Broken Treaties- 20 Point Position Paper.”

<sup>215</sup> AIM “Trail of Broken Treaties- Twenty Point Position Paper”.

quality of life for many different Indigenous peoples living within the borders of the United States. The Twenty Points are an outline in clear policy action terms of the humanity and worth of Indigenous peoples and cultures, which are devalued and destroyed within a government built on coloniality. To state that Indigenous lives and culture are worthy of value, and to demand that they have a place in the world and that they deserve safety and protection, is a radical act. As AIM, and the other organizers, finalized their plans to march on D.C, the FBI increased their surveillance. Organizers paid a visit to the BIA office in Minneapolis to secure housing and space on the mall for their protest.<sup>216</sup> They left with assurances of support, and the BIA promptly notified the FBI.

One of the reasons that the U.S. Government responded with violence to AIM's protests at the BIA during the Trail of Broken Treaties and later at Wounded Knee II was the major upheaval of authority after Hoover's death. J. Edgar Hoover, the founder of the modern FBI and its director for almost half a century, died in office in early May of 1972. According to the FBI's files up until Hoover's death, it's clear that prior to 1972 the FBI was monitoring the actions of AIM and other Red Power protest groups but did not see any threat in their work. Hoover's sudden death caused many of the chains of command that governed the agency to be thrown into disorder. Hoover's FBI did not breed trust, and from the written in notes on the released FBI files it's also clear that there was disagreement over what and if there was a real problem with AIM. As the Caravan of Broken Treaties approached their November destination point, surveillance increased. It was a campaign year, which was one of the strategic reasons that AIM chose to march on Washington, and a spirit of paranoia surrounded an FBI that had just begun their

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<sup>216</sup> University Publications of America, and United States. *The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee.*

investigation into the Watergate Scandal. November 1972 was a perfect storm of paranoia and political unrest.

When the Caravan arrived in Washington, D.C, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1972, hundreds of protesters expected to find housing and scheduled meetings with members of the Nixon administration to discuss the Twenty Points. What greeted them, they quickly found, was inadequate housing and no members of the administration willing to meet with them. The BIA made no provisions for the hundreds of people who arrived from all over the country in Washington, D.C., citing that the group was not invited but came on their own and no assistance was due them.<sup>217</sup> According to Russell Mean's autobiography, the group arrived at the BIA after spending the night in a church basement in a black community that was over-run with rats.<sup>218</sup>

The BIA is purported to be a space in the U.S. Capitol for Indigenous people. So the protesters gathered and filled the building. Upon entering the BIA building, members of the Trail of Broken Treaties did not intend to seize and occupy the building for six days. They came inside to use their numbers, between 200 to 500 people depending on accounts, to pressure BIA officials to provide lodging arrangements and to schedule meetings with the administration. BIA officials, under the directive of Assistant Secretary of the Interior Harrison Loesch, moved many of the protesters into the auditorium in the building. They spent most of the day in tense talks, with BIA and DOI officials delaying any commitment to arrange meetings with the Nixon Administration. As the first day wore on, officials and protest leadership agreed on a temporary housing solution. At the end of the working day, a fight broke out between protesters and guards,

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<sup>217</sup> Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior*, 133-134

<sup>218</sup> Russell Means and Marvin J. Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 230.

and then the barricades went up. As *Washington Post* writer Peter Osnos reported "the explanation for this unhappy turnabout is as simple perhaps as misunderstood instructions from one security guard to another and as complicated as the hundreds of years of tragic conflict between the Indians and the white men who came to challenge them."<sup>219</sup> Any agreement for housing was left behind, and the occupation of a federal building by armed, militant, protesters began.

The BIA occupation was not peaceful. Each aspect of the protesters planned visit received push-back from the federal government. The day-long negotiations did not produce a meeting with the Nixon Administration. When the altercation triggered the occupation, AIM--group that often threatened militancy--took up arms to defend themselves. Though guns were in play, no one died during this protest. Government officials bruised and beat protesters who were not safely inside the building. The worst action the protesters took during the six days of occupation was the theft of government documents and the alleged destruction of property within the building. AIM claims that they never directed protesters to damage property. The FBI began their program of infiltration of AIM during the BIA protest, and AIM claims that it was FBI infiltrators and BIA workers after the fact who did the most damage to the building to villainize and punish AIM.<sup>220</sup>

When they arrived, The Trail of Broken Treaties caravan had no reason to think that they would not be met and housed. Nixon's first term State of the Union mentioned improvements for Indian Affairs, one of the only administrations to specifically address this issue. Organizers received assurances from government officials in Minneapolis only a few weeks before they

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<sup>219</sup> Peter Osnos. "Legacy of Suspicion" A6.

<sup>220</sup> Smith and Warrior, *Like A Hurricane*, 167.

arrived in Washington. The documentation of those assurances is absent from the record. What protesters did find in the BIA files was a memo from Assistant Secretary Loesch to Director of the BIA Louis R. Bruce that the BIA "was not to provide any assistance" to the Trail of Broken Treaties.<sup>221</sup> Loesch's directive was in opposition to the message of support and change in addressing the problems of the Native American Citizens that the Nixon Administration had previously supported. Loesch, a Nixon appointee, was from Colorado and before becoming the Assistant Secretary of the Interior had little experience dealing with Indigenous American concerns. The FBI, who had been monitoring the situation, became directly involved when AIM militarized their occupation of the BIA building which was a property of the Federal Government and therefore under the jurisdiction of the FBI. In the eyes of the state, this was an attack on state land that confirmed FBI suspicions and marked AIM as terrorists.

The FBI utilized Counter Intelligence Programs (COINTELPRO) on AIM, much like they did to the Black Panthers, Anti-Vietnam War Protesters, and Civil Rights Leaders (like Martin Luther King, Jr.). COINTELPRO involved covert operations aimed at disrupting political dissent through surveillance, infiltration, and discrediting members. The FBI's released files on AIM and Wounded Knee reveal that it was the Trail of Broken Treaties and the subsequent occupation of the BIA that intensified the FBI's focus on and strategies against AIM.<sup>222</sup> An FBI Memorandum dated April 24, 1975, on the "Use of Special Agents of the FBI in a Paramilitary

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<sup>221</sup> Osnos, "Legacy of Suspicion," A6

<sup>222</sup> University Publications of America, and United States. *The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee*. These files cover from 1970-1980; however, most of the early files are not solely AIM related. The FBI conflated the fishing rights protests of the Puyallup Tribe in Washington State, the IOAT at Alcatraz, and other Red Power protests into the AIM file.

Law Enforcement Operation in Indian Country” states that “the FBI was instructed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the latter part of 1972 to conduct extremist and criminal investigations pertaining to AIM.”<sup>223</sup> One time AIM Activist Doug Durham later revealed himself to be an FBI informant and agent on AIM's activities; he joined the movement right after the BIA occupation. AIM leaders claimed that it was FBI COINTELPRO agents infiltrating the movement who were responsible for the destruction of property during the BIA occupation.

After six days inside the BIA the US Government and AIM officials came to an agreement that ended the occupation. In exchange for leaving the building, the government agreed that they would not punish protesters for the occupation and no charges for the protest would be levied. They also agreed to give the protesters \$60,000 to aid in their return home, as well as a pledge to create a committee of members across all departments that dealt with Indian affairs to address self-determination and treaty claims, among other concerns. As the protesters left the building, Dennis Banks told the *New York Times* that they discovered thousands of incriminating documents inside the BIA that showed the vast corruption and betrayal of the trust of Indigenous peoples, and that the protesters had already removed these papers from the BIA. The protesters also removed sacred objects and Indigenous artwork that the BIA had displayed on their walls.

It is difficult to assign responsibility for the destruction of property within the BIA building. Five hundred people living in a protest occupation for six days in an office building will invariably leave evidence of their presence. However, the BIA and DOI claimed nearly

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<sup>223</sup> Rolland Dewing, *A Guide to the Microfilm collection of The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee.* ( University Publications of America, Frederick, MD. 1986.)



“2.28 million” dollars in damages. <sup>224</sup>Perhaps it was because of the agreement to not punish protesters for the occupation that led to such a high assessment of the damages to the building that supposedly supported Indigenous people. The *Washington Post* detailed the accounting on the damages showing that the number included not just damages and the theft of priceless works of art, but also the billable hours paid out to employees that could not come into work due to the occupation. It's also possible that the breaking of glass and destruction of typewriters and computers, which AIM leaders claim they did not do, happened between when the protesters left the building and when the damages were assessed the next morning.

In the aftermath of this occupation, the Twenty Points were never received by nor discussed with White House officials. If that was the criteria for success for the Trail, then this protest failed by that measure. AIM and The Trail of Broken Treaties gained national attention, but the militarization of their protest movement was not widely supported by elected leadership on the reservations. Perhaps the most galvanizing and positive aspect of the BIA occupation was the retrieval of documents that were not accessible by the majority of the people they affected. These Broken Treaty papers, as reported by the few *Washington Post* staff members that AIM gave access, documented the long history of back-room deals and violations of trust that the BIA, Senators, and other politicians had enacted. Amongst the papers, they found documentation of unwanted sterilization of women on reservations. These documents gave proof to convictions long held by the activists that the BIA and the federal government did not have their best interests at heart.

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<sup>224</sup> Jon Katz. "Damage to BIA Third Heaviest Ever in U.S." *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973), Nov 11, 1972. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/148240742?accountid=14709>.

The occupation and destruction of federal property permanently marked AIM as a domestic terrorist in the eyes of the FBI. Their freedom of speech, and their demands for justice, were now criminal acts. The FBI prevented the Trail's demand for sovereignty from being heard, and the press covered the militarization of the occupation as the main narrative of the event. The militarization was controversial, and it also made AIM's later work more difficult and more prone to legal repercussions. Prior to Hoover's death, AIM leader Clyde Bellencourt and Hoover had exchanged friendly correspondence over the death of Raymond Yellow Thunder.<sup>225</sup> After Hoover's death, this occupation distanced the FBI- the group that was ultimately in charge of upholding federal justice within and across reservation borders- from the activists. This marking of the AIM activist as criminal is what turned the protest at Wounded Knee in 1973 into a military siege, and ultimately led to the death of Anna Mae Aquash.

### **3.6 STANDING AND LIVING UNDER SIEGE AS A DECOLONIAL ACT:**

#### **WOUNDED KNEE 1973**

On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973 Mary Crow Dog gave birth to her son assisted by Anna Mae Pictou Aquash. The birth did not take place in a hospital. There were no doctors present, and the medicine available was either traditional or in short supply because Mary Crow Dog gave birth during AIM's occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1973 while surrounded by federal tanks and US Marshalls. The birth of Mary Crow Dog's son is an act of survival, of affirming the value

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<sup>225</sup> University Publications of America, and United States. *The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee*

of life in the space of massacre. Eighty-three years before AIM's occupation, and in the same place, the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry shot and killed between 150-300 women, children, and elderly members of the Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota. The Lakota were at the epicenter of the Ghost Dance movement, a religious practice that was outlawed by the U.S. government for its radical anti-U.S. sentiment. The 7th Regiment left the bodies of the dead in the December snow. In 1973, the U.S. government again surrounded the Lakota with tanks and sharpshooters. Beginning on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1973 the protesters lived and resisted in the face of federally approved violence for 71 days. Wounded Knee 1973 would be the last major AIM protest until 1978, and it was a decolonial act of life under siege.

Historians cite the massacre at Wounded Knee as the event that ended the so-called Indian Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>226</sup> A final act of violence that ended the centuries of conflict between the Indigenous peoples and the people (and their descendants) who colonized North America. While armed conflict ended at Wounded Knee in 1890, thanks in large part to the public's horror at the images of the massacre that newspapers printed, the war on Indigenous culture and land claims continued. Through treaty agreements, the US government dictated the

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<sup>226</sup> Robert M. Utley, a prominent Historian of the American West, has written extensively on the Indian Wars. His works have been influential to other writers (Robert M. Utley, *Indian Wars*. (American Heritage Library. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). and *The Indian Frontier, 1846-1890*. Rev. ed. Histories of the American Frontier Series. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003). There are also discrepancies on how long the "Indian Wars" lasted, some place it from as early as King Philip's war; others begin with the war of 1812 and end it at 1890 (wounded knee), or 1895 (the final treaty signings). The Library of Congress lists subject headings for several ranges of dates for Indian Wars of North America; including 1812-1815, 1815-1875, and 1866-1895. Native Americans are a disparate group, and this dating issue speaks to the fact that while the US government often wants to erase their differences to simplify relations.

kinds and quality of resources delivered to reservations. They also dictated the quality and standards of education, leading to the boarding school movement. Congress stripped tribal leadership of the ability to negotiate rights on their own behalf, and by extension tribal sovereignty, leading to an erosion of treaty lands.

In 1973, Wounded Knee was a small town located within Pine Ridge Reservation, no longer the unpopulated valley where the massacre occurred. Wounded Knee had a church and a store, and dozens of families lived in the area. Pine Ridge Reservation was under the control of Oglala Lakota Tribal Chairman Dick Wilson, who was under investigation for corruption and facing impeachment from tribal membership. The members of the Oglala Lakota who continued to value, protect, and teach traditional Oglala Lakota culture and language were known as the traditionalists; and they were especially vocal and critical of Wilson. He disbanded the tribal council and was making what many thought were concerning and corrupt decisions over the use of the reservation's money and resources. Wilson also utilized government funds to create an auxiliary police force which he called the Guardians of Oglala Nation, or GOON, squad. These armed forces would intimidate members of the nation that disagreed with Wilson's policies.

In the midst of this political turmoil, the traditional community in Wounded Knee invited AIM to support them. Russell Means, an Oglala Lakota himself, while not raised at Pine Ridge, was central to AIM's return to Pine Ridge.<sup>227</sup> AIM developed their connection with the Pine Ridge community during the trial of Raymond Yellow Thunder's death. Russell Means at one point during the impeachment process in early 1973, offered to run for Chairman in Wilson's

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<sup>227</sup> Sioux is the colonial/imperial term for the whole collection of closely related nations from the plains, including the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota. See Akim D. Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007).

place. AIM's publicized threats of militarization combined with the aftermath of the BIA Occupation made AIM a polarizing organization on reservations across the country. Many people who supported, and were supported by, the BIA in positions of power sided against AIM, while many of the people who felt disenfranchised continued to support AIM. During the BIA occupation, letters condemning AIM's actions arrived from reservations leaders who depended on BIA financial and administrative support. BIA support was essential for their survival, and their actions distanced themselves from AIM and by extension from repercussions from the federal government.

Dick Wilson had previously voiced support for AIM, but he changed his opinion in light of the BIA occupation. In fact, Wilson was elected initially due in part to his support of AIM, and his campaign manager was Russell Means' cousin Barbara Means-Adams.<sup>228</sup> After the BIA occupation, Wilson decreed that AIM members were not welcome in Pine Ridge. His position put Wilson's AIM-member Vice President David Long in a challenging position. After Long had invited Russell Means, a registered member of the Oglala Lakota nation and a former resident of Pine Ridge, to the reservation, Wilson suspended Long for violating his new anti-AIM policy. As Akim Reinhardt has laid out in his book *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee*, tensions between traditionalist members of the reservation and the progressive members were pronounced. These values also often followed blood quantum, with full-blood members of the tribe subscribing to traditionalist values and mixed-blood members subscribing to progressive ideologies.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup>Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, 131-132.

<sup>229</sup>Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*.

In most American politics the word progressive means a left-leaning political position, but within the politics of Indigenous communities, progressive means a set of ideals that lead towards assimilation into Western culture. Traditionalists, on the other hand, are those who continue to follow the traditional Indigenous cultural practice and tend towards the rejection of Western cultural values. In his 1972 election, Wilson managed to pull in some of the traditionalist voting population, but his primary support came from the mixed-blood progressive community. As Reinhardt points out, many of the mixed-blood progressives within the Oglala Nation were also those who had benefitted from the income and job security of BIA and government sponsored jobs. Unemployment on Pine Ridge was always a problem, and nearly all employment and income on the reservation came from the BIA.<sup>230</sup> Often progressive members of the community were more assimilated to western ways of living, and they received more of the coveted BIA jobs. With jobs came wealth, and an economic divide also separated the progressives from the traditionalists.

AIM came to Pine Ridge to support the traditionalist community during the impeachment vote in February 1973.<sup>231</sup> The protesters were not welcome, and threats of violence from GOON squad members escalated tensions. The impeachment vote failed, although the numbers were close. Restored to full power, Wilson again ordered AIM off of the reservation. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, after the failed impeachment, members of the traditional community gathered in Calico,

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<sup>230</sup>Reinhardt. *Ruling Pine Ridge*. 113. This problem was a consistent problem on Pine Ridge and was documented in 1928's Meriam Report; Lewis Meriam, *The Problem of Indian Administration*; Baltimore., [c1928]. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924014526150>.

<sup>231</sup> *Voices from Wounded Knee, 1973, in the Words of the Participants*, Roosevelttown, N.Y: Akwesasne notes, 1974. 14-15.

S.D. and called on AIM to stay despite Wilson's orders. Since the beginning of the impeachment process, the traditional Oglala organized themselves as the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization (OSCRO). Elders Ellen Moves Camp, Agnes Scott, and Gladys Bissonette founded OSCRO. Unlike other organizations in the Red Power movement, women were founding members and leaders in OSCRO and the occupation of Wounded Knee 1973. Quickly AIM and the traditional community met, and as a group, they decided to occupy Wounded Knee. On February 27<sup>th</sup>, AIM and OSCRO moved from Calico to Wounded Knee. Wilson notified the federal government of the unfolding events and requested support. US Marshalls and FBI Agents joined the GOON squad and the tribal police, and the occupation/siege of Wounded Knee 1973 began.<sup>232</sup> Together, AIM and OSCRO members declared Wounded Knee a new and sovereign independent nation. The occupation and the new sovereign nation lasted for 71 days through the cold winter of South Dakota.

Wounded Knee 1973 was part protest, part declaration of sovereignty, part occupation, and part military siege. It was not as clear cut as the occupation of Alcatraz Island, nor as staged as the Thanksgiving day protest in Plymouth. To the FBI, the protest was a militant occupation by domestic terrorists in opposition to the BIA approved Wilson administration, and siege tactics were an appropriate response. Fundamentally, the everyday actions of the newly declared Independent Oglala Nation were decolonial acts, because each action asserted the value of the traditionalist's way of life and the value of their community in the face of violence from a government built on the coloniality of power. Wounded Knee, like Plymouth, was also a strategic space. Wounded Knee, South Dakota is a touchstone geography in U.S. History and it is

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<sup>232</sup> See *Voices from Wounded Knee*; Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*; and Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*.

another moment and monument to the “last of” narrative for Indigenous peoples. The massacre of Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota was a tragedy, but it also continued a visual narrative of dead Indigenous people who cannot survive modernity. The occupation gave the lie to that narrative. The visuals in newspapers from Wounded Knee 1973 showed Indigenous people living and surviving; life in the face of tanks and gunfire, life in the space of massacre. The protestor’s lives were made visible to a wider audience, and they changed the narrative of Wounded Knee, and also showed the US Government’s culpability in the violence and poor living conditions at Pine Ridge Reservation.

If the Oglala Nation had chosen Calico, South Dakota (where they first met after the impeachment), the reminders of the massacre would not have been so blatant. AIM’s actions often received media attention, and they were strategic in making the story of this occupation overlay with the history of the Wounded Knee massacre. If history repeats itself, as the adage goes, then the media were primed for a second Wounded Knee based strictly on the location of this occupation. This was another excavation of history, of boundaries, and of resistance. In 1890, the Lakota were the last to admit defeat to U.S. forces. At the battle of Little Big Horn, 15 years before Wounded Knee, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho banded together to defeat General Custer and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. After the defeat at Little Big Horn, the Government made ending the resistance from the Plains nations a priority. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 established the Greater Sioux Reservation, a tract of land that covered all of what is South Dakota west of the Missouri river, as well as vast hunting territories in what is now Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota. In March of 1889, Congress passed an act that partitioned the Greater Sioux Reservation into five significantly smaller reservations (including Pine Ridge Reservation), violating the terms of the earlier treaty to create more available land for settlers. The United



States admitted North and South Dakota to the Union in November of 1889. Settler colonialism created additional pressure to dismantle and reduce the borders and authorities of the Indigenous people living in this area. In 1890, a decolonial religious movement known as the Ghost Dance spread rapidly among the Sioux, with a strong presence at Pine Ridge Reservation. In an attempt to curtail further resistance from the Lakota, the BIA outlawed the Ghost Dance but it did not stop the religion from spreading.

In November of 1890, President Benjamin Harrison ordered military action to stop Lakota resistance. On December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1890, a detachment of at least 64 soldiers in the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry killed 150-300 women, children and elderly Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota and left their bodies in the snow.<sup>233</sup> The Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota were on their way to concede defeat. Twenty members of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment were awarded the medal of honor for their part in Wounded Knee. There was a deep freeze in late December 1890 and when photographers and reporters arrived in Wounded Knee several days after the massacre the bodies were still laid out in the blood-soaked snow. The violence of the images published in newspapers provoked sympathy for the Lakota, and this change in public opinion swiftly brought an end to the militarization of the Indian wars.<sup>234</sup> The Lakota, whose reservations were always far removed from the most populous parts of the country, were suddenly and violently visible. However, the visibility of Wounded Knee further served a narrative that reaffirmed that Indigenous people were dying off and should be “saved.” This is the logic of coloniality in play,

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<sup>233</sup> The total number of dead varies from account to account; the numbers 150-300 represent the most common limits of the dead.

<sup>234</sup> See: Susan Forsyth, *Representing the Massacre of American Indians at Wounded Knee, 1890-2000*. Native American Studies, v. 13. Lewiston, N.Y: E. Mellen Press, 2003.

reaffirming the impossibility of traditional Indigenous culture surviving in modernity. In 1973 AIM and OSCRO used this space of massacre to declare to the US Government and the media that the Oglala Lakota were still there, and still living.

After moving from Calico to Wounded Knee one of the first events of the 1973 occupation was the robbery and takeover of the Trading Post, a local store and tourist stop that was owned by non-tribal members on reservation land. It is apt that the siege began in the Trading Post, since private ownership of what should have been communal land is part of the legacy of progressive policies that undermined the sovereignty of the Oglala Lakota. Even within the reservation, the Oglala Lakota were made to feel unwelcome in what should have been their space. The Trading Post was not a popular establishment, and was a constant reminder of the ways in which the lingering colonialism within American culture profited off of the dead bodies of Indigenous people. The store owners were responsible for billboards in the area inviting tourists to come look at the massacre site, and they would sell postcards of the famous frozen massacred bodies in their store. The Trading Post was also infamous among the locals as a place that purchased native crafts for pennies on the dollar and sold them to tourists at a high mark-up.<sup>235</sup> The Trading Post at Wounded Knee is a symbol and a function of the coloniality of capitalism, and the ways in which even within the borders of the reservation capitalism keeps the Oglala Lakota without history. The Trading Post celebrated the massacre of Wounded Knee, capitalizing off the cheap labor of the Indigenous population around them for the handicrafts in their stores, without giving back or including those people in their own story. It is not surprising that the first place that the protesters forcibly took back was a store that absented them from controlling the narrative around the massacre, i.e. their history. OSCRO and AIM protesters

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<sup>235</sup> Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 110

rioted in the Trading Post. The FBI and US Marshalls took this as the first sign of violence and reacted by setting up a perimeter of bunkers surrounding Wounded Knee.

There were around 200 AIM and OSCRO members who arrived in Wounded Knee to begin the occupation. Armed with guns, they proceeded to live their lives under siege. Throughout the 71-day occupation, people came to Wounded Knee to join with AIM and OSCRO from all over the country. Anna Mae Pictou was in Boston with her new boyfriend, Nogeeshik Aquash, when she heard about Wounded Knee. In early April, Pictou and Aquash arrived at the home of AIM spiritual leader Leonard Crow Dog in the Rosebud Reservation 90 miles east of Pine Ridge Reservation.<sup>236</sup> The couple were part of a two-van caravan attempting to sneak supplies into Wounded Knee. The FBI and US Marshalls stopped the first van, but Anna Mae Pictou and Nogeeshik Aquash made it through with some supplies in the second van. They arrived at a drop-off point eight miles from Wounded Knee. It took two days for Anna Mae, Nogeeshik and a few food runners to cross the eight miles through the heavy government patrols and arrive in Wounded Knee.<sup>237</sup>

Joining the occupation at Wounded Knee for Anna Mae also meant joining AIM officially. She quickly made herself useful. She was one of the few women who took on the mantle of a warrior, digging trenches (sometimes with golf clubs) and keeping patrol. Dennis Banks recalled that when Anna Mae and Nogeeshik arrived they volunteered to be on the firing line.<sup>238</sup> She quickly made herself a part of the community, including making friends with

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<sup>236</sup> Brand. *Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash*. 62

<sup>237</sup> Brand. *Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash*. 63. I'll also be referring to Anna Mae Pictou Aquash as Anna Mae, and Nogeeshik Aquash as Nogeeshik to avoid confusion.

<sup>238</sup> Banks. *Ojibwa Warrior*. 192

Leonard Crow Dog's wife, Mary Crow Dog.<sup>239</sup> Anna Mae expressed to Mary her sense that while her life was always on the line as a Mi'kmaq woman trying to live in traditional ways, at Wounded Knee she found purpose. She told Mary: "If I'm going to die, I'm going to die. I have to die sometime. It might as well be here for a reason."<sup>240</sup> Banks recalled that Anna Mae, while a small woman at barely five feet tall, had the "heart of a lion."<sup>241</sup> At Wounded Knee, Anna Mae Pictou embraced the radical call to live outside of the power and control of the federal government. In a letter to her sister, Aquash wrote "These white people think this country belongs to them... the whole country changed with only a handful of raggedy-ass pilgrims that came over here in the 1500s. And it can take a handful of raggedy-ass Indians to do the same, and I intend to be one of those raggedy-ass Indians."<sup>242</sup>

What does it mean to stand at Wounded Knee in 1973? In many ways, the decision to occupy Wounded Knee was a way to enact a different sense of time and belonging amongst the participants: to place themselves in the space of their ancestors and to reconnect with their past. Several Oglala Lakota protesters stated that they knew in Wounded Knee that their ancestors' spirits were looking out for them, a sentiment and worldview that denies the finality of the deaths of the Hunkpapa and Miniconjou Lakota in 1890 in the cultural imagination of this new Independent Oglala Nation. In 1890, Wounded Knee was the space where the militarization

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<sup>239</sup> Mary eventually divorced Leonard and went by the name Mary Brave Bird. She is the Author of *Lakota Woman*.

<sup>240</sup>Mary Brave Bird and Richard Erdoes. *Lakota Woman*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1991. Kindle edition. Location 1907

<sup>241</sup> Banks. *Ojibwa Warrior*, 192.

<sup>242</sup> Konigsberg. "Who killed Anna Mae?"

against Indigenous people ended. In 1973, Wounded Knee became the space where the violence against and resistance by Indigenous people became undeniably visible again. This was not occupation of a federal building, an act in line with civil rights-era protests. It was an act that changed the narrative of the space, that added to the simultaneity of stories with an act that showed the Lakota people and culture radically alive in the space of death. That is to say, prior to February 27<sup>th</sup> 1973 Wounded Knee was a space of memorial for the brutality of armed conflict between Indigenous Nations and the Federal government, a memorial to the violence of coloniality. After February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1973 Wounded Knee became a space that showed the continuation of the lives and culture of Indigenous people; the decolonial possibilities of life. These were a people with history (regardless of their position in History), and staging their new nation in Wounded Knee made that history undeniable.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the members of OSCRO (supported by AIM members and other protesters) declared their occupied land within the reservation lands as the Independent Oglala Nation.<sup>243</sup> They declared their freedom from the reservation system and from the United States. It was a statement of sovereignty, an action towards decolonizing their everyday lives. It was also an act that created new borders, which in turn helped to reconstitute their own cultural bonding within the borders of the Independent Oglala Nation. The creation of the initial reservation borders was the result of violence and treaty making. The erosion of the reservation borders between the treaty signing in 1868 and the occupation in 1973 was the result of the covert violence of coloniality of power, in the form of land grabs and assimilationist policies, that parceled land and attempted to terminate (in no uncertain terms) whole cultures. While guns were not fired between 1890 and 1973 at Wounded Knee, through boarding schools and federal

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<sup>243</sup> *Voices from Wounded Knee*. 263.

policy that denied resources, the US government visited insidious harm on the men, women, and children of the Oglala Lakota Nation. By constituting new borders and declaring themselves sovereign the Independent Oglala Nation brought the violence that had been covert back into the open. Within the borders, they changed the terms for the way they lived, reasserting a way of living that was born of a traditional connection to the land. However, their borders and their way of life were under constant attack.

The Independent Oglala Nation maintained a set of protective bunkers surrounding Wounded Knee and those bunkers defined the borders of the Independent Oglala Nation. Outside of that border was a second perimeter of bunkers maintained by the FBI, US Marshalls, and further secured by the BIA police and the GOON squad.<sup>244</sup> Within their borders, they were free to live their lives, in spite of the threat of gunfire. This occupation was both an excavation, and a reassertion of their right to be in the land where their ancestors were shot and buried. By reconstituting their sovereign borders, they made space to embrace their community's traditional practices, to bring back ways of living, ways of knowing, ways of being in the world that had been outlawed and denied them by the same institutions that now surrounded them in bunkers with guns. Within their border, they changed the story of what Wounded Knee meant to them as a people. It was a place to live their lives openly and freely. A space that connected them to their past, and in which they made their present.

Three days after Independent Oglala Nation gave citizenships papers to residents, the community conducted a Ghost Dance, the same dance that was outlawed in 1890.<sup>245</sup> A sacred dance created by a prophet that saw in his vision the end of the white man in the Americas, the

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<sup>244</sup> See Map in *Voices at Wounded Knee*. 71.

<sup>245</sup> *Voices from Wounded Knee*, 264.

Ghost Dance religion was the final provocation that pushed the 7<sup>th</sup> cavalry towards the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. The Prophet Wavoka saw the Ghost Dance as way to work towards a life that was no longer constrained by the colonialism of white and western culture. It saw a future past the United States, when the people who were not from here would again leave. To dance the Ghost Dance at the beginning of a new nation that rejects the constructs, culture, and rule of the United States is to celebrate that vision of decolonial possibilities. It is not the fulfillment of the prophecy, but for the 71 days that the occupation lasted the Independent Oglala Nation was a beginning.

The citizenship of the Independent Oglala Nation represented a direct legacy of the final days of the Indian Wars. At the Ghost Dance, Leonard Crow Dog- whose grandfather remembered and passed down the legacy of the Ghost Dance- both led and taught the dance to the community. Crow Dog believed that the Ghost Dance was misinterpreted in the 1890s. It was not a dance to bring the dead back to life, but rather a dance to bring the old beliefs back to life, to revive their culture.<sup>246</sup> As Mary Crow Bird wrote “For Leonard, dancing in a circle holding hands was bringing back the sacred hoop—to feel, holding on to the hand of your brother and sister, the rebirth of Indian unity, feel it with your flesh, through your skin. He also thought that reviving the Ghost Dance would be making a link to our past, to the grandfathers and grandmothers of long ago.”<sup>247</sup> Crow Dog found a place within their borders that was not in any fire lines, and for four days and nights he brought the people together in the Ghost Dance. When he addressed the community, he told them "We're going to unite together, no matter what tribe we are. We won't say, 'I'm a different tribe,' or, 'He's a black man, he's a white man.' We're not

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<sup>246</sup> Brave Bird. *Lakota Woman*. Location 2144.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid, Location 2144.

going to have this white man's attitude."<sup>248</sup> The Ghost Dance was intended to reconstitute identity, and deny racial barriers defined and stratified by the legacy of colonialism. If you were there and you were partaking, you were a part of the community, and you belonged. Together members of the community danced the Ghost Dance, a dance that was prohibited and exterminated, for the first time in eighty years. A snow storm fell on the Ghost Dance, but it didn't stop them from dancing.

Within the bunker-defined borders, life continued. Mary Crow Dog gave birth on April 11th with the help of Annie Mae, Ellen Moves Camp, and other elders. The first baby in the new nation. Not long after their arrival at Wounded Knee, Annie Mae Pictou and Nogeeshik Aquash were inspired to get married in a traditional ceremony. The traditional Mi'kmaq ceremony was lost to Anna Mae, but the traditional wedding ceremony survived within the Lakota communities. The notices that announced the wedding stated "On this evening, the twelfth day of April, the forty-fifth day of freedom for the residents of Wounded Knee, Independent Oglala Nation, the first ceremony of matrimony, between a man, Noo-ge-Shik, and a woman, Annie Mae, will take place in the trading post."<sup>249</sup> During the ceremony the community gathered around the couple in a circle. In keeping with the traditional ceremony the circle burned cedar, passed a peace-pipe around the circle, and then cut "ninety flesh offerings...from the arms of the couple's eight attendants... made in honor of Mother Earth."<sup>250</sup> Spiritual Leader Nicholas Black

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<sup>248</sup>Ibid, Location.2153

<sup>249</sup> *Voices from Wounded Knee*. 164.

<sup>250</sup> Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior*. 190-191; Brand. *Life and Death of Anna Mae*. 64; *Voices from Wounded Knee* 164-165.



Elk conducted the ceremony. A birth and a marriage ceremony are both promises made to the future of the Independent Oglala Nation, full of possibilities.

Wounded Knee 1973 was not an occupation of all men or all young people. Protesters were all ages, elders to children. There were Vietnam war veterans among those living at Wounded Knee 1973. They laughed, and they sang. They dug trenches and stood guard. Wounded Knee 1973 was a protest of life in the face of imperialist/colonialist power and violence. The decision to live, and live with traditional values that value the work of women and men, that reject the assumptions of colonialism, are daily decolonial acts. The heightened stage of Wounded Knee 1973 made visible the possibility of a decolonial future. Their future would not forget women's roles in traditional society. While often the image associated with Wounded Knee 1973 is an Indigenous man with a gun, the reality of the occupation involved all genders and allowed for the complexity and value of all life. Perhaps a better image would be of Mary Crow Dog carrying her newly born child, accompanied by an elder like Ellen Moves Camp. This would be an image that connects the past with the future. Or the image of Wounded Knee 1973 could be the sacred circle surrounding the newly married couple- the people together, not the single man with a gun. Either of these alternatives, offers possibilities for the future that focus on the culture moving into the future while connected to the past. The Indigenous angry man with the gun is stuck in a cycle of violence, and within an iconology of patriarchal values about masculinity: this image is potentially violent and capable of only anger. Wounded Knee 1973 was more than anger and violence.

I have stated that there is a choreography of protest, building on Susan Leigh Foster's work. The performance of protest at Wounded Knee 1973 is the act of living, of choosing to continue in the face of incredible and undeniable force. At Wounded Knee, the Indigenous

people are still standing, they were still there and still living in a space that is synonymous with the violent death of Indigenous peoples. In the space of Wounded Knee, it is a remarkable survivance for the Independent Oglala Nation to show that they are still standing. It seems simple, but it is a radical and decolonial act to say through their actions and decrees that they are their own people, on their own land, and that they will live their lives without interference. By living radically in this space, they change the narrative from which the Trading Post capitalized. It is no longer just a story of death, but a story of living a life that fundamentally challenges the authority of the state and the colonial structures of power that underlie the state.

What made this occupation different, other than the government's militant response, was the national visibility of Wounded Knee 1973. After the BIA Occupation, journalists were interested in AIM's movements, and they showed up at Wounded Knee to document the interaction. There were tourists to watch Thanksgiving at Plymouth Rock, and DC residents and politicians at the BIA takeover. In Wounded Knee the visibility and public opinion relied on the journalists and media to relay what was happening to a much wider audience. Much Like the first Wounded Knee, this Wounded Knee 1973 gained additional leverage through newspapers, television reporting, and celebrity activists. Among the most sympathetic and remembered moments of public intervention, was Sacheen Littlefeather's delivery of Marlon Brando's refusal of his Academy Award for his performance in *The Godfather*. Brando didn't attend the awards because he was at Wounded Knee. Littlefeather's speech, watched by an academy that was responsible for continually representing Indigenous people in white savior narratives, as savages, or as the last of their kind, is audibly booed. Littlefeather, an Apache woman, selected by Banks and Means, was told by producers of the awards show that she could not give Brando's full

speech.<sup>251</sup> Instead, she improvised the reason Brando would not accept the award as: "the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry... and on television and movie reruns and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee."<sup>252</sup> This support on National television by a well-regarded famous actor helped to boost the visibility of the struggle at Wounded Knee and bring it back to the public's attention a month into the occupation.

The FBI, US Marshalls, and Federal Government initially allowed the press access to Wounded Knee, but as the siege continued, the FBI banned the press from the site. Reporting made clear that public opinion was not supportive of the government's militant response, and the quickest way to end this conflict for the Federal Government was to erase its visibility.<sup>253</sup> Brando's Oscar moment, an act of allyship where he gave his platform to the Red Power movement, was a strategic way for Wounded Knee 1973 to stay in the news. Littlefeather read the full speech to the reporters covering the Oscars, and the *New York Times* printed the text of the speech on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1973. Brando wasn't alone in supporting Wounded Knee; Jane Fonda, Angela Davis, and Johnny Cash also voiced their public support for Wounded Knee. Fonda and Davis visited the occupation. The Congressional Black Caucus also expressed their support for

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<sup>251</sup> Interview with Littlefeather in Neil Diamond and Catherine Bainbridge. *Reel Injun*. Documentary, 2009.

<sup>252</sup> Oscars. *Marlon Brando's Oscar® Win for "The Godfather."* Accessed December 19, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QUacU0I4yU>.

<sup>253</sup> Lucie Moya Melchert. "Wounded Knee, 1973: Consummatory and Instrumental Functions of Militant Discourse." M.A., (University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2000).

<http://search.proquest.com/pitt.idm.oclc.org/docview/230830827/abstract/A1723FDFA90744E5PQ/1>. This thesis examines the way Wounded Knee was discussed in the news.

the protesters. That visibility mattered because it kept the gunfire from becoming a second massacre, it did not prevent the occupation from ending.

The occupation ended on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1973. Throughout the occupation, there was never a single leader from the government assigned to complete negotiations to end the armed conflict. In fact, over the course of 71 days several different politicians were brought in. Each time a new leader arrived, the rules changed. The lack of effective leadership eventually led to increase in arms. In the whole of the armed conflict, there were only two casualties for the Wounded Knee occupants, although many on both sides sustained injuries. From the very beginning, each negotiation and agreement fell through. Means, Crow Dog, and Bad Cob went to Washington, DC to negotiate and that conversation went nowhere as well. Beginning on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the federal government brought in armored police carriers (APCs, which look like tanks) and as the days turned to months, those carriers increased and gradually moved closer and closer to the borders of the Independent Oglala Nation. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the government utilized snipers to shoot into Wounded Knee, and on April 17<sup>th</sup>, they fatally shot Frank Clearwater in a chair through a bunker window less than a day after he arrived in Wounded Knee.<sup>254</sup> On April 27<sup>th</sup>, amidst firefight a bullet struck and killed Buddy Lamont. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Trading Post burned. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Independent Oglala Nation and government negotiators agreed to terms in a stand-down. On May 8<sup>th</sup> the occupation ended, and the arraignments began. Anna Mae and Nogeeshik left several days before, as did many of the other protesters. When the borders of the Independent Oglala Nation fell, there was nothing but the U.S. system of justice, and that system stated that this group of people were criminals.

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<sup>254</sup>*Voices From Wounded Knee*, 264

### **3.7 ANNA MAE AQUASH'S DEATH IN THE AFTERMATH OF WOUNDED KNEE: A DECOLONIAL FAILURE**

After the BIA occupation, the FBI marked AIM as a terrorist organization, after Wounded Knee 1973 the FBI pursued AIM members individually as criminals. During the occupation, AIM members in Rapid City founded the Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offensive Committee (WKLDOC) to assist with legal issues brought against AIM during the occupation. FBI and South Dakota police arrested over 400 people for their actions at Wounded Knee, resulting in 275 trials across federal, state, and tribal courts. WKLDOC's defense efforts led to a 92.3% acquittal and dismissal rate in an incredibly massive and complex legal battle across multiple jurisdictions.<sup>255</sup> Dennis Banks and Russell Means faced charges together in their case *United States vs. Banks and Means* tried in St. Paul, Minnesota. As John William Sayer describes in his account and analysis of their trial, Means and Banks used the trial and, by extension, the U.S. legal system to put the treatment of Indigenous peoples and the violation of treaty rights on trial through their court case.<sup>256</sup> Banks and Means were acquitted of all charges due in large part to governmental incompetence, and the exposure of the corrupt and vicious actions of FBI agents in and around the Wounded Knee occupation.

The legal trials and tribulations of AIM did not end with the Wounded Knee charges. Chief Prosecutor of South Dakota, William Janklow, was relentless in his persecution of AIM

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<sup>255</sup> *Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee Records*. Minnesota Historical Society. Finding Guide.

<sup>256</sup> John William Sayer, *Ghost Dancing the Law: The Wounded Knee Trials*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.

leaders. For Janklow it was a personal as well as professional vendetta. He was a former chief prosecutor on Rosebud Reservation, where during his tenure it is likely that he raped his fifteen-year-old babysitter Jacinta Eagle Deer.<sup>257</sup> During Janklow's political campaign for Attorney General of South Dakota in 1974, Banks helped Eagle Dear to press charges through the Rosebud tribal courts. Janklow refused to acknowledge the tribal legal authority, and the Rosebud courts convicted him of rape in absentia (since he declined to appear) in 1974, disbaring him from practicing law on the reservation. The FBI and BIA also looked into the charges, since Janklow was running for office, but dismissed them. The federal legal system protected Janklow. Janklow took Banks' assistance of Eagle Deer as a personal attack. After winning his election as Attorney General, he used his position to prosecute Banks for his role in the riots that occurred at the Custer City courts during a Wounded Knee related trial in early February 1973. AIM members were in possession of a few guns when the riots broke out, and a South Dakota court convicted Banks. Janklow pushed for and attained the maximum sentence for possession of firearms without intent to kill: fifteen years imprisonment. Jacinta was killed in a hit-and-run accident on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1975; no one has ever been arrested or accused in her death, and her rape charges never reached a U.S. court. After the Custer charges, Banks did not report to the prison, and he became a fugitive for the next decade. Attorney General Janklow was quoted with saying that the solution to the American Indian Movement problem "put a gun to the AIM leaders' heads and pull the trigger."<sup>258</sup> Should Banks serve his sentence, it was very likely that he would die in jail. In light of the risk to Banks safety within South Dakota. The state of California granted him asylum. Marlon Brando and Jane Fonda helped support his petition for

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<sup>257</sup> Hendricks, *The Unquiet Grave*. 145-147

<sup>258</sup> Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. 107

asylum, and the governor approved it. Janklow ran successfully for governor of South Dakota on a campaign promise that he would return Banks to South Dakota.

Wounded Knee 1973 was a decolonial act, full of potential for the future. In the aftermath of the occupation, the federal court system and Wilson's administration reasserted the fundamental tenants of the coloniality of power in Pine Ridge Reservation. The Wilson administration's legitimacy was backed by the BIA. Pine Ridge Reservation post-Wounded Knee 1973 was a dangerous place. The GOON squad continued to thrive. People died, and Wilson's administration did not follow protocol and call on the FBI to investigate. For example, Jacinta's mother Delphine died at the hands of a drunken GOON squad member; the courts excused his actions on account of his drunken state at the time, and no trial occurred.

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Leonard Peltier and several other AIM members were camped out at Jumping Bull Ranch on Pine Ridge Reservation. Two FBI agents, Jack Coler and Ronald Williams, followed a red truck believed to belong to a young man who had stolen a pair of leather cowboy boots. The truck did not, in fact, belong to their suspect, and the presence of FBI in a space that was housing AIM members was suspicious. A gun fight ensued. The two FBI agents called for back-up, and GOON squad, local police, and BIA officers joined them. There were over forty people on the Jumping Bull compound. When the gunfire ended, Coler and Williams and Jumping Bull resident Joe Stuntz were dead. Of the forty people camping at the Jumping Bull residence, the FBI only prosecuted AIM members Leonard Peltier, Robert Robideau, and Darrell Butler. The FBI took the deaths of two of their agents seriously, and pushed hard for a conviction and trial. The FBI was able to persuade the judge at Peltier's trial in 1977 in North Dakota to suppress information about FBI mishandling of evidence in other cases related to AIM, a key aspect of the defense for Robideau and Butler. The FBI's work around

AIM in South Dakota was sloppy and often violated procedure. Robideau and Butler were both acquitted as acting in self-defense. Peltier fled the country after a judge issued a warrant for his arrest, and he crossed the border into Canada. At one point Peltier was one of the FBI's top ten most wanted. The FBI were able to extradite Peltier after receiving testimony from Myrtle Poor Bear who claimed to be both his girlfriend and to have witnessed Peltier shooting Coler and Williams. In reality, Poor Bear and Peltier had never met, and Poor Bear's testimony was false. In 1977 Peltier was convicted to two consecutive life sentences, which he is currently serving. Since the Freedom of Information Act has released FBI files, it is evident that there was and continues to be a lot of doubt as to Peltier's guilt in the death of these agents.

The Jumping Bull Shooting in 1975 added to the anxieties and tensions on Pine Ridge Reservation and throughout the American Indian Movement. Peltier and Banks were both fugitives. The FBI, the South Dakota Attorney General, the GOON squad, Dick Wilson's administration, and the BIA were all either aggressively seeking the end of AIM or at extreme tension with activists. What had begun as a protest movement to protect and uphold treaty rights and tribal sovereignty had turned into a witch hunt, with many members-- including Anna Mae Pictou Aquash-- taking on false names and going into hiding. Federal pressure changed their mode of existence from heightened visibility as activists to survival through attempts at invisibility.

Adding to the external pressure on AIM, was the internal issue of informants. The revelation of Douglass Durham-- Banks' trusted head of security-- as an FBI informant filled the movement with suspicion. Durham worked to undermine the movement from within, by adding to Banks' paranoia while distancing Banks from other leaders and the general membership. Banks sent Durham and Aquash together to California to raise funds and support for AIM from



their supporters in Hollywood. It was during this period, under an assumed name, that Aquash became friends with the Cree singer-songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie. In the summer of 1974, Aquash had split from Nogeeshik after several violent episodes. She and Banks began an affair, which tainted opinions about her in the eyes of AIM members, especially with a group of influential Lakota women known as the Pie Patrol. Banks was common-law married to Oglala Lakota Darlene Kamook Nichols, which solidified his connection to Pine Ridge Reservation. However, he was known to have affairs and Nichols was his third wife. Banks sent Aquash to California in part to keep an eye on Durham, whom he had begun to suspect. Aquash's affair with Banks and her proximity to Durham in the year before he was outed as an informant was enough to cast misgivings among some of AIM's leadership, especially the Pie Patrol members, about the possibility of Aquash's status as an informant.

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Aquash was with Peltier, Dennis and Kamook Banks, Russ Redner, and Kenneth Loud Hawk traveling in a two-car caravan in Oregon.<sup>259</sup> Somehow their van was intercepted. Dennis Banks and Leonard Peltier were able to escape, but Kamook (who was pregnant), Aquash, Redner, and Loud Hawk were all taken to jail. The FBI claimed that they had two anonymous informants who had reported the make of the car and whereabouts of Peltier and Banks during the FBI's manhunt for the two fugitives. Senior AIM leadership, living in the midst of COINTELPRO paranoia, made an assumption that one of the informants came from inside the van. Their suspicions narrowed to Aquash. In reality, the informant could have been any of a large group of people. Peltier and Banks had not been covert in their actions, they threw

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<sup>259</sup> For an account of what happened in Oregon see Kenneth S. Stern, *Loud Hawk: The United States versus the American Indian Movement*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. Chapters 1-3

parties and gave speeches before their journey through Oregon.<sup>260</sup> In Hendrick's account of Aquash's death, he writes that she told a reporter who interviewed her in the Oregon jail that "If they take me back to South Dakota. I'll be murdered."<sup>261</sup> She wrote her sister from the jail that "as soon as I return to South Dakota I will be harassed. I am sure I will be sent up...I have the support of the American Indian Movement behind me and I have no worries."<sup>262</sup> Aquash was concerned about the racist population and court system in South Dakota, where she was wanted to stand trial. She thought, like Banks, that her status as a member of AIM would put her in danger in South Dakota jails. Perhaps she also should have been concerned about the American Indian Movement.

Police transported Aquash to Pierre, South Dakota on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1975 to be tried on weapon charges from an early morning raid on the Crow Dog residence on the Rosebud reservation in early September. The judge for Aquash's case was Robert Mehridge, a justice from the Virginia courts imported to assist with the backlog of cases from Wounded Knee. Aquash missed her earlier court date, due in part to a miscommunication between her and the Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offence Committee. Mehridge believed her and released her. On November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1975 Aquash again failed to show for her court date. No one could find her. She was a fugitive again.<sup>263</sup> Her escape was puzzling. Likely, she would have been acquitted of charges, since that was the judge's verdict for her co-defendants Nilak and Dino Butler. Instead,

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<sup>260</sup> Hendricks, *The Unquiet Grave*. 226

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>263</sup> Hendricks. *The Unquiet Grave*.227.

she slipped away from the law, a few days before her indictment for the Oregon incident. Her ability to escape the law made her suspicious in the eyes of AIM leaders.

Word came from higher up that Aquash needed to be interrogated by AIM members to decide if she was indeed an informant. In early December, AIM members transported her from Denver back to Thelma Rios's home in South Dakota. Thelma Rios and others interrogated her for hours. On December 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>, early in the morning, Theda Nelson Clark with John Boy Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud drove to the far edge of Pine Ridge Reservation to the top of a cliff. As Aquash prayed, John Boy Graham shot her in the back of the head, and then they pushed her off the side of the cliff where she died. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, a farmer found her dead body and the FBI were brought in to deal with her death. They initially did not identify her as Anna Mae Aquash, despite the outstanding warrant for her arrest from both the Oregon and Rosebud cases. They titled her body a Jane Doe, and the autopsy declared she died of exposure. The FBI agents cut off her hands to send them to Washington, D.C. for identification. They buried her in an unmarked grave.

Rumors of the possibility of Aquash's death quickly reached her daughters in Nova Scotia. Aquash had been an excellent correspondent, and her daughters had not heard from her for several months. They feared the worst. They came to Pine Ridge, exhumed and identified her corpse and had a second autopsy conducted. In this second autopsy, the coroner properly examined the gunshot to the back of her head. It was clear that Anna Mae Aquash was murdered. The full story of her death would not be revealed for another thirty years. In 1975, and for years after, both the FBI and AIM members faced accusations of blame for her death, and those allegations caused instability in AIM's leadership structure. Aquash's death solidified the mistrust and doubt that the COINTELPRO policies of the FBI had introduced into AIM's culture. Anna

Mae Aquash was not an informant, and the FBI and AIM cleared her name in the following years.

Why was it Aquash that died? There were others close to the top, and close to Doug Durham. Women made up over half of AIM, but they were not the visible half. Anna Mae, however, was one of the few women at the top and one of the few who was visible. To many of the Lakota women in South Dakota, Aquash was a foreigner, and they were suspicious of her. The Pie Patrol, a group of Lakota women who were more concerned with being in the spotlight than the decolonial work of the movement, were especially suspicious of Aquash's motives. The Pie Patrol included Thelma Rios, Madonna Thunder Hawk, Lorelei DeCora Means, and Theda Nelson Clark. Rios, Thunder Hawk, and Clark are all implicated in Aquash's death. To these Lakota, she was a Mi'kmaq woman from Nova Scotia, whose affair risked the stability of AIM and the Lakota's position of power within AIM. The American Indian Movement consisted of membership from many different tribes, and old tensions between former enemies lingered within AIM. The irony of the Pie Patrol's intervention is that it was Aquash's death, and not her affair, that caused instability in AIM's leadership.

Coloniality does not just rest at the intersection of race, place, and wealth. Quijano and Mignolo both point to multiple intersections of identity that impact the subjugation of people who do not match the top of the power structure, and the colonial power structure is inherently male. Internalized colonialism, which sometimes manifests itself in assimilationist behaviors, also plays out at the intersection of sex and gender. Aquash divorced her first husband and then separated from her second. She and Dennis Banks had an affair. While I don't mean to comment one way or the other on her sexuality, or to attribute to her a sexual agency that may or may not have been her intent, her behavior violated the internalized morality that women in colonized

society cannot break. Never mind that Dennis Banks, who was known to have many affairs, also violated this moral code in undertaking their affair. Aquash's violation and subsequent blame and punishment by other women shows the real dangers of not including gender dynamics into a decolonial activist framework.

While most traditional governance in North American Indigenous societies is gynocratic, and is “never patriarchal,”<sup>264</sup> western governance, and the Government of the United States is inherently patriarchal. The role of women is secondary and subservient to the roles of men. Within AIM, while the leadership and movement worked to decolonize the relationship to the state and reaffirm Indigenous people's lives as worthy, it was still a fairly patriarchal movement privileging the visibility and value of the male leaders over the work, lives, and leadership of the women in the movement. To reiterate Margo Thunderbird's quote in the introduction: AIM “wanted to present an image, and the angry Indian man was better than angry Indian women.”<sup>265</sup> The women were certainly a huge part of the movement, but they were largely invisible behind figures like Dennis Banks and Russell Means. Why was the “Angry Indian Man” better than the “Angry Indian Woman”? Did it need to be male to be taken seriously by the US government? Were men's lives inherently more worthy of being listened to than women's? This statement carries the weight of patriarchal values with it. When only the men are allowed to be visibly angry, there is not and cannot be equal participation, visibility, and leadership. Several leaders were on record with homophobic remarks. Patriarchal values were reiterated within the movement. To decolonize and revolutionize requires taking on the gendered aspects of coloniality that have been assimilated and internalized.

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<sup>264</sup> Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 2.

<sup>265</sup> Konigsberg, “Who Killed Anna Mae?”

Maria Lugones critiques Mignolo and Quijano for the lack of accounting for gender and sexuality within the framework of the coloniality of power. She points to an idea of the colonized mind, something that Allen defines in *The Sacred Hoop*, as changing the dynamic of gender roles and sexual relationships in Indigenous communities. Lugones writes:

It is important for us to think about these collaborations as we think of the question of indifference to the struggles of women in racialized communities against multiple forms of violence against them and the communities. The white colonizer constructed a powerful inside force as colonized men were co-opted into patriarchal roles. Allen details the transformations of the Iroquois and Cherokee gynocracies and the role of Indian men in the passage to patriarchy. The British took Cherokee men to England and gave them an education in the ways of the English. These men participated during the time of the Removal Act.<sup>266</sup>

Women's displacement within colonized Indigenous nations became part of the education system, the westernizing/civilizing of their cultures were not complete until women (and by extension non-gender/sexuality conforming two-spirit people) no longer had power in their society. Women's traditional roles were eroded and forgotten; the United States certainly would not recognize an Indigenous woman treating with the government on behalf of her people. By the 1970's, AIM demonstrates that tribal cultures had, to certain extent, internalized the coloniality of gender. The problems of western gender roles ran across racial groups and decolonization needed to confront gendered power dynamics as well as treaty laws, education, and sovereignty.

Anna Mae Aquash had too many strikes against her with the women in South Dakota. They mistrusted her, and they punished her for being a woman who might take power from them. They punished her for her affair, while Banks remained above it. Aquash worked for Indigenous education and language renewal, and for the movement's goals. What the Pie Patrol saw in her was a woman who had gained power that they had not, who might take Dennis Banks away from

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<sup>266</sup> Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 200.

their Lakota comrade Kamook Nichols. The internalized colonization of gender roles privileges the life and secrecy of their male leader/warrior (Banks was on the run at the time) over the life of one of their women warriors (who was also on the run). The FBI added to this tension through the provocation of their COINTELPRO work to mark her as an informant, and that suspicion was all the justification AIM leadership needed to decide that she should be interrogated and then shot. Douglass Durham was also interrogated and was also found guilty, but he went free. Aquash, who was innocent, was brutally murdered because she was a woman uniquely visible. For a movement's decolonial work to last, it must include decolonizing the differential power in gender relationship established by colonial values. In the hope that was born at Wounded Knee 1973, a free and decolonial state, there was room for women to be warriors. Aquash's life, which became so visible and also so lonely as a woman warrior in the movement, ran counter to the hegemonic ideals of coloniality of power.

The Independent Oglala Nation was a beginning, and a rejection of colonial structures of governing power. It was not an ending. Decolonizing, like allyship, is a constant process of choosing to do differently. It is not a switch that goes from on to off, and Aquash's death shows that if the work does not include the the coloniality of gender relationships (and to extend also queer/third gender people), then it will never be really decolonial. It is not enough to excavate the history in relationship to the land, if that relationship does not include all kinds of people. Anna Mae's role as a woman with power, actual or illusionary, left her isolated from and persecuted by women who should and could have been her allies. The idea that they had the right to end her life, to take justice into their own hands, builds from a place in which the life of an Indigenous woman is worth inherently less than an Indigenous man, and both of those are worth

less than a white man. Anna Mae, who was remarkable in her visible-ness, became a target for both the FBI and for internalized colonial values within AIM.

In the decades since Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's murder, she has become an icon and martyr for the Red Power movement. Buffy Sainte-Marie remembers her in songs spanning two decades and covered by the Indigo Girls. Playwright and performer Monique Mojica (Kuna and Rappahannock) makes an ode to her in her 1990 piece *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*. Yvette Nolan wrote her 1998 play *Anna Mae's Movement* entirely about the relationship between Aquash, Banks, and Durham. She is often mentioned in conjunction with movements that call for Leonard Peltier's freedom. Aquash's daughters and sister called for justice in her murder for four decades. They made documentaries. Her death made her famous. It was also her death that helped to contribute to the fall and split of AIM between the Bellecourts and Banks and Means. While the FBI didn't kill her, her death was a turning point in their goal of stopping the movement's ability to create lasting change.

It was my goal in this chapter to focus on the events of Anna Mae Aquash's life, the stands that she took, that made her visible and vulnerable in the first place. Her death has overwhelmed what she stood for in life, but that doesn't mean that what she worked for fell by the wayside. The Boston Indian Council continued after Aquash left for Wounded Knee in 1973. Public Television station WGBH did several interviews in the mid to late 1970's with Boston Indian Council leadership, showing that the school movement was thriving in their community center. The principals that AIM fought for, and marched on Washington for, are embedded in the work that the Boston Indian Council did. The Aquinnah Wampanoag of Gay Head received federal recognition in 1987. The Mashpee Wampanoag began their case for federal recognition in 1974; they received federal recognition and the benefits that come with it in 2007. Aquash



may not be standing with them today as an elder of the council, her spirit stands with them the education, language heritage, and federal recognition and sovereignty that she worked for continues and grows with every passing year.

## **4.0 GIVING VOICE TO POCAHONTAS IN THE 1990S: DECOLONIAL DRAMATURGY IN INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S PLAYWRITING.**

### **4.1 INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S DECOLONIAL DRAMATURGY**

“He said, ‘it’s time for the women to pick up their medicine in order for the people to continue.’ She asked him, ‘what is the women’s medicine?’ The only answer he found was, ‘The women are the medicine. So we must heal the women’.”

- Art Solomon

“A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is done, no matter how brave their warriors nor how strong its weapons.”

- Traditional Cheyenne saying<sup>267</sup>

Monique Mojica uses the two quotes above at the beginning and end of her play, and they encompass the central theme of her play *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* and the work of Indigenous women’s playwriting. Mojica uses a generic character named “Contemporary Woman #1” to speak both lines, the first in the second scene, and the second ends the play. These two quotes speak to the work that Indigenous women artists took upon themselves in order to heal themselves, their communities, and their audiences through their playwriting and performances. By focusing their performances and plays on Indigenous women’s lives, these

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<sup>267</sup> Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* in *Staging Coyote’s Dream: An Anthology of First Nations Drama in English*. edited by Ric Knowles and Monique Mojica, Toronto, Ont.: Playwrights Canada Press, 2003. 140,169.

artists by extension include their own lives in the narrative, and show how integral women and women's work are to the cultural and spiritual life and survival of their communities.

Monique Mojica is one of several Indigenous women performance artists and playwrights who gained acclaim in the 1990s, a political moment of globalization, neoliberalism, and newly renegotiated trade borders. In this chapter, I use Monique Mojica's play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (from this point on referred to as *PP&BS*) as a spine to articulate the political project, the political moment, and the decolonial dramaturgical work that these women perform. I include Spiderwoman Theater, Hortensia and Elvira Colorado, Marie Clements, Judy Lee Oliva, and Victorian Nalani Kneubuhl, Jesusa Rodríguez, and Astrid Hadad as influences and examples within this study. Their performance practices as writers, and often also performers, accomplish many goals; I focus on three aspects in particular: first on the decolonial potential in their dramaturgy; second on the recurring project of re-voicing historic Indigenous female figures whose voices were either left out or not recorded in the archive through their plays and performances; and third on the connective tissue throughout these plays that remaps a hemispheric Indigenous America beyond and despite the politicized national borders that divide the nation based on colonial projects.

## **4.2 DECOLONIAL DRAMATURGY**

*Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* is an excellent example of what I refer to as decolonial dramaturgy. Dramaturgy has multiple meanings, and I'm using the term dramaturgy here in its

original context to refer to the way a play is put together.<sup>268</sup> Western classical dramaturgy traces its roots to Aristotle and the unities of time and space. The rules of well-made plays, of realism, and what we think of as modern playwriting primarily trace their structures through this Aristotelian dramaturgy. Playwrights from Eugene O'Neil to Shakespeare to Sophocles follow Western dramaturgy, focusing on the principles, to different extents, that Aristotle initially outlines in his poetics. Aristotle's dramatic theory boils down to six major elements: plot, character, theme, language, rhythm, and spectacle. While all performance evokes some of these elements, the construction and playmaking process that Mojica and other artists in this chapter employ rejects Aristotelian elements as the authority on how to structure a meaningful play.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Magda Romanska, "Introduction" in *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*. Romanska, Magda, ed. Florence, US: Routledge, 2014. 1-15.

<sup>269</sup> That is not to say that only Indigenous women reject Aristotelian elements. Many groups have come to reject the primacy of Aristotle's principles, among them: feminist and queer theatre (for example Jill Dolan and Peggy Shaw. *A Menopausal Gentleman: The Solo Performances of Peggy Shaw*. Triangulations: Lesbian/Gay/Queer Theatre/Drama/ Performance. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011)); latinx theatre (see for example: Svich, Caridad, and Maria Teresa Marrero. *Out of the Fringe: Contemporary Latina/Latino Theatre and Performance*. Theatre Communications Group, 2000.); Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal, Theater of the Oppressed. New York: Urizen Books, 1979); African-American Theatre (See for example: Philip C. Kolin, ed. Suzan-Lori Parks: Essays on the Plays and Other Works. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2010), among others. Many Asian theatre traditions, like Japan's Noh and Kabuki, and Indian Drama grew out of traditions that were never influenced by Aristotle. (See Smethurst, Mae J. *The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami: A Comparative Study of Greek Tragedy and Nō*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989.; and Ketaki Datta "Dramaturgy in Indian Theater: a closer view" in *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*. Magda Romanska, editor. Florence, US: Routledge, 2014. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 10 March 2017. 94-98)

Rejecting Western authority towards history, ways of living, and ways of governing (as I have pointed out in other chapters) are a significant aspect of decolonial action. These rejections is the beginning of a decolonial dramaturgy and not the whole of it. I lean on Walter Mignolo's work on decolonial possibilities and also on Emma Pérez's work on what she calls the "Decolonial Imaginary" in Chicano/a culture.<sup>270</sup> A historian, Pérez's project locates the decolonial process as a kaleidoscopic space where people who are oppressed through colonial power structures negotiate their status as other as a liminal identity, becoming "not simply oppressed or victimized," but rather existing within an imaginary that allows for a multiplicity of identities.<sup>271</sup> Pérez points out that "different, fragmented, imagined, nonlinear, nonteleological" elements comprise the decolonial imaginary and that histories written in the Western tradition exclude these elements as unworthy.<sup>272</sup> While Perez is writing about how to write a Chicana history, I'd offer that these elements – the different, the fragments, the imagined, the non-linear structure, and the nonteleological – are also aspects of a decolonial dramaturgy, because playmaking at its most basic utilizes the imagination to act out stories. That is the imagination made real, if only for an ephemeral moment. What Perez points to is also a means of creating an artistic decolonial representation of complex personhood, pushing through the oft-performed stereotypes that uphold colonial imaginings.

Mojica, a member of the Kuna and Rappahannock tribes, writes about her process creating *PP&TBS* in a talk and subsequent essay titled "Ethnostress" that she gave at the Native

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<sup>270</sup> Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary : Writing Chicanas Into History*. (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1999).

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid, XIV.

American Women's Playwright Archive in 1997. Her essay introduces the concept of "Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder," which she coins to explain the way that society makes her feel as though being an artist and being an Indigenous woman is an "either/or" problem. She asserts that instead her identity is a "both/and" condition, and that "we are greater than the sum of our parts."<sup>273</sup> Mojica studied theatre in school and was trained in European and American styles of acting and playwriting. Within this training, she felt limited by a dramatic literature that did not represent her story, and roles that did were far removed from her lived experience. There was no "Native Theatre." This absence was especially hard in the 1970's, and Mojica left her studies to join the Red Power protest movement because she felt as though her artistic pursuits were not doing enough for her community.

While she cites value in the work of the classical dramatic cannon, Mojica articulates the psychic damage of this kind of training, saying: "It is when the "dead white men" are held up as the "only" and the "best," "The fathers of all theatre" and the exclusivity of the canon of great literature is used to uphold a status quo that includes the continued annihilation of the world's Indigenous people that I begin to have a bit of a problem."<sup>274</sup> What she articulates here is the ways in which the western classical canon (i.e. white European, and white European-descended and male), and western classical acting training, affirm the status of Indigenous people as "without history" and to push that further "without culture."<sup>275</sup> As with history, it is not that the

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<sup>273</sup> Monique Mojica Papers. essay "Ethnostress." Native American Women Playwrights Archive and The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries. 12.

<sup>274</sup> Mojica "Ethnostress"

<sup>275</sup> Western acting styles, built to suit the Aristotelian mode of drama, rely first and foremost upon the idea of mimesis: the perfect imitation/representation of reality. Stanislavski acting training, which is at the root of most

Indigenous peoples don't have a history or a sustained cultural practice; rather, these methods and stories are not recognized in schools of training and textbooks as valuable. Acting, asking a human being to take on and enact the life of another, is an empathetic process. To absent Indigenous voices from a canon of text means that the training process continually absents those stories and lives from acting training. Actors are not asked to understand, empathize, and enact the lives of Indigenous peoples in a training program in the same way that they are asked to understand and enact Oedipus or Hamlet. The absencing of voices from the canon – including minorities, women's voices, and texts in translation from around the world – limits the imagination and is evidence of the colonality of power in academic valuation.

Instead of trying to see herself through other texts, Mojica and other Indigenous artists started to experiment and create their own work to perform. Mojica cites a 1969 speech from Floyd Kiva New, one of the co-founders of the Institute of American Indian Arts, as key to understanding her own process creating an Indigenous theatrical art form. New writes:

We believe that an exciting American Indian theatre can be evolved out of the framework of Indian traditions. we think this evolution must come from the most sensitive approaches imaginable in order not to misuse or cheapen the original nature of Indian forms, most of which are closely tied to religion....Indian theatre cannot be developed

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American acting training, is based on this principle. Mimetic representation and acting training is a Western concept and not essential to Indigenous epistemologies. See: Michael T. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge, 1993. For a discussion of pre-contact/post-contact Nahuatl understandings of representation see Silvermoon and Michael Ennis. "The View of Empire from *Atelptl*: Nahau Historical and Global Imagination" in *Rereading the Black Legend : The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, Editors. Chicago, US: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

overnight, but will come only as a result of an educational process in which Indian artists are created who can then make their own statements. To understand this point fully, one must acknowledge the fact that no pure traditional form of Indian theatre presently exists—one must be created.<sup>276</sup>

New's statement is a clarion call and a blueprint for the emergence of Indigenous theatrical forms that emerged in 1980's and 1990's. Indigenous artists, like Mojica, were taught traditional theatrical methods and then evolved their practice to create a new form, a new Indigenous theatre. This new Indigenous theatre is deeply influenced by the theatrical work of Native American Theatre Ensemble (formed in 1972) and Spiderwoman Theater (formed in 1975). Both of these groups were borne in part from the embrace of Indigenous culture's value during the Red Power movement, as referenced in the previous chapter.

While Mojica trained in the western canon of theatre, her work was also deeply influenced by training with Spiderwoman Theater. Spiderwoman Theater had a direct hand in Mojica's *PP&TBS*, Artistic Director Muriel Miguel directed the 1990 production. Muriel Miguel is also Mojica's aunt. Miguel initially formed Spiderwoman Theatre as part of a grant to create a piece about women and violent relationships in 1976. Miguel's training and performance background includes membership as a performer with The Open Theatre; she was also a member of the feminist theatre collectives in New York city in the 1970s. Miguel brought together a group of women including her two sisters, Lisa Mayo and Gloria Miguel (all Kuna-Rappahannock), to create the piece *Women In Violence*.<sup>277</sup> From this first production Muriel

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<sup>276</sup> Floyd Kiva New cited in Mojica's "Ethnostress" in *Footpaths & Bridges: Voices from the Native American Women Playwrights Archive*. Shirley Huston-Findley and Rebecca Howard, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.) 14-15.

<sup>277</sup> Spiderwoman Papers. Native American Women Playwrights Archive and The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries



Miguel and her sisters founded Spiderwoman Theater to create and present theatre experiences where “Indigenous, women’s and arts communities can come together to examine and discuss their cultural, social and political concerns.”<sup>278</sup>

Beginning with *Women In Violence*, Spiderwoman Theater created a method of devising works that they call “Storyweaving.” They explain the basis of their name and process, stating:

We take our name from Spiderwoman, the Hopi goddess of creation who was the first to create designs and teach her people to weave. In her designs a flaw was always woven in to allow her spirit to find its way out and be free. We call on her inspiration in the development of our working technique—STORYWEAVING—which is creating designs and weaving stories with words and movement.<sup>279</sup>

Stories and storytelling are integral to Indigenous cultures, and they are self-sustaining and self-actualizing acts in continuing cultural legacies. Their process begins by sharing stories, personal and cultural, and, in doing so, creating a community within their ensemble. Jill Carter elaborates that Spiderwoman’s process of Story-weaving is a process of becoming and that it corresponds to a wide range of Indigenous literature with themes of finding self within community, which Carter calls an act of survivance.<sup>280</sup> Survivance, as theorized by Gerald Vizenor, is centered on fortifying old and telling new stories that build community and are acts of resistance to colonial/imperial projects that work to absent Indigenous stories and cultures.<sup>281</sup> Carter theorizes that story, storytelling, and Spiderwoman’s process of creation are acts of cultural survivance

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<sup>278</sup> “Mission”.*Spiderwoman Theater Website*.

<sup>279</sup> “Method of Working” Native American Women Playwrights Archive and The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries

<sup>280</sup> Jill L. Carter, “Repairing the Web: Spiderwoman’s Children Staging the New Human Being.” PhD, Graduate Centre for Study of Drama University of Toronto, 2010. 10-11

<sup>281</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty : Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, (Lincoln, US: Bison Books, 2009.)

and that they are acts of doing and not of telling, making this cultural practice the beginning of an Indigenous rooted performance process.

Spiderwoman Theater asserts that “in the Native World, storytelling is an element of oral tradition used to preserve sacred knowledge, the practices of a people, and origin stories. By its nature, storytelling revisited the past but also had meaning in the present.”<sup>282</sup> Throughout this dissertation I’ve pointed to ways that Indigenous practice changes the nature of time, from linear to simultaneous, and opens a way to connect to the past, a past that has been distanced through cultural traumas. These storytelling methods are then a means of both creating community and a way to heal. This is supported by the way that the sisters talk about what storytelling is for them: “Storytelling begins there about who you are, and then who you are in the family stories. as part of the nation. AND THEN where that nation is the community, that is also part of storytelling, and then where in that WHOLE community is in the world. And that’s circles upon circles upon circles.”<sup>283</sup> Story-weaving pushes the storytelling process to address these layers of identity and interconnections, creating a work that is for themselves, for their Indigenous audience, and for the non-Indigenous audience as well.

These performances are acts of survivance specifically because of the coloniality of power that has decimated Indigenous cultures over the past 500 years. Mojica calls the treatment

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<sup>282</sup> Akwesasne Notes New Series Volume 1 #3/4 in Spiderwoman Theatre Papers, NAWPA and Havighurst Special Collections. 133

<sup>283</sup> Spiderwoman Theater papers. NAWPA and William Havighurst Special Collections.

of Indigenous people in North America a “holocaust of aboriginals.”<sup>284</sup> This is the trauma of “Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder” and what forces acts of survivance. The stakes are life and death. Mojica says that she has come to a reality that her “art is [*her*] resistance.”<sup>285</sup> The way she creates art, this decolonial dramaturgy, is her means of surviving, resisting, and ultimately thriving in the face of systemic racism, sexism, and economic disparity. How does one create art when faced with the horrors of trauma? How does one survive and work through stories that are filled with rage and sorrow?

The answer for both Mojica and for Spiderwoman Theater is to move productively through the anger and sorrow through clowning. When working on *Women In Violence* Muriel Miguel describes the anger that propelled the work:

It was during the AIM [American Indian Movement] and I realized how angry I was and I tried to identify it. It was very hard trying to understand my anger that would snap out of nowhere. There was this kind of frustration in walking down the street and being angry at men. I really had to examine it or get killed before it killed me.<sup>286</sup>

Muriel Miguel brought clowning, or, as they sometimes refer to it, the trickster persona, to the forefront of their storytelling process. Working through her anger through clowning, in this case, was a necessary act of survivance. Clowning, as a form, has a long tradition across multiple cultures of using humor to critique cultural practices, of laughing at what would otherwise

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<sup>284</sup> Monique Mojica, “Ethnostress” *Footpaths & Bridges: Voices from the Native American Women Playwrights Archive*. Edited by Shirley Huston-Findley and Rebecca Howard, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.)

<sup>285</sup> Mojica, “Ethnostress” in *Footpaths and Bridges*, 13.

<sup>286</sup>Muriel Miguel qtd in Jill Carter “Processual Encounters of the Transformative Kind” in *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations*. Edited by Deanna Reder and Linda M. Morra. (Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2010). 267-268

destroy us. The practice of the trickster character in Indigenous storytelling is represented by characters like Coyote, Nanabozho, and many others.<sup>287</sup> Clowning works with the process of Storyweaving to create humanized stories. In "Methods of Working," Spiderwoman Theater articulates the necessity of this process: by “using the buffoonery of clowns we weave our personal stories of violence, fear, anger and frustration into the piece, juxtaposing the reality of our own lives with bawdy humor.” Humor allows these women to navigate the troubling aspects of their lives, and it does more than just allow them to survive. Working in this manner creates decolonial possibilities of what the stories of their lives and communities look like beyond the stereotypes in popular culture.

Mojica, trained by her aunts in the Spiderwoman method, points to the Indigenous roots of her clown practice, writing: “in my culture, and in many of the Indigenous cultures of the world, these (Tricksters, Contraries, Sacred Clowns) are the critic. The Clown is a hard critic; even merciless.”<sup>288</sup> Mojica writes that utilizing the trickster character helps to push her pain and anger to and past the point of the absurd.<sup>289</sup> Humor here is a cutting but essential aspect of how to work through difficult subject matter and, to revisit the quote that begins this chapter, to heal

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<sup>287</sup> Indigenous cultures have a wide range of of trickster figures, but the most common in Coyote who is featured in the stories of the Crow, Yaima, Salish, Pauite, Zuni, Pueblo, and Northern Pueblo (and others, this is by no means a comprehensive list). Nanabozho (Anishinaabe) is a trickster figure who can assume human and rabbit forms and was sent to earth to teach the human beings. Iktomi is a similar figure to Nanabozho from the Lakota, but takes on a spider form. Wisakedjak (Cree) is another human supernatural trickster. These tricksters are not gods, but rather supernatural figures sent to teach. See: Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, eds. *American Indian Trickster Tales*. (New York: Viking, 1998)

<sup>288</sup> “METHODS OF WORKING” Spiderwoman Theatre Papers. NAWPA

<sup>289</sup> Mojica, “Ethnostress” *FOOTPATH AND BRIDGES*. 20.

these Indigenous women artists and their community. Mojica uses the clown to evoke biting critiques of pop culture and history, critiques that create a space for her to intervene with her own voice. The humor used is sometimes broad, sometimes bawdy, and sometimes dry – it is a tool used to negotiate with narratives of power and oppression, a defense method. Beyond clowns, humor is also deeply embedded in the social and spiritual traditions of many different native tribes.<sup>290</sup> Humor is a tool of survivance, of staying human, and of staying connected.

White audiences often do not understand the humor inherent in Indigenous theatre. During the run of *PP&BS*, the stage manager noted in a performance report that “Monique says she is having a very hard time playing to the all-white audiences we have had. They don’t have a “guide” to tell them it’s okay to laugh, respond. Can we actively paper some seats?.”<sup>291</sup> This problem was recurring on Feb 11, 1990, the stage manager noted: “Audience Small and White, very quiet.”<sup>292</sup> Why are white audiences so unlikely to respond to Indigenous women’s humor? I’d offer it isn’t that the show isn’t humorous; rather, it’s that the audience is not prepared to laugh with Indigenous people. Vine Deloria notes that the “the image of the granite-faced

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<sup>290</sup>See: Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Johansen, Bruce E. 2005. "Catharsis vis a vis Oppression: Contemporary Native American Political Humor." *Simile* 5, no. 2: N.PAG. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 21, 2017). and Sally L.A. Emmons, “A Disarming Laughter: The Role of Humor in Tribal Cultures. An Examination of Humor in Contemporary Native American Literature and Art.” Ph.D., The University of Oklahoma, 2000.

<sup>291</sup> Folder 6, Show Reports- Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots Files. Nightwood Theatre Fonds. L.W. Connolly Archives, The University of Guelph

<sup>292</sup> Folder 6, Show Reports- Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots Files. Nightwood Theatre Fonds. L.W. Connolly Archives, The University of Guelph

grunting redskin has been perpetuated by American mythology."<sup>293</sup> The assumption is that to be an authentic Indian, the Indigenous person must be as stoic as a cigar store Indian advertisement figure, and about as human. The lack of laughter comes from a failure of imagination brought on by the logic of colonialism, which understands the colonized as less human. In this case, that lack is manifest in the ability to have and make humor. This colonial logic is veritably false, but it creates a mythos that infiltrates western popular culture as truth. Humor is inherently a part of Indigenous cultures, and to incorporate humor into these Indigenous-based dramaturgies is to use humor as a tool to decolonize the mixed audience's assumptions.

Mojica and Spiderwoman focus on the power of the Trickster not only for humor, but also for transformation. Coyote, a trickster figure across multiple tribal nations stories, is able to transform into different people. Coyote is both transformative and transgressive, and embracing Coyote allows for the performer to ignore confines of gender, race, and time. Mojica writes that "Coyote in drag becomes the quintessential Indian Princess, 'Princess Buttered-on-Both Sides.'"<sup>294</sup> Storytelling allows the past to come into the present, and Coyote allows the teller to transform and gain access to both the past and present and to critique cultural assumptions. Mojica structures *PP&BS* around these transformations that take her, as a solo performer, from character to character and across large swaths of historical time. When she was preparing the play for publishing, Mojica noted that her transformations had a connection to Indigenous epistememes beyond Coyote. She noticed that she had structured the play around thirteen transformations which echoed the thirteen lunar months of they year, a central part of Indigenous time keeping. She also noticed that within the thirteen transformations "there are 4, one for each

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<sup>293</sup> Deloria. *Custer Died for your Sins*. 148

<sup>294</sup> Mojica, "Ethnostress" in NAWPA files. 11.

of the 4 directions, where there is a transformation of three women who are one. Thirteen moons, four directions. Sacred numbers in Native cultures.”<sup>295</sup>

This thirteen transformation structure might not, and likely doesn't, work dramaturgically for every idea and story in Indigenous theatre, but it does speak to how an immersion in Indigenous cultural values can introduce new forms and structures into theatrical creation. Spiderwoman also uses transformations, and they play out in different ways in different shows. For example, in *Women In Violence*, the clowns that the actors created and played throughout the show transform into themselves in the final moments, revealing the truth of their experience. The transformations allow the actors to step in and out of the story, to be simultaneously actor and narrator. In Spiderwoman Theater, the stories that are woven together around the theme dictate where transformations will happen, and it is listening to this method of weaving the stories together that Mojica uses to create *PP&BS*. The stories may seem fragmented because they do not follow western well-made play dramaturgies; however, Mojica and Spiderwoman's methods strengthen and heal their intended communities by weaving fragmented stories together to create a new whole story for their community's future. The fragmented nature of the stories, as mentioned earlier, is an aspect of the decolonial imaginary. There is room for cultural specificity in storyweaving that illuminates cultural difference while still connecting stories.

Storyweaving and transformations point towards other possible dramaturgically structural forms that can be created from existing Indigenous cultural practices. Creation is only as limited as the imagination. Mojica expounds on these possibilities, wondering:

What would happen if we use the Pueblo homes as a model? Or the Mayan pyramids? Or a longhouse? What would result from writing dialogue based on the call and response songs of the southeast? Or a soliloquy written in the rhythms of the heightened

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<sup>295</sup> Mojica, “Ethnostress” in *Footpaths and Bridges*. 15.

ceremonial language of Iroquois oratory or Cree prayer? What would it sound like to create dialogue the way my mother in law, Tzotzil Maya has dialogue? Well there would be two simultaneous speeches; one telling the story and the other in constant affirmation: “Yes , this is the truth. It is as you say. We are here together in the same sacred universe. I bear witness to what you say.” I don’t know if they will work but I am hungry for the chance to try these things.<sup>296</sup>

Since Mojica gave this speech in 1997, more artists have trained and been given the space to create with organizations like Native Earth Arts, the Center for Indigenous Theatre in Toronto, and Native Voices at the Autry in Los Angeles. The possibilities to create work that heals and speaks the truth both in story and in structure are becoming evident. These plays tend to embrace the elements of the decolonial imaginary, assuaging linear, western structures in favor of non-linear, fragmented, interwoven narratives.

The plays referenced in this study are primarily written in English.<sup>297</sup> How do you decolonize and build community when you are limited to communicating through the language of the colonizer? How do you heal the absence of language? It would be very difficult to produce a play entirely in an Indigenous language and get it published. There simply would not be a large enough audience because so many Indigenous languages are in danger of disappearing. Language is instrumental to the structure of the play. Grammar structures how we understand the meaning of words; however, language is also flexible and living. What Mojica found, and is applicable to other authors as well, is that communities, even in translation and sometimes without ever knowing their culture's language, will absorb the rhythms and cadences of their original language into the way they speak English. A linguist highlighted for Mojica that even

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<sup>296</sup> Mojica. “Ethnostress”. NAWPA.

<sup>297</sup> Some are written in Spanish, but that is still a colonizer’s language. There are some lines of dialogue in some of the plays that are written in Indigenous languages.



though her primary language is English, the syntax and sentence structure in her heightened language persisted from an Indigenous language that she had never learned or spoken.<sup>298</sup> The structures of culture persist despite colonization.

The connection to ancestral epistemologies to create new performance practices is true in Mexico as well. In 1999 Mexican Artist Jesusa Rodríguez gave an interview to Diana Taylor about the possibilities of developing a method of acting “based in a pre-Hispanic conception of the human being, which understands the body in a conjunction of mind and spirit.”<sup>299</sup> Rodríguez traces this means of being back to Aztec religious practices and worldviews, which in turn based on her lived experiences in the former space of the Aztecs: Mexico City. While not citing transformation and tricksters explicitly, Rodríguez centers her understanding of her body as a tool for transformation through an understanding of the “soul as three entities: Tonalli, Teyolía, and Ihiyotl, three souls in the body.”<sup>300</sup> These different souls create a different way for Rodríguez to understand her body and a different point from which character creation begins. The process of decolonizing extends beyond the structure of the play to the actor as well.

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<sup>298</sup> Mojica “Ethnostress” in *Footpaths and Bridges* 15.

<sup>299</sup>“Nahuatlismo: The Aztec Method of Acting (1999).” Accessed March 20, 2017.

<http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/ft/modules/item/20-jesusa-interview-nahuatlismo>

<sup>300</sup> Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino, editors. *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*. Duke University Press, 2003. 228

### 4.3 RE-VOICING THE PAST

While Spiderwoman Theater often bases its shows on personal stories, Mojica utilizes the fragmented narratives of Indigenous women since the conquest across the Americas to weave the structure of *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*. This is not just a decolonial dramaturgy; it is also a historiography through performance. Mojica takes the fragments of Indigenous women's lives from the archive. Women like Malinche, Pocahontas, Sacagawea, the Metis women in Canada, and others like them are integral to the history of colonization of the Americas. These Indigenous women function, as Rebecca K. Jager puts it, first as cultural intermediaries, and then later as permissive national symbols.<sup>301</sup> There are traces of them in the archive--they are not absent per se-- but they are voiceless. What is attributed to them within the archive is subject to the biases of the authors.

Women are frequently left out of the archival record, because they were not published or their writings are seen as trivial and not worth collecting. It is a historiographical problem of writing women's history. How do you write and include women's voices if they cannot be found in the archives? The archives have historically been created and kept by white men. Women's work and women's thought in western history often fail to be included, and are undervalued; adding to this is the issue of literacy rates and access to pen and ink. Women like Pocahontas, Malinche, and Sacagawea were cultural intermediaries able to communicate across cultures and languages. Their voices were important in their historical moment, and their presence was significant enough to be recorded by others but not enough to record what they said. Without a

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<sup>301</sup> Rebecca K. Jager, *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea: Indian Women as Cultural Intermediaries and National Symbols*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.

time machine, it is impossible to know their words precisely. From a historian's perspective, giving voice to these women is a project that requires a lot of secondary sources and plausible truth claims. The tools and methodologies of historians prevent them from writing a new voice for Pocahontas because it would be fiction. In a performed historiography, like Mojica's, imagining and writing the voice of these characters is a necessary aspect of the form.

Throughout this dissertation, I've been working with José Rabasa's idea that Indigenous peoples in North America have been positioned as "without history." That is they are absent and outside of the official historical narratives, outside of the archive from which historians work; and when they are included it is only in the ways they serve the colonizing forces of history. Their lives and their ancestors' lives, while rich in meaning and detail, are left out of the archive and are not valued on their own terms. History as a discipline is deeply influenced by the coloniality of power, valuing the narratives of progressive change brought on by white Christian heterosexual men in power. The 19<sup>th</sup> century "great man theory" of history is nothing more than an exemplar of this valuation. While Marxist theorists began to reject this version of narrative towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it wasn't until the 1960s that alternative modes of history- for example, Black and Women's History- began to gain a greater footing in the academy. In the 1980s women's history as a field rose in prominence, along with Women's Studies departments. Emory University founded the first PhD in Women's Studies in 1990. The types of training and thought that allows revisions of historical narrative develop out of academia and this timeline illustrates a wider zeitgeist culminating in heightened visibility of new methods in the 1990s.

Rabasa argues that being absent and outside of the state project can lead to a "productive exteriority."<sup>302</sup> The project of "good" history reinforces the legitimacy of the state. To be absent

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<sup>302</sup> Rabasa, *Without History*, 15.

and outside creates an opportunity to create a method of community and the past entirely outside of the logic of the state. If an Indigenous history exists outside the state, it does not reinforce the state. This is what Rabasa means by productive exteriority. If Indigenous histories are added into state histories, under the methods of “good” history, this form of multiculturalism will often reinforce the legitimacy of the state and not serve as a critique. The early 1990’s saw a rise in multiculturalism, which Mignolo critiques as an opportunity for the individual to see themselves as a member of a liberal cosmopolitanism without doing anything to decolonize the structures of state that continue to harm oppressed cultures.<sup>303</sup> This multiculturalism was an invitation to participate and consume, but not to understand or engage on a deeper level. Mojica’s performative history, which exists in the cultural borderland of the stage and the social world of Toronto in 1990, is a critique made within a state controlled space, but one that utilizes a method of historiography that is not bound by the rules of “good” history. Her performance is meant as critique, a performed productive exteriority.

Mojica’s first full production of *PP&TBS* coincides with the social movements that made space for women’s history in academia, and Indigenous women’s history on the stage. Toronto was in the midst of an “anti-racist” movement, and the theatres that Mojica worked with were in the process of committing to creating anti-racist theatre.<sup>304</sup> Native Theatre Arts produced the initial work-shop production of *PP&TBS* as part of their Groundswell Festival in 1989.<sup>305</sup> Founded in 1982, Mojica had previously served as the artistic director of Native Theatre Arts

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<sup>303</sup> Mignolo. *Darker Side of Western Modernity*. 260

<sup>304</sup> Nightwood Theatre Fonds. LW Conolly Theatre Archives. University of Guelph.

<sup>305</sup> Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots, Nightwood Files. Nightwood Theatre Fonds. LW Conolly Theatre Archives. University of Guelph

from 1982-1986, and the group created a space for Indigenous artists to develop their voices and create new works. That workshop production garnered interest in the play from Nightwood Theatre, a Toronto-based feminist theatre company that would be celebrating their ten-year anniversary season in 1990. Nightwood Theatre co-produced the 1990 full production of *PP&TBS* with Theatre Passe Muraille, a permanent theatre space in Toronto committed to producing new Canadian theatre representing diverse intercultural voices. Collected in the Nightwood Theatre papers there is a memo produced by the theatre's board of "Anti-Racist" principles for the governance of the feminist theatre group. This list of seven guidelines for anti-racist was comprised of the following points:

1. Stimulate innovative work that criticizes racism, especially in progressive communities
2. Ensure that an anti racist commitment is reflected in the operation of Nightwood at all levels, including membership in the Play Group, stimulation of writers who are women of colour in Groundswell, for example, and FemCab, and membership on the Board.
- 3 For Future seasons, commit never to produce an all white production (on stage or in the production process)
- 4 Expand audiences into communities of colour (and provide necessary support, such as day care).
- 5 Commit to one production a year that is anti-racist
- 6 Include women of colour in language
- 7 Advocate anti-racism with funding institutions, schools and other theatre groups.<sup>306</sup>

The guidelines evidence a philosophy of intersectional feminism and are remarkably progressive nearly 30 years later. The administration chose Mojica's play as part of this mandate. While equitable casting and representation across a diverse racial population continues to be an an issue and frequent cause of discussion within the theatrical world, this documentation and the grant funding that helped to produce *PP&TBS* were not an anomaly, but rather mark the beginning of a change in the priorities that the industry has not yet fully achieved.

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<sup>306</sup> Nightwood Administration Files. Nightwood Theatre Fonds. LW Conolly Theatre Archives. University of Guelph

*PP&TBS* is more than anti-racist. It is a decolonial historiographical performance project that weaves all of these Indigenous women's stories and voices together to create a new history that is non-linear, non-teleological, fragmented, and incredibly imaginative. Mojica creates a voice for these historical figures and embodies them for the audience. It is hard a play to summarize because it does not follow a plot. Rather it is "an examination of the histories, myths, and stereotypes of First Nations and mixed-blood women across the Americas, from Virginia's Pocahontas to Mexico's La Malinche, from Peru's Woman of the Puna to the Métis women in the Canadian west, from Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides to the Cigar Store Squaw."<sup>307</sup> *PP&TBS* is not a solo performance; Chilean immigrant musician Alexandra Nuñez accompanies Mojica on stage. In addition to writing and playing music, Nuñez also performed supplementary characters.

The play is, as previously mentioned, structured around thirteen transformations and has a loose framing device of the 498<sup>th</sup> year of "the Miss North American Indian Beauty Pageant."<sup>308</sup> The pageant humorously begins this narrative with a reminder of Columbus's contact with the Americas in 1492. Contestant Princess Buttered-On-Both Sides (Mojica), meant to look like the Land-O-Lakes logo, is Mojica's coyote trickster in drag and the campiest aspect of the show. As the performance notes suggest, the white members of the audience did not always understand that this was supposed to be funny, while Indigenous audience members were in on the joke. Perhaps the white audience was expecting a consistent tragic tone to the piece; stereotypes of Indigenous women in popular culture primed the non-Indigenous audience for romance and tragedy. What they weren't expecting was a campy satire of the stereotypes and tropes of

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<sup>307</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, 135.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

Indigenous women's lives in the opening scene: where Princess Buttered-On-Both Sides performs her talent at this beauty pageant of "Dance of the Sacrificial Corn Maiden" and then hurls herself from the large papier-mâché volcano for the "loss of my one true love, CAPTAIN JOHN WHITEMAN."<sup>309</sup> This scene is both a satire of the limits of Indigenous women's lives in popular culture and a coyote-style celebration of possibilities. Her story is simultaneously both a critique and a joyous action, a both/and moment and not an either/or.

Mojica and Nuñez transform Princess Buttered on Both Sides and the Host of the pageant into "Contemporary women" commenting with the wisdom cited at the beginning of this chapter. This transformation transitions the play from the satire to contemporary lived experience, still challenging stereotypes through existence. Then in the third transformation, Mojica becomes Mexico's La Malinche. While the play presents time in a fragmented manner, blending past and present, Mojica introduces the historical figures in chronological order. La Malinche, as she is best known, is also known by the name Malinali, Doña Marina, and La Chingada. A Nahuatl woman with a gift for language, Malinche was gifted to Hernán Cortés when the conquistador arrived in the Aztec empire. She became Cortez's translator and gave birth to Cortez's son, arguably the first mestizo (mixed heritage of Spanish and Indigenous descent). Mexican history has a complicated relationship with her; she is understood as both a mother figure to the nation and a betrayer of her people to the conquistadors.

The trick of performance is that it allows this historical figure to come to life in moments, which in writing can take entire books to achieve. Malinche, although well-known in Mexico, is less well-known in the United States and Canada. Mojica's Malinche offers a rebuff to the history books that define her entirely through her use to Cortez, through her status as La

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<sup>309</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, 140

Chingada--the fucked one. Mojica writes and performs Malinche not as a betrayer of her people, but as one who has been betrayed by her people through their history. Mojica gives her a chance to speak back, not to explain herself, not to apologize, but to speak for herself. This voicing is an act of decolonial imagination because it is not actually Malinche's voice, it is still Mojica, as both writer and performer, whose voice emerges on stage. However, Mojica's writing is based on research- *PP&TBS* has constant citations throughout the text both attributing quotes and showing the sourcing of her historical material. Her project of voicing these historical women imagines their voices out of the evidence, and out of her lived experience as an Indigenous woman. In the absence of archival evidence, where do we find historical truth? Diana Taylor argues that there is a relationship between the archive and the repertoire, that is, the inherited embodied practices that are passed down from generation to generation. Mojica writes of a similar process calling our bodies "libraries—fully referenced in memory, an endless resource, a giant database of stories. Some we lived, some were passed on, some dreamt, some forgotten, some we are unaware of, dormant, awaiting the key that will release them."<sup>310</sup> When she voices and performs Malinche, she draws out of the truth of this bodily experience.

Mojica's binds Malinche's memory and body to the land by staging Malinche at the top of the on-stage Volcano while she speaks a threat to the audience "I spit, burn and char the earth. A net of veins binding me to you as I am bound to this piece of earth. So bound. A volcano, this woman."<sup>311</sup> Malinche is best known as the mother of the mestizo, her reference here to both the blood of the land and the blood of the people. By connecting Malinche to the land and the still

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<sup>310</sup> Monique Mojica "Stories from the Body: Blood Memory and Organic Texts" in *Native American Performance and Representation* edited by S.E. Wilmer. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009). 97.

<sup>311</sup>Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*. 144



living people Mojica recognizes Malinche's place as an ancestor, and in so doing connects the past to the present.

From Malinche, the next transformation brings back Princess Buttered-On-Both Sides performing the sacrificial virgin. Instead of playing out the trope of the Indigenous princess who sacrifices herself because she loves the foreigner, this trickster figure rejects the trope and runs away. Princess Buttered-On-Both Sides then returns to perform a song as the titular character "Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots." The song is a country-western style do-wop number. The "Blue Spots" are Princess Pocahontas' backup singers (performed singularly by Nuñez). The Song "Captain Whiteman" satirizes while explaining the Indian Princess trope--the eternal salvation scene where Pocahontas rescues John Smith from her father, Powhatan- that John Smith's writings introduced to the archive. The opening stanza of the song exemplifies this:

Captain Whiteman, I would pledge my life to you  
Captain Whiteman, I would defy my father too.  
I pledge to aid and to save,  
I'll protect you to my grave.  
Oh Captain Whiteman, you're the cheese in my fondue<sup>312</sup>

Through song, Mojica sets up the plot of this stereotypical Indian Princess romance: defiance of her father's wishes; pledge of faithfulness to her white savior; conversion to Christianity; and acceptance of civilization. The country-western style makes it difficult to take this narrative seriously, as does the choice to name the generic white savior figure "Captain Whiteman," Mojica is pushing this colonial narrative to its absurd conclusion.

From this absurd deconstruction of the Indian Princess narrative, Mojica begins a two-part transformation (parts 5 and 6) that weaves the multiple narratives of Pocahontas's life and their absurdities with Mojica's new body-memory voiced portrayal. She introduces the concept

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<sup>312</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spot*, 146.

of multiple versions of Pocahontas at the end of Transformation 4, saying "I have many names. My first name was Matoaka. Some people call me Lady Rebecca, but everyone knows the little Indian Princess, Pocahontas, who saved the life of Captain John Smith. In transformation 5, titled "Storybook Pocahontas," Mojica begins to deconstruct the versions of Pocahontas beginning with the simplest version. She performs a sequence three times, the first time through following only four gestures, the second time adding sounds, and the third time with text. The motions and sounds are: "1) No!"(*Hands overhead, on knees*)", "2) Don't! (*arms cradling Captain's head*)", "3) STOP! (in the name of love)", and "4) Ooh (swooning, hands on cheeks."

<sup>313</sup> This version of Pocahontas both the simplest, and the most fragmented, and it originates from Mojica's body. When she adds text to these motions, the text gives voice to the stereotype's subtext for each of the gestures: 1. "He's so brave, his eyes are so blue, his hair is so blond and I like the way he walks."; 2. "Don't mash his brains out! I don't want to see his brains all running down the side of this stone."; 3. "I think I love him"; and 4. "He's so cute."<sup>314</sup> Storybook Pocahontas is the version of Pocahontas that exists entirely within the colonial gaze, a way of looking that is based in the ideal that western colonial values are desired by all who are do possess them. There is no other logic, except that Pocahontas would desire and save Captain John Smith. The motions identify the story, the sounds repeat the intentions of the gestures, and the text affirms colonial desire. The repetition of this version of the story further fragments the meaning of the story instead of reinforcing the colonial desire. After finishing the last part of the text, Mojica transforms back into the Contemporary Woman and asks the audience "Where was

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<sup>313</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*, 147

<sup>314</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*, 147

her mother?.”<sup>315</sup> This question resonates because the repetition gives the audience the time to question the believability of the storybook version of Pocahontas.

“Transformation 6” continues Mojica’s exploration and voicing of Pocahontas and the colonial narratives that control her story. This section, titled “Pocahontas/Lady Rebecca/Matoaka Transfiguration,” is one of the four transformations that weaves three women (in this case, aspects of a single woman) into one. In this scene, Mojica performs three fragmented personas of Pocahontas: the storybook version of her story that children learn in school; the version of Pocahontas that the archives record as Lady Rebecca; and then as Matoaka, Mojica’s voicing of the Indigenous woman through the archival gaps. The scene begins with the Troubadour singing a 17<sup>th</sup>-century style ballad of the story of Pocahontas that Storybook Pocahontas joins. The Troubadour's comic adding of "-o" at the ends of lines to create a rhyme scheme, reaffirms the absurdist aesthetic of Storybook Pocahontas, and by extension the trope and national myth of Pocahontas’s story. Mojica then becomes “Lady Rebecca,” and to differentiate Storybook Pocahontas from Lady Rebecca she steps into a large ornate frame that contains the costuming of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Englishwoman: the lace cuffs and collar, and a velvet hat with an ostrich plume that resembles the Simon Van de Passe engraving portrait from 1616.<sup>316</sup>

Mojica’s performance shows the ways in which Lady Rebecca, and what we know about this part of Pocahontas’s life, is a construct of archives created and maintained by colonists. The contemporary accounts of Pocahontas are limited to Captain John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia* and records that Pocahontas's husband, John Rolfe, left behind. There are also some

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid, 147

<sup>316</sup> “Pocahontas Engraving” Smithsonian Source.

<http://www.smithsoniansource.org/display/primarysource/viewdetails.aspx?PrimarySourceId=1199>

records from her visit to England before her death at the end of that trip in 1617. For Mojica, Lady Rebecca is the version of the Pocahontas that was happy to convert; the version that had no regrets about leaving her people and culture behind. Lady Rebecca speaks the lines of text that the archival records attribute to Pocahontas, her archived voice. Mojica footnotes these citations writing "Quote attributed to Pocahontas (we have no way of knowing if these words passed her lips)."<sup>317</sup> The archive has its own biases, and Lady Rebecca's text, juxtaposed with Mojica's performed actions, highlights the bias. As Lady Rebecca recites the Apostle's Creed, performing her conversion to Christianity and standing as a "Christian Englishwoman,"<sup>318</sup> she is also "fitting (*her*) neck and wrists into collar and cuffs with much resistance as if being put into stocks and pillory; fanning herself with ostrich plume fan."<sup>319</sup> Lady Rebecca is confined by the trappings of Christian English womanhood as much as by the archival record. She is no more the "real" version of this historical woman than Storybook Pocahontas is; a trope, and a fragment from the archive. The performance highlights the bias of a colonial frame (performed literally here) to a woman whose history is only recorded so far as it intersects with the colonizer. Her life prior to contact is unrecorded, as are her personal thoughts and daily life.

Matoaka is Mojica's imagined answer to Pocahontas's unrecorded life. Where Storybook Pocahontas is near cartoonish, and Lady Rebecca is artificial, Matoaka is stripped of absurdist trappings and speaks in earnest. Matoaka narrates her family relations, centering her place in the world through her relationships. "I belong to the deer clan... That's my family," she begins, "I am the daughter of Wahunsonacawh, the powhatan. He is head chief of Tsenacommacah, the

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<sup>317</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*, 148

<sup>318</sup>Ibid.,150

<sup>319</sup>Ibid, 149

nations here in the Tide Water.”<sup>320</sup> Matoaka renames, and in renaming, re-centers Pocahontas’s life around the tribal relationships as understood by the tribe, and not as interpreted by the colonists. Naming and words are important because language informs how people understand the world. Mojica also incorporates Powhatan language into Matoaka’s speech. Language shapes our understanding of our relationship to each other and to the earth. Robin Wall Kimmerer points out that in many Indigenous American languages the majority of the words are verbs and not nouns. For example, there is no noun for lake, lake is a verb- which means that the speaker is always in active relationship to the body of water. It is not an object; it is action. Matoaka’s line "Everything is grown, everything has spirit, everything is breathing....," echoes this way of thinking: the world is living, and Matoaka is in relationship to it.<sup>321</sup>

The sixth transformation ends with Matoaka singing the song "Nubile Child" accompanied by the character "Ceremony" played by Nunez. "Nubile Child" is the song that Mojica's linguist friend pointed out was written in the syntax and cadences of Indigenous languages despite being written in English. The song drops all pretense of trickster humor and becomes a ritual centered on a young girl's coming of age as a woman. Through the song, Mojica imagines and voices the hopes and dreams Pocahontas might have had for her life when she was young and coming of age, and the Virginia colony interrupted her life. The last stanza of the transformation reads:

strong, fast, free woman/child  
strong legs, brown skin, woman/child  
Look all the way around you.  
Look around your world woman/child  
Dark skies, the moon is mine

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<sup>320</sup>Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* 150

<sup>321</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*. 152

stars travel  
Woman's time.<sup>322</sup>

Mojica leaves the audience imagining the possibilities of Pocahontas's life as she stands on the cusp of womanhood--not the young girl whose life is always already linked to the founding of Virginia colony and John Smith. Mojica's historiography does not honor the linear narrative of a life story, and instead of ending with her death ends her history of Pocahontas with the possibilities of her life. This act gestures to pre-contact culture, to the continuation of Indigenous history outside of and despite colonization. Voicing Pocahontas is a survivance, an act of telling a story that continues the culture, and it is told from the position of a productive exteriority. Ending the story with the possibilities of her life is what makes this narrative decolonial because it allows us to imagine her future as other than it has been archived and articulated by the state. This dramaturgical non-linear move changes the terms for her story.

Throughout the rest of the performance, Mojica continues to make this kind of dramaturgical move- to deconstruct western history's portrayals of these women and to create a new voice for them out of the archival absence from her Indigenous perspective. It is a decolonial move that denies, primarily through humor, the primacy of the Western narrative their lives in favor of an alternative Indigenous-oriented version. Mojica is not alone in this type of move. Jesusa Rodríguez performed versions of Pocahontas and Malinche in her cabaret act at *El Habito*. Elvira and Hortensia Colorado, storytellers and performers, revisit and revoice the Columbus myth from an Indigenous perspective in their 1992 piece *Blood Speaks*, and they revoice Aztec goddesses in their 1990 piece *Coyolxuahqui: Women Without Borders* and again in their 1994 piece *Open Wounds on Tlalteuctli*. Mojica explores the decolonial possibilities of

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<sup>322</sup> Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots*, 152

Sacajawea's story in her 1991 radio play *Birdwoman and the Suffragettes*. Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl rewrites Hawaiian history in her 1995 play *Trial of a Queen: 1895 Military Tribunal Manuscript* that toured the islands.

#### 4.4 REMAPPING AN INDIGENOUS HEMISPHERIC AMERICA DURING THE CREATION OF NAFTA.

Mishuana Goeman argues for spatial decolonization in literary texts authored by Indigenous women, which she calls (re)mapping. Goeman builds on Doreen Massey's concept of space and its political possibilities through an analysis of the ways in which Indigenous women's literature (re)maps spatial relationships to the land that have been displaced through colonial and imperial geographies.<sup>323</sup> Words are powerful, and Goeman argues that the author's in her study (Leslie Marmon Silko, E. Pauline Johnson, and Joy Harjo, among others) create literature that maps the land through story, both old and new, as a resistant act from colonial displacement and as an act of survivance. Like Rabasa's claim of Indigenous people as absent and outside of national History projects, Goeman argues that "Native space is delegated to exist outside national settler terrains, even while it is controlled and manipulated by settler governance. Natives occupy certain spaces of the nation and are criminalized or erased if they step outside what are seen as degenerative spaces."<sup>324</sup> The borders of the nation (in this case of the United States, Canada, and Mexico) are colonized and imperialist spaces that adhere to hierarchies of ownership. Native

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<sup>323</sup> Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). 3

<sup>324</sup> Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 33.

women's literary mapping, Goeman argues, resists colonial binaries and hierarchies. Maps are themselves works of literature, marking the truth of land claims and spaces. In (re)mapping these authors declare new truths about the land and heal displacement. I'd argue that works like Mojica's also (re)map the Americas, and that the mapping is hemispheric.

The 1990s were the end of a century, the end of a millennium, and a moment of highly political renegotiated trade borders in North America. Policies which favored neoliberalism, the free market economy pushed to its limits, spread throughout global economic systems, flourished in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. The global economy encouraged advances in technology and communication and forced governments to rethink and renegotiate their border and trade agreements in order to stay viable and maintain economic power. U.S. President George H.W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexican President Carlos Salinas negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992, and it was signed into law officially in December 1993, taking effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1994. NAFTA was designed to create fewer barriers in investments and tariffs between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, but it would not demonstrably change the mapping of the border. NAFTA is in no way a decolonial or radical negotiation, it is instead a reinforcement of capitalism and free market ideology that is deeply influenced by the coloniality of power. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation and chapter to dissect the nature of borders and NAFTA; I bring it up to point towards the political reasons why cultural intermediary figures like Pocahontas, Malinche, and Sacagawea were effective mouthpieces for Indigenous performative (re) mapping.

These three historical women, and others like them but less well known, are part of the history of negotiating borders in North America. In the national mythos, these women convert to the colonizer's culture: Pocahontas becomes Lady Rebecca, the Indian Princess who teaches her



wealthy English husband how to farm, births his child, and then dies. Malinche gives birth to the Mestizos. Sacagawea bears her French fur trader husband a child while helping Lewis and Clark to navigate and map what will become the western United States. Gender is integral to their portrayal because their ability to be the mother figure is central to their myths. They represent both blood and land and capitulation to colonial and imperial forces. The more complex narratives about their spaces, such as the argument that many Indigenous tribes used women specifically to promote and ease cultural intermixing is lost.<sup>325</sup> An understanding of Indigenous gender roles that were different from Western culture was lost on the explorers who chronicled the colonization of the Americas.<sup>326</sup>

These women's roles in society were intended as interventions and intermediaries, and that is again how they're utilized on stage in the 1990s. Jesusa Rodríguez' performative remapping and intervention through a re-voicing of Pocahontas and Malinche is explicit in its intervention and critique of power. Throughout the 1990s, Rodríguez performed monologues on the El Habito stage in the persona of Malinche or Pocahontas. From her stage she created a new version of Malinche, a new version of Pocahontas, that would speak directly to Mexican President Salinas. As Malinche and Pocahontas she critiqued Salinas' support of NAFTA, a critique which carries more symbolic meaning performed as these historic personas.<sup>327</sup> Performing both of these Indigenous women also belies the authority of the Mexican and U.S. border, as it draws the audience's attention to the pre-contact moment and the different

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<sup>325</sup> Jager, *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea*

<sup>326</sup> Jager *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea*

<sup>327</sup> Taylor and Constantino, *Holy Terrors*. 231-234

arrangement of land ownership. These performances (re)map what space can mean, and offers a different way of imagining the land in the future.

Rodríguez was focused in her (re)mapping project and political critique; NAFTA is the end result of centuries of free-market capitalism that creates a global economy of those with and without access. While it was written before NAFTA, *Princess Pocahontas and The Blue Spots* is just as relevant to the national borders and capitalist markets that control society. Mojica's embodied story-weaving (re)maps the Americas hemispherically from Indigenous female perspectives, and this radical act opens Indigenous futures. A future orientation is evident in the way Mojica leaves both Malinche and Pocahontas's characters: Malinche's speech from the Volcano is not a past-focused event but a warning for the future; the audience's last moment with Matoaka looks towards her future on the precipice of becoming a woman. Mojica connects Indigenous populations from Peru to Canada, mapping the continuing presence and history of Indigenous women across the hemisphere. Mojica's map asks the audience to imagine the Americas as occupied land; this is not a map of terra nullius, but a land that is populated and cultured. There are no "noble savages," only people with languages and connections to the land. There is no one version of an Indigenous woman. Mojica has found room for many different voices within her mapping of the hemisphere.

Mojica, Rodríguez, Elvira and Hortensia Colorado, Vicotria Neulani Kneubel, and Spiderwoman Theater are all examples that should be added to this canon of literature that (re)maps. The mapping is deliberate, it is decolonial, and it is essential for survival. To say nothing, to continue to exist in the values of coloniality is to give in, and to give in is to allow your way of living and being to die. To survive one must resist oppression, in the many forms it takes, both openly and vocally.

## 5.0 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Across this dissertation I've argued for the political agency of performance, of dancing onstage, of standing in protest, and of writing and performing new dramatic works. I'm going to close this dissertation with two contemporary Indigenous artists, whose work points to the continuing issues of survivance and coloniality/modernity/decoloniality across hemispheric North America. The first I'll discuss is Jamie Black's REDress project, and the second is dancer and choreographer Rosy Simas's dance *Skin(s)*. Black's project is a response to the thousands of Indigenous women who have gone missing in Canada. Simas's dance is an exploration of Indigenous identity created across five communities in the United States. These works, while separated in time and space, create a performative conversation about presence and absence, trauma and space, of and for Indigenous women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are a fitting final thought for this work's exploration.

I had the pleasure of meeting Rosy Simas and seeing her production of *Skin(s)* when it was produced at the Kelly Strayhorn Theatre in 2016. Simas is Seneca, and her production of *Skin(s)* in Pittsburgh allowed her to reconnect with the Seneca territory, both the current territory and an excavation of the former Seneca territory land that reached through Pittsburgh and is still connected by the Allegheny river. Footage of the Seneca reservation and a soundscape that included her extended family speaking Seneca language and other found sounds. Simas creates her work in order to heal the centuries of trauma. This is a recurring project for Simas, she

created *We Will Wait in the Darkness* in part by “asking is it possible, through intentional action (storytelling and movement) in the present, to heal the spirits of my Seneca family who are no longer bound by space-time?”<sup>328</sup> She imagines her connection to the past through Seneca traditions of storytelling, and also through scientific studies that study how DNA can carry trauma from generation to generation. Her choreography and performances, in both *Skin(s)* and *We Will Wait For Darkness*, are intended as acts of healing and as works for an Indigenous audience. She is an inheritor of the decolonial work of the last century, and her work continues to recover and excavate the borders of history that have displaced and traumatized her ancestors and her community through performance.

Canadian Metis artist Jamie Black created the REDress project in 2010 as a performative response to 1000 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. These women, who are treated as less than human and often exist in marginalized roles and spaces within Canadian society, are often the victims of violent and sexual crimes, and crimes that do not receive the same attention from the media or from the police. They are vulnerable in their invisibility. When a culture does not expect you to exist, and then you are murdered or abducted, no absence is noted because the indigenous woman was always already invisible. This racial and cultural invisibility and the unchecked violence inflicted on these women, is the fulfillment of the coloniality of being that positions Indigenous women at the bottom of a hierarchy of value. They are vulnerable because this power structure also reifies them, turning them into objects and making them less than human beings in the eyes of the state.

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<sup>328</sup> Rosy Simas. “My Making of We Wait in the Darkness.” *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (May 10, 2016): 29–32. 29

Jamie Black's project works to make the thousand absent women present again. Black's project uses clothing to make present the women who have been made absent through acts of violence. The REDress project utilized red dresses to redress this issue, the title describing both the content and the purpose of the project. The project is an art installation with community involvement. Black originally conceived of the project at the University of Winnipeg as an intervention into the media's representation of this issue. She solicited red dresses from the community, and hung them around the campus as an installation. The dresses are contemporary, and all different cuts and styles which makes it easy to imagine these women as members of contemporary society, as human beings. Black told a reporter that "they ... have kind of a ghostly presence, so it feels as though my room is filled with people who are no longer here." The REDress project has had installations across Canada, as well as in London.

Black's subject is numerous and absent. She cannot show all the women when she has only 100 dresses for an installation, instead the objects must perform the absence. In life these women, made less than human beings, are things, and in death through Black's articulation, these things, these dresses, make the humanity and the lost lives of hundreds of women visible. Black stated "Having dresses outdoors really puts them in, I think, a sacred space where they can interact with the weather and the wind. Those elements animate the dresses and allows them to dance, and that brings back a vitality that's missing. It really does have a haunting effect." The REDress allows the people who interact with the installation to picture the life that could have been lived in that dress, and let's the person imagine what these women might have looked like without a picture that instantly racially classifies them. The clothing is contemporary, and could be worn by anyone, and it is that utility of purpose that equalizes and decolonizes the missing and murdered women's existence.

Absence, presence, and the connection to the past are continual issues for Indigenous communities and these two projects highlight those issues in an explicitly performed way. Standing between state and reservation, present and past, life and death, these two performances encompass the continued need for acts of survivance and decolonial acts in Indigenous art. Simas shared with me that she was one of the children at Wounded Knee 1973, and that her mother recently published *We Are Still Here: A Photographic History of the American Indian Movement*. The influence and response to the work of AIM is continual, as is the need to continually declare that they are still here. It is my hope that I've shown through these case studies that the logic of colonialism continues to do harm to Indigenous societies by continually imagining them as dead and long gone. As Black's project demonstrates, Indigenous women are killed and missing and their deaths remain unsolved because the state does not see them as valuable. Simas and Black's work both demonstrate Indigenous women's value and attempt to heal colonial traumas.

Decolonizing is continual work. While a performance is ephemeral, the work of imagining that the performance's action helps an audience to understand is where the potential for long term change exists. Ending a state based on coloniality/modernity is an overwhelming project and will not happen in a single act, a single protest. Decolonization must encompass gender, sexuality, religion, race, and resources in order to be truly decolonial, and that work is hard and dangerous, but possible. It begins with acts of imagination.

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